



Our MISSION:
"To maintain a point of contact and information for telephone retirees on health care and other benefit issues."

THE RETIREE GUARDIAN

Newsletter of the retirees of CenturyLink, Qwest, U S WEST and their predecessor companies. www.AUSWR.org

2016 Issue 1

— AUSWR CO/WY

Colorado/Wyoming plans for 2016

by Co-presidents, **John Rommelfanger, Colorado,** & **Bob Rucker, Wyoming**



John Rommelfanger,
Colorado President

As we close the door on 2015, the entire AUSWR Colorado/Wyoming Board of Directors wants to share plans with you, so we can meet



Bob Rucker,
Wyoming President

all of your expectations for our retiree organization this year -- and so that 2016 will give us even better results than our accomplishments last year.

Commitment to fund Curtis Kennedy's services —

Curtis continues to provide oversight and review of the CenturyLink federal filings regarding pension and benefits, a quarterly review at a minimum, and more often as needs arise. As he monitors case law affecting retirees, he authors

articles for the *Retiree Guardian*. We share the annual fees related to his services on a cost-per-active member basis with the NWB Qwest – U S WEST Retiree Association. Thank you for your generosity towards our Litigation Fund. We continue to solicit 'legal funds' earmarked for 2017. Have no doubt about it, all funds raised in 2015, and in 2016, donated for Curtis's services — will go to Curtis.

Member support — Be assured that for 2016, our Retiree Advocates, led by Retiree Advocate Ombudsman Jim Heinze, Health Care Specialist Barbara Wilcox, all Area Representatives and board members, will continue to be available to help you with any pension and benefit issues that might give you difficulty in understanding or handling. Barbara Wilcox will continue to hold 'Medicare 101' classes, as needed, in the Denver area for folks going on or new to Medicare .

Working with CenturyLink —

The first point of contact for retirees remains the CenturyLink Service Center. Jim Heinze and Barbara Wilcox lead our communications efforts with CenturyLink's Human Resources staff, working together to help with those questions and

(Continued on page 2)

INSIDE THIS EDITION—

3 Curtis: 'Is ERISA your friend?'

4 Curtis: Federal budget affects pensions

5 Nacchio scores a 'win'

6 Medicare for 2016: Changes to Part A and Part B

7 Westridge update: Qwest pension fund fraudsters delay jail time (again)

9 Person-to-Person: Bud Ham and the 'Suicide Trail'

10 Obituaries

11 Membership Application

12 Denver-area Medicare classes

(Continued from page 1)

problems that cannot be resolved with the Service Center.

Membership Fees —

Your board has decided that there will be no increase in our membership dues this year -- dues will **remain at \$5** (*what a bargain!*). We would hate to have any member not be able to receive the *Retiree Guardian*, as well as other benefits of our organization, due to their inability to pay more. We continue to welcome your additional-dollar donations to our legal funds for Curtis.

The Retiree Guardian —

We are scheduled in 2016 to publish quarterly editions of our greatest communication voice with you, the *Retiree Guardian*. Kitty Kennedy starts her 11th year as our regional editor, as well as editor, for our Colorado/Wyoming edition. Kitty leads our regional team that works together, producing each edition.

Annual Colorado & Wyoming Membership Meeting in October —

Another benefit to members is that our annual membership meeting and luncheon in October (held in Lakewood Colorado) will be at no cost in 2016. This annual get-together is another great opportunity to renew old friendships and ask questions of a panel of board members and other 'experts' concerning your benefits. In 2015, about 130 members attended our annual meeting.

NRLN coordination and support —

We will continue to partner with the NRLN in

2016. The NRLN will insert its "Annual Appeal" letter in the fourth-quarter edition of the *Retiree Guardian*. The representation with CenturyLink for all retiree activities and communications remains the role of AUSWR. The NRLN provides a presence in Washington, D.C., helping voice our positions on federal legislation concerning seniors, including pensions, benefits and health care.

And who makes all this possible —

As always, Treasurer Bill Campbell does a great job keeping track of our financials. Thanks to past president Jack Beattie, who has performed our annual financial audits. Kay Daugaard is our new Membership Vice-President for 2016 and beyond. A special thanks goes to Pat Wood for her service in more than one position on our board -- her involvement in our organization adds to the good for all of our members.

Thanks to all our board members who give their time and energy to provide services to the administration of our organization -- and help to all retirees.

We welcome your thoughts, ideas, and — Yes — your criticisms to help us do our best in 2016.

Happy New Year!

Rommel (Colorado)

and

Bob Rucker (Wyoming)

Regional Retiree Guardian Team:

Regional & Colo/Wyo Editor: *Kitty Kennedy* (*kkennedy404@gmail.com*)

Copy editor: *Irene Chavira* (*irenec98@msn.com*)

Copy editor: *Eve Mary Verde* (*everde@hoglezoo.org*)

AUSWR COLO/WYO:

Barbara Wilcox (*bmw@mho.com*)

John Rommelfanger (*jrommel@live.com*)

Don Warsavage (*oldsavage14@gmail.com*)

NWB Qwest—U S WEST Association:

Clyde Just (*cjust6365@centurylink.net*)

Jerry Weldon (*weld60@msn.com*)

Cindy Hadsell (*clhadsell@aol.com*)

Editor: *Jerry Miller* (*jfpm815@gmail.com*)

Copyright - Fair Use Notice: The *Retiree Guardian* is the newsletter of the AUSWR Colorado/Wyoming and the NWB-U S WEST-Qwest Retirees associations. Copyrighted material is reprinted, the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We make such material available in our efforts to advance understanding of issues to our members. We believe this constitutes a 'fair use' of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the U S Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material presented is available without profit. For more information, go to: Cornell University Legal Information Institute at: <http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.html>.



Legal opinions & news

by Curtis L Kennedy, Litigation Attorney

Is ERISA your friend — as originally intended by Congress? Or is ERISA just part of the ‘dark side of the moon’?

Please pay attention to how the federal law appears to be scuttled by powerful economic interests.

First, let's not forget that 40 years ago the federal law, ERISA, was enacted to do away with all of the different 50-state laws concerning employee and retirement benefits, with the intention that employers would be encouraged to keep providing workers and retirees those benefits.

Likewise, for decades, employees and retirees alike took for granted that two typical benefits, car accident health-care coverage benefits and disability coverage benefits, would be immune from any obligation of the injured worker or retiree to either reimburse or pay back the insurance company.

For example, whenever a worker or retiree was badly hurt in an automobile accident, the expensive doctor and hospital-care bills were paid by the company-sponsored insurance plan.

And there was no obligation to pay back the insurance company. Right? Now, very powerful corporate and insurance interests want all of that to change.

A very closely watched case filed under federal ERISA law was presented by the insurance industry to the U. S. Supreme Court. *Montanile v. Board of Trustees of the National Elevator Industry Health Benefit Plan* concerns the legal issue of whether an employer-sponsored health benefit plan, after paying for a worker's or retiree's doctor and hospital bills, can personally sue the injured victim, and collect full reimbursement against any of his or her general assets, i.e., bank checking accounts, bank savings accounts, cars, residential home . . . You name it.

The *Montanile* case seriously concerns me -- enough for me to go to the expense of being personally present. I traveled to Washington, D.C. to be nearly

first in line to enter the U. S. Supreme Court to hear this very important *Montanile* case, involving employee/retiree benefits. I did get a front-row seat.

During the oral argument held November 9, 2015, eight of the nine justices all weighed in. (Of course, Justice Thomas never asked any questions, as he always stays silent during every hearing conducted before the Court). The justices heard from, and made comments, to both sides (counsel for the insurance industry and counsel for the injured worker), and they heard from counsel representing the U.S. government.

Robert Montanile was hurt in an automobile accident caused by a drunk driver. He received payments for his doctor and hospital bills under his employer-sponsored health care plan. The plan paid about \$121,000. Then, Montanile sued the drunk driver and, after much effort, received an out-of-court settlement payment of \$500,000.

Montanile's attorney told the benefit plan about the recovery. Weeks after not hearing anything from the benefit plan, the attorney received \$300,000 for his attorney's fees and costs, and gave the remaining \$200,000 to Montanile, who spent the money.

Six months later, the benefit plan and insurance company sued Montanile, and ultimately got a court judgment for \$121,000, enforceable against Montanile's general assets, including his house. Montanile's counsel appealed that judgment all the way to the U. S. Supreme Court.

The issue before the Court is whether or not the employee benefit plan could recover under the laws of equity, which govern ERISA, against anything owned by Montanile. During the oral argument of the

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

Montanile case, none of the eight responsive justices tipped their hands to one specific side. However, the federal government argued on the side of Montanile.

The effects of this case could reach other plans including Social Security and disability payments.

Also, because Congress has been so very inept about recognizing and fixing problems like this one for workers and retirees alike, it seems we will have to await the U. S. Supreme Court's decision -- likely to be issued in June 2016 -- in order to learn whether or not ERISA is a friend to the retirees, or just another part of the 'dark side of the moon.'

Our Nation Continues Toward Two Grossly Unequal Retirement Systems

I just cannot sit by and not say something about the potential damage that will be caused to our nation's private pension system because of the Federal omnibus two-year budget compromise recently passed by Congress.

-- Curtis

While many persons know that Congress passed "The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 (BBA 2015)" -- few realize just how this budget deal is most certain to effectively speed up the demise of defined-benefit pension plans.

No surprise to me, Congressional members joined forces to pander to their corporate and Wall Street 'masters.' Quite simply, Congress has continued the several-decades long journey, the quiet 'screwing' of retirees, making it easier for wealthy corporations to justify ending their sponsorship of defined benefit pension plans for retirees.

Corporate pension plan sponsors have long been deeply troubled over the uncertainty of future pension liabilities and have aggressively enacted efforts to impoverish retirees -- freezing pension plans, i.e., stopping benefits from increasing, shutting out all new employees, eliminating promised health and life insurance benefits long associated with the brass-ring prize of earning a service pension, fooling retirees into accepting a less secure reduced lump-sum pension payment incapable of being properly financially managed by the retiree, terminating obligations by booting certain groups of retirees out of on-going pension plans, transferring retirees into far less regulated insurance annuities -- and, in many cases, simply terminating the pension plan.

Corporate employers have long expressed to Congressional leaders how plan sponsors are deeply concerned about the extent and uncertainty of future pension liabilities, and their desire to shed pension

obligations. The proposed increase in the BBA 2015 legislation would push even more pension plan sponsors to manage costs any way they can, including further reducing participant head count and de-risking via insurance annuitizations.

The new federal budget deal calls for huge flat-rate, single-employer premiums paid to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC). The federal program serves as a uniform backstop for a pension plan, should the corporate-sponsor become insolvent. The required PBGC annual premium, which used to be \$31 per pension plan participant in year 2007, will rise from \$64 next year to more than \$80 in year 2020. Those premium increases do not encourage plan sponsors to continue with their defined benefit pension plans, but only serve to encourage employers to jettison pension plans and weaken the nation's private retirement system.

Another dangerous attribute of the BBA 2015 is how it impacts minimum pension plan contributions required by plan sponsors. Without getting into the nitty-gritty actuarial details set forth in the BBA 2015, suffice it for me to say, "In short, the passage of this new federal legislation provides reduced required contributions to pension plans through 2022."

And, lastly, another hidden attribute of the BBA 2015 is that it panders to corporate-plan sponsors who think they have a better grasp of mortality than what was recently established by the esteemed Society of Actuaries. "In short, the new budget deal gives plan

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

sponsors more flexibility, subject to Treasury Department approval, in determining mortality tables used for pension plan funding purposes.”

All the while, corporate sponsors continue to be incentivized by federal legislation that serves to undermine traditional retirement security for the masses, there is an exceedingly gross disparity favoring the elitist, including overpaid hedge-fund managers and corporate executives of the largest companies.

The new ‘normal’ for pensions in this nation is that high-level corporate executive compensation, which includes extremely lavish pensions, is soaring to even more obscene levels, while companies are looking to slash pension costs. This stark contrast is

exceptionally dramatized in a recent report conducted by the Center for Effective Government.

“The 100 largest CEO retirement funds are worth a combined \$4.9 billion. That’s equal to the entire retirement account savings of 41 percent of American families (more than 50 million families).” <http://www.foreffectivegov.org/two-retirements>

Your retiree organization will continue to monitor executive compensation developments at CenturyLink. Likewise, I will continue making formal ERISA document requests to CenturyLink, as done repeatedly on behalf of retirees, and my review of information received will be set forth in future editions of the *Retiree Guardian*.

Curtis F. Kennedy

Ex-con and former Qwest CEO Joe Nacchio wins \$14.2M in lawsuit against former financial adviser



Excerpts from Bloomberg Business News

For Joseph Nacchio, the former Qwest chief who went to jail for insider trading, justice in civil court was swift and bittersweet on January 7, 2016.

Joe Nacchio's 2015 appearance on Fox Business' "Opening Bell" show

Nacchio won a \$14.2 million insurance case verdict against a Goldman Sachs Group Inc. unit, Ayco, and a financial adviser, David

Weinstein, who helped convict him.

Weinstein sold Nacchio and his wife insurance policies in 2000 for a \$4.5 million premium that they believed had a death benefit of \$94.8 million. It wasn't until a new adviser reviewed his accounts years later that Nacchio learned the policies were far more complicated and risky than he knew, he said.

“He perpetrated a negligent action on us. He breached his fiduciary duty to us,” Nacchio, 66, said in an interview. “He cost us millions and millions of dollars. This had nothing to do with him testifying against me.”

Over the month-long trial in state court in Morristown, New Jersey, defense lawyers branded Nacchio a rich felon who lied when he said Weinstein failed to warn him about the risks of variable life insurance policies he sold to Nacchio

and his wife in 2000. After 75 minutes, jurors found that Weinstein was negligent and had breached his fiduciary duty. Nacchio, who was convicted of illegally selling \$52 million in shares of his own company, said he has a “very tarnished view of the American justice system” but is satisfied with the jurors’ verdict in the Ayco/Weinstein case. He was glad to get a chance to take the stand.

“I could look that jury in the eye and tell them what I believed to be the truth,” he said. “I feel partial vindication that I could go before a jury and have them believe me.”

Nacchio told the jurors of his modest upbringing in a tenement in Brooklyn, New York, the son of a longshoreman-turned-bartender and a homemaker. He recalled his swift rise through the ranks at AT&T Inc., his introduction to Weinstein in 1986, and how Weinstein advised him when he grew wealthy after joining Qwest in 1997, serving as chairman and chief executive officer. He said Weinstein stopped talking to him in 2005.

He testified that Weinstein was “a trusted adviser” and a close friend. “I went to David’s son’s bar mitzvah. He came to our 25th wedding anniversary,” he said. “He knew my kids. I knew his kids. I think David and the family visited me at the shore house one summer with the kids.”

The trial never generated the front-page stories that riveted Denver in 2007, when prosecutors depicted Nacchio as a greedy executive who misled investors while he sold shares of Qwest Communications International Inc. in 2001, based on private warnings that the company would miss revenue targets.



What's new in Medicare for 2016?

by Barbara Wilcox, Health Care Specialist
AUSWR Colorado/Wyoming

End-of-Life Counseling:

As of January 1, 2016, Medicare will reimburse doctors for discussing end-of-life options with patients. These voluntary discussions, also called Advance Care Planning (ACP), can be included in the 'Welcome to Medicare' office visit, the Annual Wellness Visit, or any visit to the doctor.

These options can help give peace of mind to retirees and their families.

Changes to Medicare Part A and Part B

Q. In October 2015, Medicare was projecting a large increase in 2016 in the monthly premium for Part B (Medical Insurance). Did that happen?

A. The Part B monthly premium did increase in 2016, but not as much as originally projected. Since there was no cost-of-living increase in Social Security payments in 2016, the "hold harmless" provision kept the Part B premium the same as it was in 2015 for most Medicare beneficiaries. Congress intervened to keep the increases low for

other beneficiaries. Details are shown on the chart to the left below.

Q. Who pays the Part B premium?

A. Everyone who has Medicare Part B, regardless of whether or not you also have CenturyLink company health insurance, a Medicare Supplement Plan, a Medicare Advantage Plan and/or a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan.

Q. Were there increases in the Part B deductible and coinsurance?

A. The deductible went up to **\$166** per year. The coinsurance remains at **20% of the Medicare approved charges**.

Q. Who pays the Part B deductible and coinsurance?

A. Everyone who is on Original Medicare, meaning those who do not have a Medicare Advantage Plan, which has its own deductibles, copays and coinsurance. If you are on Original Medicare, you may also have CenturyLink company insurance or a Medicare Supplement Plan that pay some or all of the Medicare deductible and coinsurance.

Q. What about Medicare Part A, the Hospital insurance? Did those charges also increase in 2016?

A. Yes, there were increases in the deductibles and co-insurance. Details are shown on the chart on the next page. Note that, as CenturyLink retirees or dependents, most of us do not pay a monthly premium for Part A, due to our work histories.

Q. Who pays the Part A deductible and co-insurance?

A. Everyone who is on Original Medicare, meaning those who do not have a Medicare Advantage Plan, which has its own deductibles, copays and co-insurance. If you are on Original Medicare, you may also have CenturyLink company insurance or a Medicare Supplement Plan that pays some or all of the Medicare deductible and co-insurance.

(Continued on page 7)

Part B Monthly Premium in 2016

"Hold Harmless." Your standard monthly premium was deducted from your Social Security check in 2015.	\$104.90
You are new to Medicare in 2016	\$121.80
You did not have your monthly premium deducted from your Social Security check in 2015	\$121.80
You are paying a late penalty because you signed up late for Part B	\$121.80 plus the penalty
You pay a higher Part B premium because your income was high in 2014 (over \$85,000 for individual)	\$121.80 plus the increment for your income group

(Continued from page 6)

Prescription Drug Costs

Q. What changes occurred in prescription drug costs under Medicare Prescription Drug (Part D) Plans or Medicare Advantage (Part C) Plans?

A. Each Part D and Part C plan determines its own monthly premiums, deductibles and copays for prescription drugs. If you are on one of these plans, you should have received notification by

now of any changes in what you pay in 2016. At the same time, Medicare limits the size of the deductible that a plan can charge for prescriptions. In 2016, the annual deductible can be no larger than **\$360**.

Q. What about the ‘donut hole’? Is it supposed to be getting smaller each year?

A. Yes, the Coverage Gap, also known as the ‘donut hole,’ is getting smaller each year, and will be completely phased out by 2020. This is a concern for people who have significant prescription drug needs and/or may take expensive brand-name drugs.

Q. What are the parameters of the prescription drug Coverage Gap in 2016?

A. The Coverage Gap begins when you and your plan together have spent a total of \$3,310 this year. At that point, you will pay 45% for most brand name drugs and 58% for generic drugs. The coverage gap ends when you have paid a total of \$4,850 in out-of-pocket costs. At that point, you are in Catastrophic Coverage, and you generally pay only 5% of the cost of your prescriptions for the rest of the year. The exact rules on what counts toward what category of costs is complicated, and your Part C or Part D plan insurer is required to keep you informed of where you are with regard to the Coverage Gap.

Information on 2016 costs is based on *Medicare Minute Teaching Materials*, January 2016, published by Medicare Rights Center, Senior Medicare Patrol and State Health Insurance Assistance Programs.

Part A Charges in 2016

Part A Premiums	\$0/month if you’ve worked and paid payroll taxes more than 10 years total
Hospital Deductible	\$1,288 each benefit period
Hospital Co-insurance	\$0/day for days 1 – 60 once you’ve met your deductible
	\$322/day for days 61–90 each benefit period
	\$644/day for days 91–150 (non-renewable lifetime reserve days)
Skilled Nursing Facility Co-insurance	\$0/day for days 1 – 20 each benefit period (after a minimum 3-day in-patient hospital stay)
	\$161/day for days 21–100 each benefit period

RETIREE ADVOCATES

can help you if you have questions or problems
AFTER you call the

CenturyLink Service Center
at
800-729-7526

If you live in:

Retiree Advocate:

E-mail

Arizona	Kitty Kennedy	520-444-6617	kkennedy404@gmail.com
Idaho or Montana	Shirley Moss	208-342-3449	samos05@q.com
Iowa or Nebraska	Gordy Lundy	402-203-2042	gmale5664@gmail.com
New Mexico	Cassie Kelley	505-298-8666	cassiek@comcast.net
Oregon or Washington	Shirley Jones	206-368-8686	sjbenefit65@gmail.com
Utah	Byron Lemmon	801-295-4653	bylemmon99@msn.com
ALL OTHER STATES:	Jim Heinze	303-442-1831	jjonrr@ecentral.com

Westridge \$7.6 billion fraudster convinces court pension plans harms 'no individual victims'

Excerpts from Newsday and various investment websites

A three-judge panel of the federal Second Circuit Court of Appeals in New York said the lower court made a mistake in relying on a "clearly erroneous finding of fact," in the case of former hedge fund manager, Paul Greenwood, who was sentenced to a 10-year term for fraud in December 2014.

During the investigation in 2009, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) authorities said Greenwood and his partner, Stephen Walsh, solicited \$7.6 billion from 26 investors, skimmed from the top, and tried to cover up the loss of \$554 million with bogus promissory notes.

The SEC noted that Greenwood had spent his loot on a stable of expensive stallions, \$1.7 million in high-end collectible teddy bears and purchased the Long Islanders hockey team. He ultimately cooperated with investigators, helping them build a case against Walsh and recover diverted funds.

In October 2014, Walsh, who pled guilty, was given a maximum 20-year sentence, which is delayed by the judge, following Walsh's attorneys' attempt to void his guilty plea. His sentencing remains pending.

At the December 2014 sentencing for Greenwood, U.S. District Judge Miriam Goldman Cedarbaum had little sympathy for the fraudster, handing down a 10-year sentence. Just before announcing the sentence, Cedarbaum spoke about the people "who lost many thousands of dollars as a result of [Greenwood's] fraud," according to the unsigned ruling.

"The loss of that money was very devastating for many of them," Cedarbaum had said.

In the face of Greenwood's appeal, however, the government conceded "nothing in the record expressly supports the conclusion that the ... actual losses that remained outstanding at the time

of Greenwood's sentence had 'devastat[ed]' any specific victim," according to the Second Circuit's ruling.

A pre-sentence investigation report recounted pension and retirement plans among Greenwood's investors, but the report "makes no mention whatsoever of an individual victim, let alone a number of individual victims who lost thousands of dollars as a result of the fraud," the ruling states.

The Second Circuit panel ordered the lower court to re-sentence 68-year-old Greenwood, but noted that he could still face the same 10-year sentence.

In 2009, Curtis Kennedy reported in the *Retiree Guardian* that our (then Qwest) Pension Plan experienced a \$98 million loss because of alleged fraud by Westridge Capital Management Inc., a hedge fund managed by Paul Greenwood and Stephen Walsh.

Our Qwest pension plan loss seemed small in comparison, as analysis of pension fund and endowment investment data at the time showed the following to be among known investors in Westridge Capital's 'enhanced index strategy':

- \$18 billion Iowa Public Employees' Retirement System,
- \$5.5 billion Sacramento County Employees' Retirement System,
- \$4.6 billion Wells Fargo & Co. pension plan,
- \$3.5 billion North Dakota State Investment Council,
- \$3.2 billion CBS Corp. pension assets,
- \$2.8 billion University of Pittsburgh Endowment,
- \$2.5 billion Kern County Employees' Retirement Association,
- \$1 billion Carnegie Mellon University endowment,
- \$313 million Viacom Inc. pension plan.

...of course none of these are 'individuals.'

Don Warsavage's 'Person-to-Person' The 'Suicide Trail'

—Tell your stories to Don Warsavage,
and he will write them with you —for a future
edition of our newsletter. Email Don at:
oldsavage14@gmail.com Phone: 303-776-7782

The following story submitted by O. A. (Bud) Ham exemplifies the telephone company worker's tradition – and how rugged the jobs were that gave the nation 'Bell System-quality' service. Bud left Mountain Bell after 20 years of service in 1972, and embarked on a successful career as a consultant and lecturer. We thank him for his success and his story.

Telephone people who worked during the era of the Bell System have every reason to take pride in their history. On Christmas Day and Mother's Day, telephone operators left their families to handle the high volume of calls of all the other families across the country. They also were the emergency lifeline, connecting people with the help they often desperately needed -- before the existence of 9-1-1. Our country, 'back then,' was connected together by communications equipment maintained and repaired by craftsmen; often facing difficult, sometimes dangerous conditions.

Back in the early '60s, when Bud Ham was a central office technician, he and his partner, Ken Rude, were responsible for the maintenance of a TD-2 microwave repeater station perched atop a mountain overlooking Monarch Pass in Colorado.

The microwave station was the main east-west carrier of the major TV networks. U. S. Highway 50, over the pass, rises to 11,000 feet on the Continental Divide, connecting the mountain towns of Gunnison and Salida. The pass is a seven percent grade, and is often closed in winter, due to severe storms. The microwave station, equipped with two bunks, a hot plate and provisions, was nearly 1,000 feet higher than Monarch Pass.

"In summer, we could drive our truck from Highway 50 right up to the station. Not so in winter. This was before the development of snowmobiles. Early in winter, before the snow became too deep, our transportation was a vehicle called a Snow Cat. It was a huge ungainly monster with four tracked pontoons, like you see on a bull dozer. My partner and I were going to the station in the Snow Cat, when an early blizzard

enveloped us. We were restocking the station for winter with about 200 pounds of equipment and supplies.

"There were two routes to the station. The safer one was open until after the first major snow — the other was called the 'Suicide Trail.' On it, there was a stretch for about 50 yards on the side of a cliff where it was barely wide enough for our vehicle. The drop-off was about 500 feet."



1960s- era Snow Cat

Bud was driving, and because of the blizzard, the only chance of getting to the station was the 'Suicide Trail.' It was slow going, progressing only a few feet at a time. The gusting wind caused white-out conditions so bad visibility became zero. When the wind eased, it cleared enough to inch forward a few feet. After waiting in the blizzard, Ken opened his door to get a better

view. He slammed the door immediately while he yelled, "Bud! Back straight up! Now!" The right front pontoon was hanging loose over the precipice.

They had no choice but to abandon the Snow Cat, and snowshoe up to the repeater hut, carrying the hundreds of pounds of equipment and supplies on their backs. Arriving there meant a one-way trip, as the storm raged on for three days, making it impossible for them to safely leave the hut.

When the storm finally moved out, leaving a cold, clear morning for them to trek back down to the Snow Cat, Bud carefully backed the machine down off the 'Suicide Trail,' starting the long three-mile drive back down the mountain.

About half way down, the Snow Cat hit a frozen snow drift, and tipped over on its side. Unhurt, they put on their snowshoes again and hiked out, sometimes sinking up to their buttocks in the new snow, but making it back to safety.

The Snow Cat? Still up on the lonely mountain, assaulted by the waves of winter storms, it was gradually covered by drift after drift, as it lay quietly on its side for the entire winter.



...friends and co-workers we have lost

Willis "Willie"	Smith	1930 - 2015	Lake Havasu City	AZ
Lovina E	Thompson	1922 - 2015	Santa Ana	CA
Daniel Harold	Bauer	1931 - 2015	Longmont	CO
Connie	Bragg	1928 - 2015	Denver	CO
Norman Virgil "Swede"	Davis	1924 - 2015	Golden	CO
Shirley	Galpin	1933 - 2015	Colorado Springs	CO
Arthur "Papa Art"	Garner	1926 - 2015	Greeley	CO
Edwin T "Ed"	Lawler	1944 - 2015	Denver	CO
Brian L	Lovejoy	1947 - 2015	Aurora	CO
Nelda Pauline "Merry"	McNamara	1925 - 2015	Colorado Springs	CO
Fred	Rickauer	1930 - 2015	Silverthorne	CO
Marguerite June	Tillquist	1927 - 2015	Denver	CO
John H	Traudt	1025 - 2015	Denver	CO
Carl Edgar	Gross	1926 - 2015	Boise	ID
William L. "Bill"	Nelson	1928 - 2015	Twin Falls	ID
Mary Cecelia	Dudley	1925 - 2015	Butte	MT
Harry V	Fuller Jr	1937 - 2015	Helena	MT
William F. "Bill"	McDonald	1927 - 2015	Missoula	MT
Helen T	Wherry	1934 - 2015	Butte	MT
William "Bill" R	Douglas	1936 - 2015	Las Cruces	NM
Elberta Mae Mueller	Fellows	1927 - 2015	Salt Lake City	UT
James Allan	Lamb	1943 - 2016	South Jordan	UT
Barton P	North	1925—2016	Salt Lake City	UT
William E. "Bill"	Jones	1933 - 2015	Cheyenne	WY
Steven Allen	Lethold	1951- 2016	Casper	WY
Daniel "Dannie" Maurice	Logue	1932 - 2015	Lander	WY
Hal Clyde	Wood	1944 - 2015	Green River	WY

Bill Alsdorf sends retiree obituaries via email weekly, including the retiree obituary. To join the email list, send your request to Bill at his email: auswr@q.com. Send your information about a member who has passed away to Bill —(please include the date, newspaper source or Internet link of the obituary).

Legal services DONATION for CURTIS KENNEDY for 2016: \$ _____ .⁰⁰

AUSWR Colorado/Wyoming Application —PLEASE PRINT—

CHECK ONE: New Member: _____ Annual renewal: _____ (\$5.⁰⁰) Change _____

Last name: _____ First name: _____

Dual membership: Last name: _____ First name: _____

Mailing address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____ - _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

I would like to volunteer in the following areas: (you will be contacted —you can check more than one):

Area Rep: _____ Membership: _____ Financial: _____ Legislative: _____ Media Relations: _____

Other (describe): _____

I retired from (Name of company): _____ Date: _____

Spouse retired from (Name of company): _____ Date: _____

I own CenturyLink stock: Yes: _____ No: _____

Please mail DUES check for \$5 to: AUSWR CO/WY, PO BOX 27027, DENVER, CO 80227-0027

CHANGES TO ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER OR E-MAIL ADDRESS

If you have a change in your name, mailing address, phone number, or e-mail address, please use this form. ALSO on the back page of this newsletter, your membership expiration date is included on the mailing address. If your expiration date is near, use this form to submit your annual dues.

- **IF YOU KNOW** of any prospective members who have not yet joined the Association, please provide them with a copy of this **Membership Application** form, or have them contact John Rommelfanger, Colorado President, at 303-475-8225. A copy of the form also can be printed from our web site at: www.AUSWR.org. **IMPORTANT TAX INFORMATION:** AUSWR CO/WY is an I.R.S. non-profit, tax-exempt organization. However, dues and donations are **NOT DEDUCTIBLE** on your personal tax returns. Records are available via written request at P.O. Box 27027, Denver, CO 80227.

Board of Directors CO/WY

Colorado President: John Rommelfanger
—303-475-8225 / jrommel@live.com

Wyoming Co-Presidents:
Bob & Jean Rucker—307-632-8470 /
bobandjean@sisna.com

Vice President-Communications
LaVerne Lanskey—303-726-2520
lalanskey@gmail.com

Vice President-Membership: Kay Daugaard
303-790-9637 / mkdaugaard@msn.com

Secretary Pat Finley—303-425-0804
pfinley00@msn.com

Treasurer-Receipts/Budget: Bill Campbell
—303-988-2800 / wilco751@a.com

Treasurer-Disbursements: Dale Thompson
—303-659-8720 / daleosa2@comcast.net

Health Care Specialist: Barbara Wilcox
—303-377-5761 / bmw@mho.com

Database Manager: Dale Thompson
—303-659-8720 / daleosa2@comcast.net

E-mail Editor: Bill Alsdorf
—303-659-4189 / balsdorf@q.com

Newsletter Editor: Kitty Kennedy
—520-444-6617 / kkennedy404@gmail.com

CWA/Legislative Rep: Harvey Hoffman
—303-733-1955 / hehoff@q.com

CO/WY Retiree Advocate: Jim Heinze
—303-442-1831 / jjonrr@central.com

COLORADO AREA REPS:

To volunteer in your area, contact
John Rommelfanger —303-475-8225

Arvada: Betty Moore—303-936-7917
bluebetty@q.com

Aurora: Pat Finley —303-425-0804
pfinley00@msn.com

Boulder/Longmont: John Rommelfanger
—303-475-8225 / jrommel@live.com

Broomfield: Judy Campbell—303-466-5666
jacampbell38@gmail.com

Castle Rock/Monument: Charley Heard
—303-660-9593 / cheard@att.net

Colorado Springs: Ralph Rohrig
—719-550-8267 / earoh12@aol.com

Denver East: Ed Arnold—303-321-7766
earnold72@gmail.com

Denver North: Dave Felice —303-880-5150
d2felice@aol.com

Denver Southeast: Robert Wiswell
—720-859-7641 / rwiswell@ix.netcom.com

Denver Southwest: Jim Hodges
—303-798-3213 / ehodges641@aol.com

Englewood: ... Vacant
Fort Collins/Loveland: Chuck Rider
—970-267-0817 / clmnrider@att.net

Fort Morgan: John Jump—970-867-7221
jjumper143@q.com

Golden: - Vacant
Grand Junction/Durango: Sue Berndt
—970-263-9008 / tbandsb@msn.com

Greeley: Chuck Rider—970-267-0817
clmnrider@att.net

Lakewood: Don Hinkley—303-988-0095
dwhinkley@q.com

Littleton (80220—80222): Ed Dinkins
—303-794-6625 / ed.dinkins2@gmail.com

Littleton (80223—80225—80227): LaVerne Lanskey
303-726-2520 / lalanskey@gmail.com

Littleton (80224—80226—80228): Tom Spall
—303-745-0233 / marytom@realtor.com

Middle Park: - Vacant
Parker/Sedalia: John Rommelfanger
—303-475-8225 / jrommel@live.com

Pueblo/South Park: Tony Juarez
—719-546-6065 / tps50@msn.com

Southwest Colorado: Wesley Colvin
—719-384-2436 / redbarn@centurytel.net

Thornton/Brighton: Bill Alsdorf
—303-659-4189 / balsdorf@q.com

Westminster/Wheat Ridge: Alice M. Peterson
--303-424-7609 / allicad@aol.com

WYOMING AREA REPRESENTATIVES:

Casper Area: Gary Overturf
—307-527-9005 / ago@tritel.net

Lander-Riverton: Jim Reddon
—307-856-6833 / jamesr@bresnan.net

Cheyenne Area: Dorothy Rhoades
—307-235-4501 / drhoades36@hotmail.com

ARIZONA REPRESENTATIVE:

Statewide: Kitty Kennedy
—520-444-6617 / kkennedy404@gmail.com

All Other STATE CONTACTS:

John Rommelfanger
—303-475-8225 / jrommel@live.com

To volunteer in your area, contact
John Rommelfanger —303-475-8225

AUSWR CO/WY
P.O. Box 27027
Denver, CO 80227-0027

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BRIGHTON, CO
PERMIT NO. 51

**—Change your Home Address?
—Or Phone Number?
—Or E-mail Address?**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

PLEASE CHECK THE MAILING LABEL —
Let us know your changes

You can help us save \$\$\$ in return postage,
if we have your CURRENT mail address, phone
no. & e-mail address

Contact Dale Thompson 303-659-8720 or
Email: daleosa2@comcast.net

AUSWR CO/WY, PO Box 27027, Denver 80227-0027

Denver-area Medicare 101 Classes:

◆ **Thursday, January 21, 2016**

1:30-3:30 PM

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
2400 South Colorado Blvd.
Denver, CO 80222

◆ **Monday, April 18, 2016**

9:30-11:30 AM

Carpenter Recreation Center
11151 Colorado Blvd.,
Thornton, CO 80233

To sign up, contact Barbara Wilcox at 303-377-5761, email: BMW80205@gmail.com.

These classes are geared towards Post-90 retirees who will be 65 soon or are going on Medicare for any other reason, such as being on Social Security disability for two years.

But, anyone interested in Medicare, and how it interfaces with CenturyLink retiree health benefits, is welcome. The classes are a collaboration between AUSWR CO/WY and the Colorado State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) — and they are free of charge. CenturyLink Human Resources personnel often are present to answer questions, depending upon their availability.

For information about possible classes in other cities, please contact Barbara.