

BCBSM Retirees Newsletter

*Produced for and by members of the
BCBSM Retiree Association*

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Detroit authors featured at Spring Luncheon

Gino's Surf Banquet Center in Harrison Township on Lake St. Clair was the site of our annual spring luncheon on May 21. Located right on the waterfront, we had a great view of the lake from the dining room.

In addition to a delicious luncheon, with make-your-own sundaes for dessert, we were treated to presentations by two local authors. Our own fellow Retiree Association member Bill Allen took the stage before lunch to tell us about his motivational book, "I'm Tired of Being Ordinary, Are You?" He signed copies of his book purchased by attendees and graciously donated half of the proceeds to the Association's charity fund.

Following lunch we heard an inspiring and lively talk by retired Army Lt. Col. Alexander Jefferson, a Tuskegee Airman, about his experiences in combat and as a POW during World War II. The 93-year-old Detroitier captured those experiences in words and original drawings in his memoir titled "Red Tail Captured, Red Tail Free," published in 2005.

The 50/50 and Chinese auction drawings were held after the formal presentations. Winners of the 50/50 were Elaine Schoder, \$100; Marilyn Wozniacki, \$70; and Joyce Obenhoff, \$48. Elaine kindly donated \$20 of her winnings to the Association. Chinese Auction winners were Dolores Gelemey, Betty Zwolak, Janet Crain, Mike Cartier, Kathy Adamus, Andrea Zin, Edith Oliphant, Mary Ann Gehringer and George Kuljurgis.

(See inside for more on our guest speakers Bill Allen and Lt. Col. Jefferson.)



Liz Hrenchuk, now in her early 90's, still enjoys attending Association events.



Linda Burton and Leon Morton



Imogene King-Dugan and Carole Stiefvater



Marie Bjerke and Sandra King

Meet retiree Bill Allen

Bill Allen wants you to “wake up to your potential and put your dreams into action” and he’s written a book to help you do just that: “I’m Tired of Being Ordinary, Are You?”

Now that he’s retired, it’s that positive philosophy that keeps him active and involved.

Bill, who grew up in Warren, joined the Army in 1964 when he was 17. He served in Iran for over a year and then volunteered for Viet Nam. He’s earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Wayne State University, run in marathons and competed in powerlifting events. In fact, he still runs in half-marathons and participates in powerlifting competitions.

“I’m a bit of a health nut and I think there are more and more older people doing physical things. Old people are so much younger today than when I was a child. I recently won a national deadlift contest and plan to go to Portugal this November to participate in the World Powerlifting contests. I have found that it takes so little effort to make dramatic improvements in one’s health — one just has to push oneself a little.”



Bill Allen at book signing with Geri Wojczynski

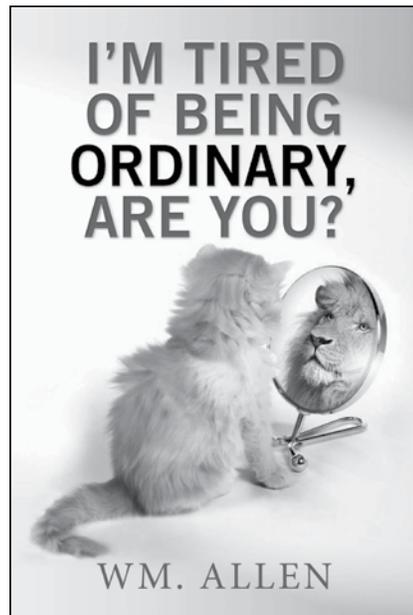
Bill joined the Blues in 1981 as a systems auditor and retired in 2009 as director of Corporate Quality and Assistant General Auditor. He says he considers everyone at BCBSM his family.

“Of course, like any family, some relatives are close and you see them frequently. Others are a bit more distant. And what family doesn’t have a few arguments now and then, but when it is said and done, they are still your family,” said Bill.

Bill’s book grew out of his years at Blue Cross when he sent inspirational messages to fellow employees. When a friend suggested he write a book, Bill liked the idea and, having saved his messages for over 30 years, decided to take the plunge.

His book, published in 2014, is organized into 52 weekly lessons, each highlighting a positive trait such as endurance, gratitude and courage. The lessons include a description of the trait for that week and may also feature inspirational quotes, a joke, a motivational book or a movie recommendation.

To learn more about Bill’s book, check out his blog at harmonybooksfilms.com. The book is for sale at Barnes & Noble online and Amazon.com.



Upcoming events



We’ve just a couple more events for 2015. We hope to see you there.

- The Annual Meeting takes place **Oct. 22** at Laurel Manor in Livonia.
- A tour of Sea Life Michigan at Great Lakes Crossing is set for **Nov. 11**.
- Our annual Holiday Party is an evening event on **Dec. 3** at Club Venetian in Madison Heights.

Meet Tuskegee Airman Alexander Jefferson

At the age of 93, Lt. Col. Alexander Jefferson can look back on a long and eventful life. He fought for his country during World War II as part of the first group of African Americans in the Army Air Force, all the while experiencing racial segregation in the military that was only gradually abolished following the war.

Lt. Col. Jefferson was born in Detroit and attended Chadsey High School. He graduated from Clark College in Atlanta in 1942 with majors in chemistry and biology and then joined the Army. He was trained at Tuskegee Army Air Field in Alabama and Selfridge Air Base in Michigan.

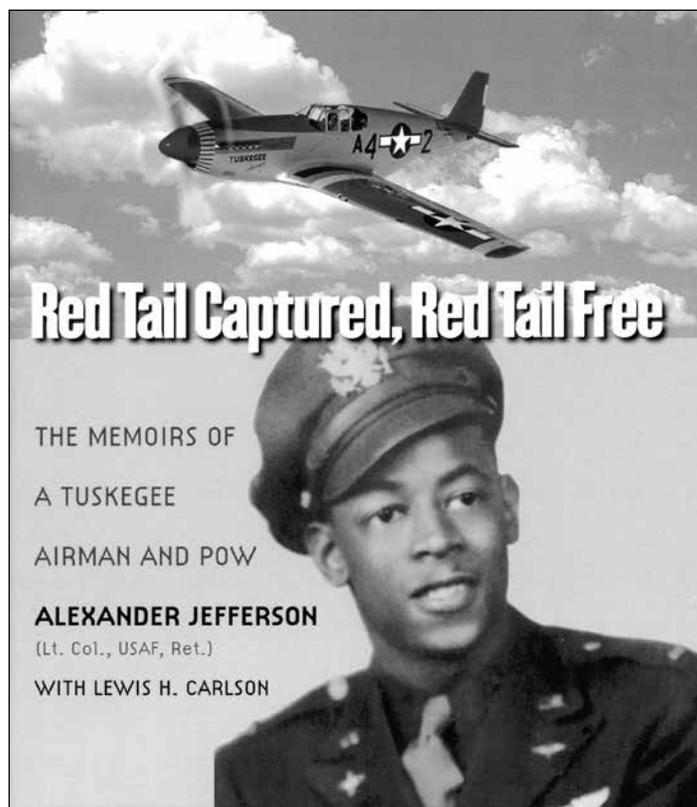
After getting his wings, it was on to Ramitelli Air Base in Italy. He was a pilot in the 332nd Red Tail Fighter Group, escorting bombers on their raids into Germany. It was on his 19th run in August 1944 that his plane was shot down in Toulon, France. On landing, he says, he "looked into the muzzle of a German soldier" and became a prisoner of war.

He was imprisoned in Stalag Luft III in Sagan, Germany (now in Poland) and when the Russian army was advancing toward them the POWs were marched to Stalag Luft VIIA in Moosberg, Germany. They were liberated by Patton's 3rd Army in April 1945.

In his talk, he recounted discrimination he encountered during the war. White and black officers were not allowed to socialize, and upon arriving back in the U.S., he said, "It was white officers to the right and black officers to the left."



Retired Army Lt. Col. Alexander Jefferson



"We were treated better by the Red Cross as POWs than we were at home," he noted.

Back in Detroit, Jefferson earned a master's degree in science education from Wayne State and spent 31 years as a science teacher and administrator in the Detroit Public Schools. In October 1995 he was inducted into the Michigan Aviation Hall of Fame at the Kalamazoo Air Museum.

Jefferson closes his book, published in 2005, saying, "Some 60 years have passed since we flew the unfriendly skies over Nazi Germany, but we Tuskegee Airmen are still fighter pilots. We have our reunions and we reminisce and laugh about 'the good old days.' But we also are very proud of the changes we helped bring about both within and outside the military. Above all, we want our fellow Americans to know that the civil rights we fought so hard for are not for African Americans alone, but for all human beings."

Jefferson's book is available at Barnes & Noble online and **Amazon.com**.

To Lake Huron and back on the Clinton River cruise



The Pride of Michigan is docked along the Clinton River. It's part of the U.S. Navy Sea Cadets program, Great Lakes Division.

Retiree Association members and their guests spent a relaxing day on the Clinton River June 23 aboard the Clinton Friendship. Cruise events always draw a large crowd and more than 120 attendees filled the boat to capacity. The cruise featured a buffet lunch and included a 50/50 raffle.



Left to right, Faye Williams, Bob Patrick, Marilyn McCowell and Vinita Morris



Margaret Graham (left) and Beverly Lawson



Retiree Debbie Kujawski with her daughter Brittany



Carolann Myers (left) and Barb Dietz



Chris Grethen (left) and Madeline Scarletta



Back on land. The cruise takes passengers out to Lake Huron from Mt. Clemens where the Clinton Friendship is docked.

Globetrotters profile: These travelers visit their 7th continent

Some of you may have seen a photo of world travelers Ann and Paul Austin and Debbie and Ron Baron in the Detroit Free Press last April. They appeared in "Travel with the D" wearing Tigers logo gear over several layers of warm clothing on their trip to Antarctica.

Temperatures ranged from 10 to 26 degrees, but, said Ann, "We had so many layers on that none of us got too cold."

Those layers of clothing did make getting in and out of the inflatable boats that ferried them to and from their ship difficult, said Debbie.

"The zodiac boats can't actually get onto the land so it's a very physical process rolling in and out of them with so many layers of clothes you can barely move, kind of like the little boy in 'A Christmas Story.' Then you have waders on to trek in the water and ice to get onto the land," she said.

The group began their trip in Buenos Aires. The jumping off point for the Antarctica cruise was Ushuaia, Argentina. They made numerous landings in Antarctica, including stops at Argentina Island, Vernadsky Research Station, Dorian Bay, Paradise Bay, Brown Base, Deception Island and Halfmoon

Island. They spent a few hours at each site. Some landings had to be canceled because of wind or ice conditions.

Ann says that her most memorable moment was seeing a glacier calving while at Brown Base. "I've seen this on TV, but to see and actually hear it in person was unbelievable. Paul's favorite was seeing three humpback whales up close."

Because they traveled at the end of the season, they didn't see all the penguins that normally live in Antarctica, but they did meet Gentoo, Chinstrap and Adelie penguins — some up close and personal.

"We did expect to get close enough for great photos, but never imagined the number we could reach out and touch — although touching any of the animals is forbidden," said Debbie. "At one point, Ron and I sat in the snow and a curious little guy came over to check us out. After a good look, he pecked at our boots and pants. What an amazing experience."

The trip was called "Glaciers and Penguins" and, says Debbie, "We saw an inordinate amount of each. The scenery and wildlife were absolutely amazing."



From left to right, Ann and Paul Austin and Ron and Debbie Baron

Association Members and guests cheer the Tigers to victory



Janet Crain, left, and her guests.

Friday, July 17, was a perfect evening for whiling away the hours at the ballpark. It was doubly enjoyable because the Tigers beat the Orioles 7-3. J.D. and Victor Martinez and Jose Iglesias all hit home runs and contributed six RBIs.

Since this was the second year we've sat in the lower level with easier access to seating and the restrooms, we asked those attending how they liked the new area. (This year the price included hot dog, chips and a soda as well.) Here's what we heard:

"These are the best seats since we've been doing retiree Tigers baseball," said Debbie Kujawski, who attended with her daughter Britanney.

"The seats are good. We like being covered from the hot sun," said Shirley and Frank Matthews.

"My whole group loved the seats. Awesome!" said Janet Crain.

Meet retiree Cynthia Jarvis-Zuri, community activist



Cynthia Jarvis-Zuri

After 33 years with the Blues, Cynthia now has time to pursue her greatest passion — working within her Detroit community to help those in need.

A long-time Detroit resident, Cynthia attended Greenfield Park Junior High and Pershing High School. At Wayne State she earned a bachelor's degree in Industrial Psychology and later took graduate courses in Public Administration at Central Michigan University.

Cynthia retired from Blue Cross in 2012. She started out in Keypunch in 1979 and from there held a variety of positions including customer service rep, group rep, customer service analyst, pricing supervisor, provider external trainer and provider consultant.

"The reason I chose to work at BCBSM was because of the variety of different employment opportunities. I wanted an employer that I could build a career with. And as I continued to work there I found my niche, the customer, both the providers and subscribers," she said.

Now that she's retired, Cynthia takes every opportunity to help out in her community. Last summer she worked with missionary volunteers from all over the U.S. who came to Detroit and stayed at a neighborhood church for a week at a time to clean up and make repairs in the neighborhood.

"We had as few as 25 and as many as 150 people at a time, not including neighborhood volunteers. It was absolutely amazing," she said.

Cynthia regularly attends council meetings in her district. "I have gotten to know our council person and her staff. I have walked with them, rallied and whatever else that I can do to uplift the community," she said. She also serves on the boards of several nonprofit groups.

Cynthia is pursuing many community projects but the closest to her heart is opening a home for single homeless working women, a project she's been planning for many years.

She is working on a pre-1935 two-family house. It is almost refurbished despite many challenges, she said. "Basically, it is almost totally fixed up. It was in very bad shape. We had to do almost everything from all new doors and windows to electricity, plumbing, painting, furnaces, water heaters, floors sanded, you name it. "

Now she is working to establish the home as a nonprofit 501(c)3 so that she can qualify for grant assistance to provide funding for the project. To help in this effort, she's been attending classes through Community Development Advocates of Detroit.

In addition to community service, Cynthia enjoys traveling. Also on her "to do" list is tracing her family's roots. She's taken classes on how to research her ancestors but says she doesn't have the time just now for such an involved project.

Cynthia lives with her husband Mahir, a retired teacher who is extremely happy that she is retired now too, she says. She has two sons, both out of state, and several grandchildren.



Welcome to Our New Members



Angela Aldini

Sandra Bassett

Donna Bean

Laurence Binder

Christine Bishop

Calvin Bond

James Boyd

Corey Branch

Jody Brooks

Veronica Buglione

Vicki Butler

Linda Cady

Eartha Cobble

Don Confer

Maelouise Cook

Annie Davidson

Denise Dorris

Janet Dubois-

Reynolds

Kathryn Dudek

Baran

Judith Emmons

Gary Felner

Paul Gliesman

Phyllis Greene

Dennis Hollar

Beverly Hollis

Anita Houston

Lilianna Juhasz

Sandra July

Eva Kea

Sylvia Lee

Michael Leffler

Marilyn Locke

Jill Loduca

Kymerly

MacDonald

Tammy Mader

Linda McDonald

Salena Mclaury

Hubert Meier

Christopher Mellas

Rosemarie

Merriweather

Susan Miller

Valerise Millhouse

Gary Montmorency

Joseph Murray

Sherry Nesler

Maureen Newsome

Allan Olsen

Laura Parker

Carol Penzin

Debra Plummer

Victor Pye

Yvonne Quinn

Linda Radcliffe

Scot Radcliffe

Siu Chu Reoma

Nadine Rivers

Rodney Ross

Cynthia Russo

Mary Scala

Stephen Schriedel

Nona Sehoyan

Christine Smigelski

Julie Soules

Brenda Sparks

Joan Spitale

Frederick Stempin

Deborah

Stephenson

Denise Stewart

Louanne Stewart

Beverly Stone

Diane Stout

Toya Thomas

Karen Tittjung

Sharon Westrick

Eva Wheeler

Brenda Williams

Lora Wills

Angela Wynn

Karen Yee

Laurie Zammarelli

Golfers take to the links in Clarkston

The 2015 Bill Burke Memorial Golf Outing on Aug. 14 was held for the second time at the Fountains Golf and Banquet Center in Clarkston. The day included a continental breakfast, 18 holes of golf and a buffet dinner with many awards and prizes.

Nine teams competed this year. The 1st place winners in the women's division were Jann Cantelon, Jeanne Carlson, Judy Avallone and Susan Reetz; 1st place in the men's division went to Jim Bridgeforth, Herbert Harris, Warren Sylvertooth and Jeff Harris, and the mixed division winners were Brad Gavle, Toni Clark, Ken Biedermann and Bruce MacPherson. Longest drive award for the men went to Warren Sylvertooth and to Rachel Hamil for the women.



Kathy Elston with some of the prizes. Health One Credit Union was our presenting sponsor.

A 50/50 drawing was also held. The winners were Tony Thomas with two winning tickets for first and third prizes (\$60 and \$21) and Mark Mullin, who won second prize (\$30).

Our appreciation goes out to all of our sponsors and contributors. Health One Credit Union purchased five holes (\$100 per hole). Other hole sponsors were Dean Sellers Ford, Mark T. Mullin, CPA, Ralph Magreta, Brian Maxson from Merrill Lynch (two holes), Greg Huffer from Merrill Lynch (two holes), Kathy Elston, the Burke Family, AXA Advisors, Arrow Strategies and Nick Grabowski. Other donations were

received from Carl's Golfland, Nick Grabowski, Jann Cantelon and Kathy Elston.



One of the competing teams, from left to right, Mike and Noel Cartier, Kirk Vogelel and Bill Smith

News & Notes

Subscription renewal reminder

It's that time of year again. If you would like to continue to receive the newsletter and flyers by way of U.S. Mail in 2016, or if you would like to switch to e-mail delivery, be sure to fill out and return the form enclosed in this mailing. If you already receive communications by e-mail, no action is needed.

Senior Advisory Committee update

The Retiree Association welcomes Carolyn Cruse as our new representative to BCBSM's Senior Advisory Committee, which serves as a liaison between the Blues and the community. Carolyn was director of Bricktown Customer Service when she retired in 2013 after 43 years with the company. She is pleased to represent the Association on the committee.

The Retiree Association Board also wishes to extend its appreciation to Phyllis Hampton, our previous representative, for her service. Phyllis provided many detailed and informative reports to the board about the issues discussed at the Senior Advisory Committee meetings.

Snowbird luncheon is on for 2016

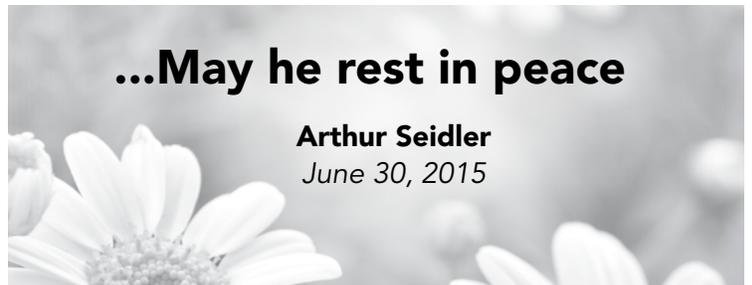
The Florida spring luncheon unfortunately had to be canceled in 2015. This year Cindy Warf (Vanderlinden) is looking forward to organizing the event, which will be held in a restaurant in The Villages, near Lady Lake in Florida. Watch for more information.

Tell us your story

Do you have a travel story or a favorite volunteer activity you'd like to share with us? If so, we'd like to hear from you. Send a note to information@miretireeassociation.com or write to us at BCBSM, mail code 0126.

...May he rest in peace

Arthur Seidler
June 30, 2015



Who's Who in the Retiree Association



Retiree Association officers and committees meet the first Tuesday of each month to discuss Association business. Those attending the July meeting are pictured here. Seated, left to right, John McCrary, Adrienne Starling, Annette Foster, Joyce Obenhoff and Kathy Elston; standing, left to right, Richard Dow, Beleta Williams, John Flint, Ray Newak, Shirley Epps, Imogene King-Dugan, Janice Crossland and Kay Jones.

Officers

- **President**
Kathy Elston
- **Vice-President**
Annette Foster
- **Treasurer**
Joyce Obenhoff
- **Secretary**
Adrienne Starling
- **Immediate Past President**
John McCrary

Committees

- **Finance** – Richard Dow, chair
- **Fundraising, Membership Liaison** – Beleta Williams, chair
- **Internet Communications** – Kath Arndt, chair; Imogene King-Dugan and Adaku Mensah, committee members
- **Newsletter Editor** – Janice Crossland, chair
- **Operations** – Betty Zwolak, chair; Linda Hall and John McCrary, committee members
- **Planning** – John Flint, chair; Ray Newak, co-chair; Kathy Elston, Shirley Epps and Kay Jones, committee members
- **Social** – Annette Foster, chair; Kathy Dolan and Lee Singleton, committee members; Florida luncheon, Cindy Vanderlinden-Warf; Golf Outing, Kathy Elston, Brad Gavle and John McCrary
- **Representative to BCBSM Senior Advisory Committee** – Carolyn Cruse

The *BCBSM Retirees Newsletter* is published three times a year for members of the BCBSM Retiree Association. We'd like to hear from you. If you have a comment on the newsletter or an idea for an article, please contact us at information@miretireeassoc.com or write to us at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, Retirement Administration, Mail Code 0123, 600 East Lafayette Blvd., Detroit, MI 48226.

Also be sure to check out our website at miretireeassoc.com for information about upcoming events and photos of past events. We're on Facebook, too. You will find the link on our Web site.

E-mail Directory updates: The directory is updated periodically and sent via e-mail to members who wish to share their e-mail address with fellow retirees. To add your e-mail address, make a correction or remove your name from the list, send your request to information@miretireeassoc.com.