

CONNECTIONS

The newsletter of LERA-ALABAMA
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www.alabama-lera.com



FRIENDS AND FACES

An Interview with Bonnie Castrey, LERA President and internationally known Arbitrator, Mediator, & Fact Finder

1. Tell us a little about your background...

I was born and raised in Buffalo, NY. In High School I worked as a Nurses' Aide in a nursing home. I initially attended the University of Buffalo (now SUNY Buffalo) and the Edward J. Meyer Memorial Hospital School of Nursing and became a Registered Nurse. After graduating and becoming licensed in NY, I moved to CA and went to work for Harbor General Hospital. In those years, we had huge patient loads and so I became active in the California Nurses Association and organized nurses in 9 LA County Hospitals, 32 Health Departments and the jails and probation department. At that time, 1965 or so, the county was taking testimony for the union representatives regarding a County Ordinance for Collective Bargaining, so I studied up and gave testimony. That is the short version of how I started in a lifelong love and career of labor relations.

2. Where did you go to school?

When I returned to school at Cal State University Long Beach to complete a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, I took as many Collective Bargaining classes as were offered.

3. What major did you choose and why?

I continued my nursing studies as I thought I'd get a Masters and doctorate and teach nursing. In 1988, at the behest of my wonderful spouse Robert, and with a full scholastic scholarship, I returned to school and was awarded my Juris Doctorate in 1992.

4. Tell us about yourself...?

I swim and read in my spare time. I am also an active community member, as an elected Governing Board Member of the Huntington Beach Union High School District. I was first elected in 1985 and have run successful campaigns ever since, so I am now in my 30th year of service. The District serves about 16,000 high school students each year and 20,000 adult education students through various programs. I believe that public education is one of the cornerstones of our democracy, so I spend a lot of time supporting our schools and various programs. I helped to start the Academy for the Performing Arts in about 1988. It has grown from 80 students to over 700. A number of our students are on Broadway and many have lucrative jobs in the performing industry including technical theatre, lighting, costume design, etcetera.

5. How did you become interested in this field of work, and how did you become an internationally known arbitrator?

I became interested in the field as a result of my volunteer activities organizing nurses, and becoming active in both the California Nurses Association on the state wide Board of Directors and the American Economic and General Welfare Commission as the elected Vice Chair. I had been volunteering, teaching nurses about collective bargaining in several states. I testified in Washington, DC, before the Senate Health and Labor Committee regarding the Health Care Amendments to the NLRA, in 1973. In 1974, the American Nurses Association (ANA) asked me to go to Hawaii to help nurses there...

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IN THE HEADLINES:

Welcome our new President!

This issue of "Connections" is the first to feature Alabama-LERA President Valerie Singleton. Valerie took over as President at the Fall Conference, and has been preparing for the first Board Meeting which will be held in January. Valerie has over 17 years of expertise in the field of Human Resources, and works for URS in Huntsville, Alabama.

2016 Memberships are Due!

Don't forget to renew your Alabama-LERA membership! We have moved to a calendar year system, so that memberships renew each January for that calendar year. This has proved to be much easier for individuals to remember, and works out well as all activities are based on the same calendar year. You can even pay for the year's dinner meetings and Fall conference at the same time!

To renew your membership, visit the Alabama-LERA webpage at:
<http://www.alabama-lera.com>

Celebrating Success: The Alabama-LERA 2015 Fall Conference!

Once again, Alabama-LERAs 2015 Fall Conference was a clear success! Maintaining its history of national level speakers and subject matter experts, the conference delivered perspectives from the national stage, such as the latest input from the National Labor Relations Board and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. A data packed presentation from The University of Alabama's Dr. Samuel Addy brought keen insight into the Alabama economy. The audience also enjoyed the benefit of expert knowledge during the "Ask the Arbitrator" session, which is a popular session each year. A highlight of the 2015 Conference was the presentation of a lifetime service/appreciation award presented to Dr. Trevor Bain for his critical participation in the launch of the original chapter and his guidance over the years. Participants had the opportunity to network with key labor and management professionals from across the country and state.



ABOVE: Snapshots from the 2015 Alabama-LERA Fall Conference. The program lineup boasted top caliber speakers including the President of LERA (Bonnie Castrey); NLRB Chair Mark Gaston Pearce; FMCS Deputy Director Scott Beckenbaugh; and Dr. Sam Addy, Associate Dean for Research and Outreach, UA.

ABOVE: Trevor Bain receives his award for life time achievement and service to Alabama-LERA.

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Welcome to the latest "Connections" newsletter!

I'm excited to say our 2015 Conference at Orange Beach last fall was a huge success as we celebrated 30 years of Alabama-LERA! We were privileged to hear updates from speakers who are admired and respected in the labor-management relations profession, both nationally and internationally. We were also given the opportunity to hear a student's perspective of labor and employment relations. Alabama-LERA began partnering with universities last year and it's exciting to see the student interest growing at each conference. My hope is to see an increase in the student associations' sponsorship by our companies and local unions. What better way is there for the college students entering the "real world" to learn and stay abreast of the latest information regarding labor, employment, and industrial relations news and trends than through LERA? I read an article written by one of the students who attended the 2014 fall conference and he was very appreciative to Alabama-LERA for affording him the opportunity to attend the conference at no cost. He was also very excited about the opportunity to network with so many well-known professionals. However, he stated that the most important thing the conference did for him was help boost his confidence and mentally prepare him for this future career.

Over the past few years the Alabama-LERA membership has grown steadily and we now have 79 members. I'm confident that number will increase as we continue reaching out to the labor and management community. Please continue inviting potential members to our dinner meetings and conferences. Sometimes all it takes is explaining the many opportunities LERA provides to network, share ideas and learn about new developments, issues, and practices in the field.

We are looking forward to another exciting and successful year of Alabama-LERA!

Valerie PG. 2

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

The 2016 Birmingham Dinner Meeting featuring Mark Crosswhite, President and CEO, Alabama Power Company

When:

January 26, 2016

Registration at 5:30pm

Dinner & Program at 6:00pm

Where:

Alabama Power Company Headquarters
600 NTH 18TH Street, Birmingham, AL 35203

How: Cost is \$35.

Make your reservation online at:
www.alabama-lera.com



Build strong, trusting relationships in order to work through challenging issues. Have a cup of tea or coffee together on a regular basis and just get to know each other as people....
Bonnie Castrey

(Continued from page 1) ...as they were having serious contract negotiation problems. I did. Following the conclusion of negotiations, the Federal Mediator asked me if I had ever considered leaving nursing and going into the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS). I talked with him and afterwards applied in November of 1974 at FMCS and began my service as an Intern in January 1975. As many of you know, that Federal Mediator was none other than my future husband, Robert Castrey. We subsequently married in March of 1976 and spent 39 magnificent years together. I served at FMCS until July of 1985, when I went into private practice as a mediator and arbitrator. Later I served as a Member and then Chair of the Federal Service Impasses Panel from 1995-2002. In terms of international recognition, I think that came about as a result of Robert's and my ongoing membership in the International Labor Employment Relations Association (ILERA), and attendance at international and regional congresses beginning in 1979. We met many practitioners and scholars and hence were invited to speak at various gatherings. I also served in 1990, as President of the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution, which was an international organization. I have spoken at international conferences in England, Australia and Italy and was a Guest Scholar at Edith Cowan University in Perth, Australia. While I Chaired the Federal Service Impasses Panel I spoke about the "Patchwork Quilt of Labor Relations Laws in the United States", in Hobart, Tasmania, AU.

6. What is the most exciting or rewarding part of your job?

The opportunity to meet and build relationships with labor relations professionals and to assist people in settling challenging issues of disagreement.

7. What do you see on the horizon for the Labor Relations world? I am optimistic that young people will begin to recognize the value of strong labor management relationships and that over the next decade labor laws will once again be strengthened, either statutorily or by case law. At the table, we will continue to grapple with the challenging issues of pensions, two tier systems, the Affordable Care Act including "Cadillac Tax" and the widening wage gap and decimation of America's middle class.

8. What trends have you seen this past year?

On one hand, the destruction of many labor laws and relationships, and an attack on pensions and benefits, but on the other hand a rise in organizing in such sectors as hospitality and care givers for the elderly and children.

9. What advice do you have for managers and unions?

Build strong, trusting relationships in order to work through challenging issues. Have a cup of tea or coffee together on a regular basis and just get to know each other as people.

10. What are you most interested in accomplishing as President of LERA?

To get LERA back on a strong fiscal base with an increased membership in all categories and a very vibrant 2016 annual conference in Minneapolis, MN May 26-29 at the Millenium Hotel. I hope you'll all calendar the date and plan to attend.

11. What is National LERA working on that readers may find exciting?

Building the online Policy Network for open discussion of current labor relations issues that impact policy at all levels.

12. What is most important idea for unions and managers to embrace in the current environment?

Build trusting, collaborative relationships wherein you can openly and honestly discuss the challenging issues of the day, including the impact of trade and the international environment on the US and our workplaces.

13. Anything else our readers should know...? I'm always excited to have the opportunity to meet with all of you and to discuss issues on your mind about LERA and the workplace!

Alabama-LERA 2015-2016 Executive Board

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REGISTER NOW for the
Birmingham Dinner Meeting!
To register, log on to
<http://www.alabama-lera.com>

We'd love to hear from you!

Please e-mail your feedback/suggestions to: patrick.rasco@nasa.gov

For information on becoming a member of LERA-Alabama contact:
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