

# TVARA NEWS

The TVA Retirees Association

The Tennessee Valley Authority Retirees Association | 400 West Summit Hill Drive WT 8C-K | Knoxville, TN 37902 | www.mytvra.org | 865-632-3318

## Is It Time To Reset Your Insurance Plan (and Premium)?

By **TOM SWANSON**,  
Chair, TVARA Health Committee

Many retirees have had their current Medicare health-insurance policy for a number of years.

During that time, the premium may have been increasing due to “adjustments” such as age, as provided for in some of the policies.

The TVARA Health Committee has suggested nearly every year in this newsletter that retirees with Part D, Prescription Drug Plan policies, should look at the market for these policies annually due to frequent changes in the drugs covered and their costs.

This is the first time we have suggested that it is time to do the same with the Medicare medical-insurance policies!

It is possible contract adjustments have resulted in a premium cost for your current policy that is greater than premium quotes for the same coverage from a different insurer.

The only way to find out is to shop for a replacement policy.

The easiest way to do this is to call Via Benefits and the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) in your particular state.

Via Benefits can sign you up with a new insurer, SHIP can provide you with information

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## TVARA Staff Carrying on as COVID-19 Crisis Continues

By **VICKIE ELLIS**, TVARA Valleywide President

Once again, I am writing to you in this newsletter as we continue to experience the many facets to the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to wear masks, social-distance, and take precautions from getting this terrible illness. We all have been impacted in some way.

This issue of *TVARA News* contains great articles that should be of interest as we make decisions about benefits in the upcoming months. There have been some very positive changes to the retiree medical-plan rules, so please read the information closely.

Many of our chapters have had to cancel quarterly meetings for the second time in a row, but at least one,

Knoxville, has decided to meet via Webex calls. If your chapter decides to meet in this format, I encourage you to participate, catch up with friends, and perhaps learn a new technology.

At a recent TVARA Board meeting, Dr. Steve Chardos, retired TVA psychologist, made remarks concerning individuals’ physical and emotional wellbeing during COVID-19. He has shared those thoughts in an article in this newsletter. Let’s all commit to reach out to fellow retirees and make a connection.

This past quarter, Bicentennial Volunteers Inc. and TVARA partnered

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## Regardless of Location, Situation, TVARS Team Committed to Service

By **JUSTIN VINEYARD**, Senior Retirement Consultant & TVARA Liaison, TVA Retirement

As this issue of *TVARA News* was being pulled together, TVA Retirement System employees continued to work remotely to reduce the number of individuals in TVA facilities and promote social distancing.

We are committed to providing you and/or your family with the same level of service and support you are accustomed to during these times.

The TVARS staff is available by email at [retsvcs@tva.gov](mailto:retsvcs@tva.gov) or by calling 1-800-824-3870 toll-free.

### Financial Performance

TVARS reports that for the fiscal year from Oct. 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020, investments earned 1.7 percent.

Throughout the worldwide COVID-19

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The TVA Retirees Association is the official organization of all TVA retirees. It was organized to serve the varied interests of TVA and its retirees and their beneficiaries, and to help keep them informed of TVA developments affecting their interests. It has been recognized by TVA as the responsible representative of retirees in conveying retiree views.

# TVARA NEWS & NOTES

The following news items were submitted to TVARA News by TVA's Internal Communications department:

## Snakes on a ... transformer?

You may have heard of the movie "Snakes on a Plane," but most TVA employees and retirees have never heard of, or much less encountered, snakes on a transformer. It's actually not an uncommon occurrence — and, if not corrected, can cause unwanted outages.

According to Annette Moore and Jason Baggett, general managers for TVA's east and west Nuclear areas for transmission maintenance, there were two outages in the first seven months of 2020 due to snakes' climbing on or wrapping themselves around transformers at substations. It's a pesky phenomenon Moore and Baggett's teams deal with throughout the year.

"We have a handful of outages like these every year," Moore says. "And it can be for different reasons, depending on the season we're in. In the cooler months, snakes are searching for warmth that the transformers provide, while in the warmer months they're looking for a food source."

That food source can be anything from birds nesting in the structures to rats and squirrels pillaging in or around the substations. When a snake climbs along the transformers to reach heat or food, it causes the transformer's protective equipment relaying to trip — clearing what it believes to be a fault in the system — and results in an outage, as well as a deceased snake.

Baggett and Moore say they and their teams have seen native snakes varying from massive rattlesnakes to common rat snakes near the substations. Venomous snakes are the most problematic, as both teams stumble upon them not only along the transformers but also "happily hanging out" inside yard cabinets or control boxes.

In situations like these, the teams call in the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency to have any snake they see — dangerous or not —

professionally removed from the premises. They are not allowed to kill a snake unless it's about to bite or causing a life-threatening situation.

"The problem with snakes is the element of surprise," Baggett says. "Some of these little guys can camouflage themselves pretty well, so that's why we tell our teams that, any time we're working on or around a piece of equipment, we need to make sure we're thoroughly scanning that equipment and the perimeter to ensure our work area is safe and clear of any hazards."

## Major demolition projects active across Valley

For TVA's D4 (deactivation, decommissioning, decontamination, and demolition) team, rest will come later as ongoing demolition projects continue across the Tennessee Valley. The team is actively leading large groups of contractors in the demolition of five fossil sites, as well as several underutilized assets identified by Strategic Real Estate & Governance.

Work at the Shawnee and Widows Creek Fossil plants is scheduled to be complete in 2021. At Shawnee — a plant that still has units generating power — the team is currently wrecking the mooring cells, coal-conveyor belts and barge-unloaders. The work at Shawnee is being coordinated with Power Operations to remove structures that were deemed unsafe. The project began in 2019.

Demolition of Widows Creek began in 2018, and all major buildings on the site have been cleared. The backfilling of the plant basements is underway, and preparations are being made for the implosion of the remaining 1,000-foot stack that served Plant A. Both 500-foot stacks and boilers on units 7 and 8 were safely demolished on Sept. 27, 2019. Widows Creek went offline in October 2015.

"We are keeping the team busy as we work



to decommission structures and to restore these areas to brownfield status at the end of each project,” says Roger Waldrep, Vice President of Major Projects for Generation Projects & Fleet Services. “Our goal is to work safely and tirelessly to create a location that is suitable for continued economic growth and use.”

The Colbert and Johnsonville fossil plants are scheduled to be restored to brownfield status by 2023.

At Colbert, the coal-conveyor belts and supporting structures have been removed. Work continues on the plant’s condensers, and asbestos abatement is ongoing and will continue on into 2021. The plant was retired in 2016 after 61 years of service.

In addition, the D4 team has completed backfilling the conveyor basements and reclaim hoppers at Johnsonville. Both of the plant’s barge unloaders have been demolished. Turbo-generators on units 1-5 have been removed from the turbine-bay structure, and the outbuildings are being leveled. Asbestos abatement is in progress and will continue into 2021. The last of Johnsonville’s 10 units came offline on New Year’s Eve, 2017.

Paradise Unit 3 generated its last megawatt on Feb. 1 this year. Decommissioning is underway as the coal-belt material and anhydrous-ammonia tanks have been sold and removed from the site. Cleaning of the coal dust from the powerhouse and removal of oil from equipment is in progress. The Paradise D4 project is scheduled for completion in 2028.

All D4 work supporting Strategic Real Estate & Governance will conclude in 2021. To date, the team has leveled more than 100,000

square feet of roof space across the Valley during the four-year effort that first began in 2017. One of the structures to fall was Sequoyah Nuclear Plant’s Overlook Building.

The D4 team is supporting demolition of the three Buffalo Mountain wind turbines, which were installed in 2000. The team also is helping Strategic Realty plan the safe removal of several buildings on the Muscle Shoals Reservation.

Decommissioning work is a year-round, multiyear activity.

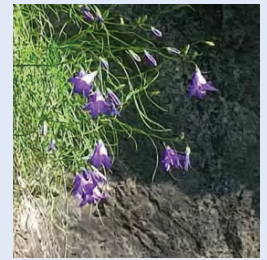
“The process of decommissioning a plant takes time, vigilant work, and a common goal – safety – to be successful,” says Bob Deacy, Senior VP, Generation Projects & Fleet Services. “I am proud of the work of our D4 team and the mission we accomplish for TVA.”

### TVA drone footage captures rare plants

TVA drones documented a rare cluster of Common Harebell plants growing on a river bluff near Decatur, Tenn., this summer. The special project — funded by TVA Natural Resources — came one year after TVA botanists Adam Dattilo and David Nestor noticed in drone footage a few unusual blue flowers hanging from a rock outcrop, about 15 or 20 feet above the ground.

They first saw the cliff-dwelling plant in May 2019, while investigating reports of endangered-plant species occurring in the area. Neither of them had ever seen this species before, and they immediately thought they had found something unusual. But after surveying the cliff from the base, Dattilo and Nestor realized they were never going to be able to see the mysterious blue flower close in that location.

With a long stick, the two dislodged a perfect specimen — roots, stem, leaves, a single flower, and all. After careful examination, they ultimately identified the plant as Common Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*).



“This species is new to the state of Tennessee,” Dattilo says. “And our sample may be the only one ever collected, because no other plants are within reach from the ground. Other botanists could get a sample, but they would have to rappel from the 200-foot bluff to reach the rock outcrops where the species grows.”

To survey the site safely, Dattilo contacted TVA Natural Resources & Conservation Specialist Heather Hart and Manager of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Operations & Training Walt Hodges. Together, the teams sprouted a plan to launch drones from a boat to conduct a search for more plants. Natural Resource Management West staff members Mark Odom and Drew Lyles offered their services to captain the boats from which the drones were launched.

By hovering 200 feet off the ground, three to four feet away from the bluff, the drone survey would use hi-resolution imagery to remove all human-safety hazards.

It took a little over a year for all three TVA departments to get everything ready for the project. When James Manni and Nigel Jones, program managers of UAS, manned the drones, they observed several dozen of the species growing in new locations on the cliff side.

#### TVARS Team Committed to Service...continued from page 1

pandemic, TVARS has remained committed to its investment strategy, which aided the recovery.

During the same time period, TVARS assets were about \$7.7 billion.

The annualized investment performance over the past three-, five-, and 10-year periods has been 5.4, 5.5, and 7.8 percent, respectively.

#### 7th Director Selection

The Selection Committee has continued to make progress toward its goal of having a seventh TVARS Board Director approved by the end of 2020. The committee planned to notify the applicants in August about next steps.

#### Bank of New York Mellon

To access your monthly direct-

deposit statements online, visit [bnym.accessmyretirement.com](https://bnym.accessmyretirement.com) and log in or create your account using your 15-digit BNYM account number found on any statement. On this website, you also can update your address, tax-withholding, or direct-deposit information.

For assistance, call BNY Mellon toll-free at 1-844-545-1256.

# More Choice, Flexibility for Medicare-Eligible Retirees

By **JERRY LANDON**, Senior Program Manager, TVA Healthcare Plans

TVA is pleased to announce changes to its retiree medical-plan rules, which will provide retirees with more choice and flexibility when it comes to selecting a Medicare-supplement plan. The changes are effective Jan. 1, 2021.

As a result of discussions with TVARA and in response to retiree requests, a Medicare-eligible retiree's dependent not covered by Medicare will be able to remain covered by one of the TVA/BlueCross group health-insurance plans, regardless of whether the Medicare-eligible retiree enrolls in any additional health insurance through Via Benefits or any other source.

Further, retirees who purchased additional health insurance through Via Benefits, dropped that insurance, and then later re-enrolled through Via Benefits, will be allowed again to receive a TVA contribution to their Health Reimbursement Account.

Any Medicare-eligible retiree interested in getting his or her spouse or dependent back on a TVA/BlueCross group plan or in regaining HRA funding should contact TVA Benefits by toll-free phone at 1-888-275-8094 or by email at [TVAEmployeeBenefits@tva.gov](mailto:TVAEmployeeBenefits@tva.gov).

## Some rules aren't changing

Medicare-eligible retirees not purchasing insurance through Via Benefits will continue to be ineligible for an HRA

contribution. Also, a retiree's Healthcare Credit amount will be reduced if a Medicare-eligible dependent does not purchase additional insurance through Via Benefits. Finally, retirees or dependents who end TVA/BlueCross group medical coverage by canceling their coverage or due to nonpayment cannot re-enroll in the group plans.

## Shop around every year

All Medicare-eligible retirees are encouraged to call Via Benefits every year to discuss health-insurance options. Retirees also should discuss options with their State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and other insurance companies or insurance brokers. Retirees especially are encouraged to shop their Part D, Prescription Drug Plan, every year if they have one.

All retirees "aging in" to Medicare will be given an estimate by letter of their Healthcare Credit, if any, as a result of being covered by Medicare. When retirees or their dependents "age in" to Medicare, the Healthcare Credit that TVA provides will be reduced often because of the retiree's decreased total costs. An estimate of the new Healthcare Credit will be provided to retirees or their dependents as they approach Medicare-eligible age.

We hope these changes will provide retirees with better information and greater flexibility when making health-insurance decisions after aging out of the TVA group plan.

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## News for Non-Medicare Retirees

### Enrollment in a TVA medical plan

The election period for non-Medicare retirees to select their TVA medical-plan option for 2021 is Oct. 14-Nov. 3.

The same two plans — 80% PPO and Consumer-Directed Health Plan (CDHP) — will be available.

Election materials will be mailed to each enrolled retiree's home in early October. The materials will include information on 2021 plan changes and premiums.

Retirees should start planning now. Remember, if you want to change your election, be sure to do so by Nov. 3.

### Watch your HSA balance

Eligible participants in the CDHP can take advantage of a Health Savings Account. Please note that accounts with a zero balance and no activity for six months or more are closed by HSA Bank. In order to be eligible for the 2021 TVA contribution to your HSA, you must have an active account on Jan. 1, 2021.

Call HSA Bank toll-free at 1-844-650-8934 if you are concerned that your account may have been closed.

If your account has been closed due to inactivity, call a TVA Benefit Specialist toll-free at 1-888-275-8094 to have it reopened. Accounts closed for other reasons will need to be reopened by HSA Bank.

— JERRY LANDON

## Contacting TVA Benefits

In response to the pandemic, the TVA Benefits staff has been working remotely since mid-March. The staff is committed to supporting you and your family and can still be reached toll-free at 1-888-275-8094 or [TVAEmployeeBenefits@tva.gov](mailto:TVAEmployeeBenefits@tva.gov). Mail delivery, however, is delayed, and retirees are encouraged to submit paperwork via email or by fax to 865-632-9682.

## Open Enrollment Coming Soon for Medicare Retirees

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Open Enrollment for Medicare plans will be held Oct. 15-Dec. 7. During this time, you can change your Medicare health-plan and prescription-drug coverage for 2021.

If you purchased an insurance plan through Via Benefits, you will be receiving more information from that company this fall.

Be sure to review all materials that your current insurer may send, such as the Evidence of Coverage and Annual Notice of Change, to

ensure they still meet your needs for 2021. You don't have to do anything if no changes are needed. You will remain in the plan in which you currently are enrolled.

If you do want to make a change or are interested in learning about the options available to you, call Via Benefits toll-free at 1-844-620-5725 or your State Health Insurance Assistance Program toll-free at 1-877-801-0044 (for Tennessee) during the Open Enrollment period beginning Oct. 15.

— JERRY LANDON

## Reach Out and Touch Someone – *Virtually* By DR. STEVE CHARDOS

There is much that could be shared about physical and emotional wellbeing during this pandemic. And a lot of this type of information is readily available on TV and on the internet.

So I decided I wanted to share just one thought, one takeaway, one practical thing you can do about improving your health during this troubled time.

Loneliness is a significant risk factor for several health conditions. For folks such as retirees, this can be a challenge in the best of times, but it is even more so during this pandemic.

As I thought about the point I wanted to share, an old slogan popped into my head. I could not remember where it came from. So I looked it up. Some of you may recall it immediately. The slogan is **“Reach out and touch someone.”**

What I found from my search was that this slogan was used by AT&T around 40 years ago to encourage folks to make long-distance phone calls.

With all the social distancing now taking place, one of the most effective things we can do for others and for ourselves is to simply Reach Out and Touch Someone.

Since we currently cannot do that literally, we need to reach out virtually by email, text, FaceTime, Zoom, or, better yet, with what now is considered an old-fashioned method — with a phone call. (Some might find FaceTime and Zooming a bit invasive.)

I suspect all of us, during a difficult time in our lives, have been on the receiving end of someone saying, “If you need anything, just give me a call.”

As sincere as that is meant by the person saying it, it usually is not followed up by the person receiving it. When folks are really hurting, they tend not to make that call. So I am encouraging you to reach out proactively and touch someone.

Think of those you used to work with or knew at TVA, and then just reach out to them. Ask them how they are doing, share a little on how you are doing. All of you, right now, if you took a few moments could think of people you know who would appreciate your reaching out to them.



DR. STEVE CHARDOS

And do not worry about what to say. Remember, it is **“Contact over Content.”**

Imagine what it would be like if later today you received a call from someone you may not have heard from in a while. Something like: “Hey Steve, I was just thinking about some folks I used to work with and wanted to see how you are doing with all this craziness.” It will not matter if no profound thoughts are shared. It is the contact, not the content, that will be remembered and have the most impact and benefit. Even a brief contact.

By this time in our lives, most of us have spent some time in a hospital. I suspect you can remember folks coming by to visit with you. You were likely to recall their visit fondly for the rest of that day and maybe even longer.

It is not as likely that you would have remembered what was said. It was the contact, not the content, that was important. Even a brief visit.

Most of you can remember the tornadoes that ripped through the TVA region back in 2011. Tom Kilgore was TVA's Chief Executive Officer then. The day after the tornadoes, someone proposed to Tom that TVA publish a phone number for TVA folks impacted by the tornadoes to call if they needed help.

However, Tom said we should get a list of TVA people who we knew needed help and then have someone reach out to them individually to assess their needs. What a terrific idea! The impacted folks who were contacted were pleased that TVA had taken the initiative to reach out to them.

So in a similar vein I am encouraging you to consider taking the initiative to reach out and touch someone.

And, as an added benefit, those reaching out also receive health benefits for themselves. So both the receiver of the call and the person making the call can benefit healthwise from the contact.

Therefore, again, the thought for today is “Reach out and touch someone” — a former TVA friend or co-worker or maybe another family member or friend.

Remembering, the benefit is in the **contact**, not in the **content**.  
*Dr. Steve Chardos is a retired psychologist and TVA retiree.*

# BVI Provides Funding To Help TVARA Help Valley Food Banks

By PENNY WALKER,  
TVARA Volunteer Project Coordinator

As a result of the recent hardships created by COVID-19, Bicentennial Volunteers Inc. made the decision to provide some monetary relief to the citizens by offering each TVARA chapter a grant to be used toward support of their local food banks.

The food banks have been struggling to feed more and more people during this time of the coronavirus.

“We wanted to help the food banks so they can continue to feed the many people in need,” says Jim Russell, BVI President.

The funds have been donated to more than 50 food pantries ranging from large food-bank distribution centers to small community pantries, located in five states.

“The TVARA chapters offer their sincere appreciation to BVI for providing aid to all the area food banks that have benefited from their generous contribution,” says TVARA Valleywide President Vickie Ellis. “The gratitude expressed by the organizations receiving the financial support has been overwhelming.”



TVARA's Joan Marsh (second from left) and Henry Long (far right), after presenting check to, from left, Sheffield, Ala., Eklesia Missionary Baptist Church's Katenia Fitzgerald, Dr. Kobbie Fitzgerald, Alene Harris, and Annie Fitzgerald



Les Bay, TVARA East Tennessee Chapter President, presents a check to Will Shewey of the Shades of Grace Food Ministry in Kingsport, Tenn.

## BVI Awards Banquet Canceled Due to COVID-19

By KRISTEN DAVIS

Bicentennial Volunteers Inc. has announced that it regrets it has had to cancel this year's BVI Awards Banquet. The annual event originally was scheduled for Sept. 17 at the Chattanooga Hotel.

The banquet is held each year to honor retirees who are active in BVI. This includes those who perform BVI volunteer work, as well as those engaged in FEMA disaster-recovery work and TVA contract work.

The BVI Board of Directors canceled the banquet after careful consideration of the possible risk to attendees.

“Our audience is made up of TVA retirees,” says BVI President Jim Russell. “This age group is considered ‘at risk’ for the coronavirus, so we felt it would be best to call off the event.”

Many retirees who attend the banquet are volunteers at TVA visitor centers. In March of this year, TVA announced the centers would be closed for the season due to the pandemic.

“We look forward to the time when we can return to normal and resume our volunteer work,” Russell says. “The volunteers perform a great service for TVA.”

## Has Your Contact Information Changed?

Did you recently change your email address or phone number? If so, go to [mytvara.org/your-current-membership-information/](https://mytvara.org/your-current-membership-information/) and correct the appropriate data. If you have changed your home address recently, notify the TVA Retirement System in writing. Also, you can change your home address through the Bank of New York Mellon website: [bnym.accessmyretirement.com](https://bnym.accessmyretirement.com).





# TVA Drawn into D.C.'s Turbulent Times

By JUSTIN MAIERHOFER, TVA Vice President, Government Relations



JUSTIN MAIERHOFER

If you've been watching television or reading newspapers this summer, you likely know there has been significant attention on TVA in Washington. We in Government Relations would like to share with you information we have as of the publication of this newsletter.

On Aug. 3, President Trump issued an Executive Order regarding federal contracting and hiring practices. He specifically noted TVA's latest Information Technology reorganization effort, with impacted TVA workers present at the signing event.

At the same time, the President formally removed two members from the TVA Board of Directors, Chairman Skip Thompson and outgoing Director Richard Howorth, whose term had expired in May but who was serving until the end of the calendar year or until his replacement was appointed.

Shortly after the President's actions, TVA Chief Executive Officer Jeff Lyash and Interim Board Chair John Ryder traveled to Washington and met with White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and White House Counsel Pat Cipollone. The purpose was to discuss the shared desire to preserve and grow U.S. jobs, and to relay that TVA would rescind its decision to lay off workers as part of the IT-restructuring process.

TVA committed to the White House that employees have good opportunities throughout TVA's employment and supply-chain practices. As CEO Lyash emphasized, "TVA will not lose sight of any facet of TVA's mission of service — providing low-cost, reliable power, while also serving to protect American jobs and create economic development across the Tennessee Valley."

In addition to continuing to work with the administration on these issues, TVA is working with the Senate as its members consider nominees to fill empty spots on the TVA Board.

On Jan. 28, the President nominated former Speaker of the Tennessee House of Representatives Beth Harwell and President of East Tennessee State University Dr. Brian Noland to serve on the TVA Board. On April 6, he also nominated the Acting Deputy Assistant Attorney General at the Justice Department, Katherine Crytzer, to serve as TVA's Inspector General.

All three nominees testified together on May 19 before the Senate Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Clean Air and Nuclear Safety, and on July 1 the nominees were voted on favorably, clearing the Senate EPW

Committee. The next step in the process is for the Senate as a whole to vote on these nominations.

During the first week of August, President Trump also nominated Charles W. Cook, a telecommunications executive from Mississippi, to fill Richard Howorth's seat. Cook's confirmation process will begin in early fall when the Senate returns to Washington from August recess.

It will be a busy fall for Congress, with much regular work to do, as well as presidential and congressional elections taking place Nov. 3.

Negotiations on a fourth COVID-19 relief package have been tense, with Republicans and Democrats unable to close on major portions of the potential bill, including unemployment benefits, state and local funding, and, of course, the ultimate pricetag.

After negotiations stalled for yet another time, President Trump on Aug. 8 issued an executive order and three memoranda dealing with unemployment benefits, protections for renters and homeowners, a payroll-tax deferral, and a deferral of student loans. It was not immediately understood whether or when Congress would renew talks to provide legislative solutions to the pandemic's health and economic impacts.

However, with campaigns heating up heading into November, the calendar is crowded.

In the Valley, we are watching a number of interesting races in our delegation, including seven incumbent senators up for re-election: Kelly Lynn Loeffler (R-GA), Mitch McConnell (R-KY), David Perdue (R-GA), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Doug Jones (D-GA), Mark Warner (D-VA), and Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS).

And, notably, there are several members of the delegation who are either retiring this year or who have moved on to take other positions in government including Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and representatives Phil Roe (R-TN), Mark Meadows (R-NC), and Doug Collins (R-GA).

While there is potential for a great deal of change in our seven-state region, we are closely tracking the House, Senate, and presidential races and preparing for all outcomes as they relate to TVA's mission of service going forward.

The TVA Government Relations team looks forward to continuing to represent the interests of TVA in Washington, and we appreciate and are grateful for TVA retirees' support and for our engagement with local, state, and federally elected officials across the seven states we serve.

Lots of fun, food, and walkin', touring

# THE BALKANS



By CHARLES VAN BEKE

For the past several years my wife, Sherry, and I have taken our two teenage granddaughters, Caroline and Katherine, on Sierra Club hiking trips in Spain and Italy.

Okay, for our most recent trip the girls wanted to go to Paris, or London, or such, just like their more well-heeled friends.

"Nope" I said. "We're going to make your friends really jealous. We're going to Tirana, and Zagreb, and Ljubljana.

"What?" came their response. "Where are they?"

So off we went to learn of the little-known — to most Americans — history, culture, and food of the Balkans.

The Balkan region generally consists of the five nations formerly making up Yugoslavia (Land of the South Slavs) and Albania.

Tirana is the capital of Albania. Folks my age remember Albania as that godawful brutal communist dictatorship on permanent lockdown from the rest of the world. Well,



Charles and Sherry Van Beke

today's Albania exceeded, by far, all of my expectations.

(But, beware, lots of steps and largely nonexistent handrails.)

First, as a "civilized world" pedestrian, I experienced a real shock getting used to the traffic. Obey traffic lights and crosswalks, but if none are present, just step off the curb. Don't hesitate, just do it, and traffic comes to a halt.

What? No dodging cars, trucks, buses? A bit unnerving at first and having to get used to, but it really worked! Talk about civilized.

And the cost of living, at least for our American pocketbooks, is cheap, Cheap, CHEAP. One night for dinner, Sherry and I shared a large spinach-and-shrimp soup, a large fresh salad, a platter of perfectly grilled squid, and three beers for 22,500 LEK, about 22 U.S. dollars. And sidewalk cafes abound.

Architecturally, Tirana is interesting. Pre-WWII imperial Albania was heavily influenced by Italy, so the large government



Typical Adriatic coastal town — this one on Kotor Bay in Montenegro

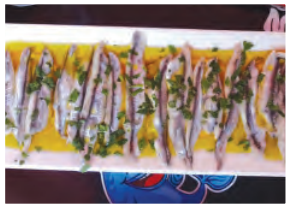




Delicious and varied food could be found at every turn.

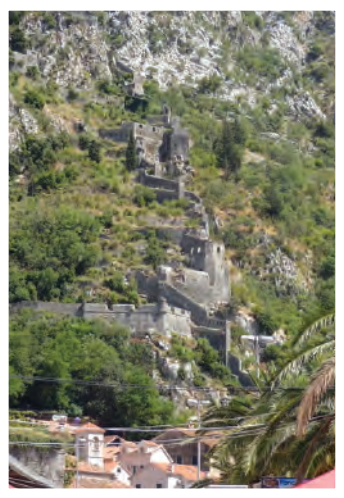


buildings, museums, and mansions are like those found in Italy. Then came the post-WWII drab communist structures. Now, more modern European styles.



While in Tirana, we took two daytrips to learn of Albania's long history going back to the Pre-Roman and Greek Illyrians. (While the other Balkan countries were populated by waves of Slavs, Albanians bristle at being called Slavs.)

We visited ancient castles and fortifications and delightful small cities. We purchased a small throw rug right off the loom of a local woman for \$15 while visiting the castle in Berat. The castle commanded the Osum River far below, and the town terraced up the mountainside.



City wall around Kotor, Montenegro, encloses the city and the adjacent mountain.

Because you can see them all from the riverside, the city is known as the Town of a Thousand Windows.

Our other daytrip was to Kruja and the Sanderbeg Castle.

Sanderbeg's name is found everywhere in Albania. He is a national hero, a medieval warrior whose army successfully fought off Ottoman invaders for decades.

For those of you who do not know me, I am a "foodie." Never met a food I didn't like, except sea urchins in Japan.

Every trip I take photos of all of our meals. Crazy, huh? Well, anyway, our guide in Albania seemed to make it his mission to have us try as many local dishes as possible, so our lunches and dinners were family-style. That meant dish after dish of mainly vegetarian options — stuffed zucchini, stuffed peppers, stuffed eggplant, grilled veggies, plus grilled lamb or chicken, and rich desserts. Accompanying each meal were homemade bread with homemade yogurt or cheese spread and, for me, the local beer.

During the trip we visited five countries (we did not go to Serbia) and had to make that many border crossings. At the Albania-Montenegro crossing, the line of traffic was very, very long. Our guide jumped off the bus, ran to the head of the line, spoke with his friend who was the supervisor of the station, and ran back to the bus. We then pulled out of line and drove past 50 or 60 other vehicles, much to their occupants' chagrin, I am sure. Nice to have friends in high places.

On the deep-water bay of Kotor in Montenegro sits the walled city of Kotor. I have been to a number of walled cities and the Great Wall of China, but this wall is the most unusual because it runs along the sea, then snakes very steeply up the mountain, then back down to the sea.

It is so steep that I didn't climb it, which, for me, was quite unusual. For lunch, Sherry and I each had a large bowl of mussels and a cold beer. Yummy. I don't recall what the

*Continued on next page*





The corner in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated, sparking WWI



Veliki Tabor Castle in Zagorje, Croatia

girls had, but we all topped it off with gelato as we finished touring the not-too-large city.

Worth the visit.

Okay, so everyone in the world wants to visit Dubrovnik, probably the most famous walled city in the world. For me, it was my least favorite part of the trip except for the daytrips there.

While the city and its fortifications are really impressive and quite beautiful, the crowds were elbow-to-elbow and the city was wall-to-wall with souvenir shops.

Also, I love to stay in rural mom-and-pop hotels. Here we stayed in a four- or five-star mega hotel on the Adriatic a short bus ride from the city. The hotel did, however, have the most extensive buffet I have ever experienced. Probably a dozen stations.

Not being a meat-and-potatoes guy, I confined myself to the marinated seafood bar, grilled peppers, salads, and, of course, small portions of several desserts.

Well, maybe Dubrovnik isn't so bad after all — just don't go during the high tourist season.

One evening when the four of us decided to eat a late dinner on the plaza overlooking the Adriatic, a small creature scurried across the walkway. A rat? Nope, a hedgehog. I had never seen one in the wild before, well, sort of the wild.

I mean, here we were in the Mediterranean area — the Adriatic and Ionian seas are part of the Mediterranean — so

I decided to take a swim. I waded in up above my knees, couldn't feel my legs because of the cold temperature of the water, and retreated. Never did get to swim in the Adriatic. The girls did, just so they could tell their friends they had. Ah, to be young again.

During the Balkan War of the early 1990s when Yugoslavia convulsed into its five constituent parts, Croatian Dubrovnik was under siege by the Serb portion of the fractured Yugoslav Army and Navy.

We visited the top of the adjoining mountain where the small force of Croat militia fought off the Soviet-armed Serb forces from a Napoleonic-era fort. By night, casualties were carried down the steep mountainside, and small boats evaded the Serb Navy to bring supplies to the besieged city.

We were able to spend time with one of those former teen-aged militiamen, a deserter from the Yugoslav Army who filled us in on the history of the conflict and his experiences. Then, off we went into the countryside for an absolutely delightful lunch at a family-owned farm restaurant.

Our host was a real character, funny, informative, and a musician. At the end of the Balkan War, he and his family returned to their totally destroyed homeplace and built an apparently thriving business.

Family members and one employee make cold pressed extra virgin olive oil from their own trees; red, white, and dessert wines; dried fruits; and more. They also have created a heritage museum onsite. Our lunch started with their homemade olive pate, veal pate, hummus, and pork chitlins.

## Dubrovnik, Croatia





Voila! Cheese for breakfast



Our "hotel"  
on a farm

Our farm  
in Karanac,  
Croatia

The pates were special! Then came platters of their own cheeses and smoked meats. I've had lots of smoked meats in Spain and Italy, but these were something else. Then salad.

Finished? Not by a long shot. Platters of veal and really, really good lamb with potatoes and vegetables. All this with beer, house wines, or soft drinks. Then, oh no, still more — very strong Turkish-like coffee and dessert.

During the meal we were serenaded by accordion-and-guitar folk songs. Did I mention that it was an extended lunch period, a couple of hours long? The bus ride back was exceptionally quiet except for a bit of snoring. No dinner that night.

The next day we began our trip through Bosnia and Herzegovina, another one of the constituent states of the former Yugoslavia. We stopped for lunch in Mostar, a city bitterly fought-over by the Serbs and Muslims.

You may have seen photos of the famous arch Stari Most (Old Bridge) spanning the Neretva River. Tasty lunch, but city worth a lunch stop and nothing more.

Our next stop was the capital city of Sarajevo, where we spent two nights and very busy days. Well worth the visit.

The city had been a crossroads of the Ottoman Empire, and Muslims, Jews, and Orthodox Christians had lived together in harmony for centuries. Best known, until now, as the city where Archduke Ferdinand of the Hapsburg rulers of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was assassinated in 1914 by Serbian nationalists, setting off WWI. Of course, being good tourists, we were photographed on the very spot of the assassination.

Today, Sarajevo is a delightful city, fully restored from almost total destruction during the 1,425-day siege during the Balkan War. Thousands of its citizens were killed by Serb forces, including about 2,000 children picked off by Serb snipers as the boys and girls tried to play or forage for fresh water and food.

One of my lasting memories there is a statue of a father with his hands cupped around his mouth, calling for a never-to-return child. The statue is in a small park dedicated to the lost children, whose names are inscribed there. If you are ever to be moved emotionally, this might be the place.

We spent one afternoon with a woman who survived the entire siege. While she is now very cheerful and upbeat, she said she found it hard to overcome the bitterness she felt, because the entire world witnessed the carnage through daily newsreels but stood by and did nothing.

In one museum and in the basement of a bookstore, I watched some of those newsreels. The Bosnians survived by digging a half-mile tunnel under the siege line through which they evacuated the seriously wounded and brought in supplies and fresh fighters.

One evening our group split into three groups to enjoy a home-hosted dinner. Ours was with a 50-some-year-old woman who had escaped with her eight-month-old daughter. Her husband stayed behind to fight but later escaped, also. She was delightful and served a good meal. The highlight, however, was the discovery that she shared a birthday with our Katherine. Lots of hugs.

The city is heavily Muslim, but you would never know it.

*Continued on next page*



Memorial in Sarajevo engraved with the names of 521 children who were killed during the 1992-95 siege



This statue depicts a father calling for his son, one of the slain children.

Colorful head scarves, maybe, but the only burkas were worn by tourists from the Middle East. It is also the world headquarters of the Bektashi sect of Islam (during the war, the headquarters was in Detroit). Its mosque was the only one I have ever been in that did not have minarets. That's because there is no call to prayer. In this sect you pray when the spirit moves you — daily, weekly, monthly, whenever, not the otherwise-required five times a day.

The basement is a very nice museum. For me, and all of us, Sarajevo was one of the highlights of the trip. Oh, lots of good food there, too.

Onward to the Slavonia region of eastern Croatia, once the breadbasket of the Austria-Hungarian Empire along the Danube plains. There we spent a very busy day and night with another self-sufficient family in the farming village of Karanac. Our rooms were former stables. There we walked the countryside, and the girls made cheese that we had for breakfast the following morning.

Caroline made bread before breakfast. The girls pitted plums for preserves, and I helped stir the large pot of boiling plums during a brandy-making process. Before breakfast, I gathered eggs from the coop and picked vegetables. I absolutely fell in love with this place and with hosts Denis and Goca, dogs Luna and Frida, and Mishko the cat. Wonderful food, delightful family.

Like many other farming villages, homes are for sale everywhere as young folks head for the cities and non-farm jobs.

Again we separated and had dinner with various families in the village. I do not know about the others, but ours was a family and meal to remember. Everything was homemade. The young woman and her parents farm 120 acres with a dozen dairy cows, plus pigs, orchards, and gardens. Basically they make their living selling at the market in the nearby city. I'd like to return and spend a week there.



Charlie, cooking plums at farm stay, says this is real work.

Okay, another long bus ride until we reached the Croatian capital city of Zagreb. What an upbeat,



Caroline (left) and Katherine pitting plums for use as preserves or brandy

happening place. Sidewalk cafes everywhere, glorious architecture from the Empire period, museums, walking, walking, walking.

Of course, this is Europe, so gelato. In our favorite gelato place — Sherry and I had been to Zagreb on a previous trip — which had, and I counted, 48 flavors. Paradise on Earth.

Our local guide visits the United States twice a year to run, including the 240-miler from Santa Monica to Las Vegas. Not an ounce of fat on this guy.

We enjoyed the native, that is, primitive art museum and especially the very unusual museum of broken relationships, which features heartfelt writings and physical objects from those relationships. Ordinary people can be very insightful and articulate in expressing feelings of loss. Of course, we visited museums of modern and classical art, as well.

Finally, streetcars everywhere, never out of sight. Talk about convenient public transport. I love Zagreb. Can you tell?

On the way from Zagreb to the seaside city of Opatija, we visited Croatia's most-visited national park, Plitvice Lakes, where we walked for several hours observing waterfalls, tumbling crystal-clear waters, and tourists. At the end, we took a boat ride across the largest of the lakes. A very pleasant way to spend a day during the searing summer heat.

Opatija was THE summer home for the elite of the Hapsburg Empire. The mansions remain, lining the streets closest to the sea. Our hotel was once one of those family mansions, which, happily, are not being torn down for new hotels.

While there we took a daytrip into the interior of the Istrian Peninsula, where we met up with a truffle-hunter and her dog and had a delightful lunch — delicious panna cotta with stewed plums — at another *agroturismo* overlooking one of the many old hill towns in the region.

On the way back to town, we stopped at a distillery and sampled three brandies and a variety of jams.

The next day we were off to Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, the city known as the "Green Capital of Europe." Like Zagreb, a city that WWI, WWII, and the Balkan War never touched. No heavy industries, so not worth bombing.

Slovenia was the first country to secede from Yugoslavia, largely for economic reasons. Not having a Serb population and being farthest from Serbia, it was the largest and most powerful of the Yugoslav republics. Its war only lasted about two weeks, without any casualties to speak of, as the Yugoslav Army withdrew to friendlier territory.

Sherry and I were pleased to return to this absolutely

*Continued on page 16*

# Car Talk—Turning an Insight into a Dream

By JIM ANDREWS

When TVA retiree Mark Bishop of Clinton, Tenn., bought a 2000 Honda Insight, it wasn't because he wanted a hybrid car.

"I wasn't interested in a hybrid automobile," he says. "I was interested in having a lightweight, aerodynamic automobile that could be turned into pure electric drive.

"The Honda Insight was a two-passenger hybrid, introduced in 2000. Production continued through 2006, resulting in a total of about 17,000 units."

Bishop, who was an Associate Engineer in Power System Operations from 1981-2006 in Corryton, Tenn., and at Bull Run Fossil Plant, says the Insight's lightweight chassis was very aerodynamic.

"The original power plant achieved about 70 miles per gallon," he says.

Bishop purchased his Insight in New Jersey in late



Mark Bishop and his 2000 Honda Insight

2013 and converted it to pure electric drive from March through July of 2014.

"The three-phase, four pole induction motor and controller are built by HPEVS Co. in California," he says. "I used a surplus lithium battery from an Israeli Nissan Renault. The battery fits nicely among existing spars (one upper and two lower), behind the seats."

He says the conversion also required a battery-management system, a battery-charger, a throttle, and a dc-dc converter for a 12vdc supply.

"The motor has a peak power of 84 horsepower and a range of 90 miles at a conservative speed of 60 mph," Bishop says. "It has surpassed 40,000 miles in six years of daily driving, plus two trips to Missouri.

"It is a delight to drive and requires very little maintenance."



A look under the hood of Bishop's aerodynamic prize



**More car talk?** If you have an old car, truck, motorcycle, jeep, or whatever type of vintage vehicle and would like to share stories about it in *TVARA News*, contact Theresa Habiger at [thabiger@charter.net](mailto:thabiger@charter.net).

## TVARA Staff Carrying on...continued from page 1

to provide funding to community food banks across the Tennessee Valley. During the pandemic, food banks/pantries are in need of funding to provide food to the many schoolchildren and families who cannot afford basic needs. Penny Walker, our Volunteer Project Coordinator, has written a great article highlighting the many food

pantries we have helped. Take a minute to enjoy the travel article written by Charles Van Beke about his and wife Sherry's travels to the Balkans and maybe envision a trip for yourself.

We appreciate your membership in TVARA. For those of you who have not renewed your dues or would like

to join for the first time, please see the information in this newsletter.

TVARA staff members carry on their work from home, but we are still able to respond to your questions or concerns via phone calls and emails. Thank you for your patience.

Stay safe and stay well ...

# In Memoriam

May 1, 2020 – July 31, 2020

TVA Retirement Management received notifications of the deaths of the following retirees for the period May 1, 2020, through July 31, 2020, as well as other previously unreported deaths. They are listed with the date of death (and date of retirement). To report the death of a retiree, call the TVA Retirement System toll-free at 1-800-824-3870.

<b>Anderson, Charles E.,</b> 6/27/2020 (1/1/1995)	<b>Grider, Terry L.,</b> 6/14/2020 (5/29/2004)	<b>Leake, Warner,</b> 7/17/2020 (7/11/1986)	<b>Shands, Charles O.,</b> 5/18/2020 (3/1/1997)
<b>Arnold, Ronald G.,</b> 6/29/2020 (12/31/2009)	<b>Hale, James A.,</b> 6/19/2020 (11/16/1991)	<b>Lee, Gary W.,</b> 5/2/2020 (12/9/2006)	<b>Shook, Kenneth M.,</b> 4/18/2019 (6/6/2008)
<b>Ault, Willis L., Jr.,</b> 7/17/2020 (10/2/2005)	<b>Hale, Mildred C.,</b> 6/11/2020 (1/12/1991)	<b>Martin, David T.,</b> 6/18/2020 (8/27/1988)	<b>Sims, Curtis L.,</b> 6/24/2020 (8/6/2005)
<b>Banks, Willie J.,</b> 5/27/2020 (1/22/1988)	<b>Harbison, Billy J.,</b> 5/7/2020 (4/8/2000)	<b>McAlexander, Albert W.,</b> 5/25/2020 (5/31/1986)	<b>Sims, Willie P.,</b> 6/16/2020 (1/1/1999)
<b>Bennett, John R.,</b> 7/19/2020 (10/2/1993)	<b>Harrington, Nancy C.,</b> 7/10/2020 (10/6/1989)	<b>McCord, Michael C.,</b> 6/6/2020 (10/1/1996)	<b>Smith, Larry E.,</b> 4/9/2020 (5/4/1991)
<b>Betka, Jakub J.,</b> 4/21/2020 (4/2/2006)	<b>Harvey, Gary L.,</b> 6/11/2020 6/2/2007)	<b>McDougal, Ricky R.,</b> 4/28/2020 (4/4/1998)	<b>Stansbury, Bob W.,</b> 6/28/2020 (10/17/1994)
<b>Brooks, Edward A.,</b> 5/5/2020 (10/6/1994)	<b>Hayes, O'Brien D., Jr.,</b> 5/29/2020 (1/5/2008)	<b>Meneses, Gilbert G.,</b> 7/30/2020 (11/5/2011)	<b>Stiles, Benjamin D.,</b> 5/16/2020 (8/13/2011)
<b>Burnett, John L.,</b> 5/15/2020 (9/21/2001)	<b>Henson, Larry J.,</b> 7/17/2020 (1/8/2005)	<b>Moses, Frank H.,</b> 5/23/2020 (2/3/1986)	<b>Stone, Sherman L.,</b> 5/26/2020 (10/17/1994)
<b>Carpenter, Robert M.,</b> 5/14/2020 (1/12/1991)	<b>Holloway, Ronald E.,</b> 5/21/2020 (8/30/1991)	<b>Nugent, Johnnie L., Jr.,</b> 5/6/2020 (10/17/1994)	<b>Wallace, Lewis E.,</b> 6/24/2020 (1/3/1983)
<b>Clark, Judy A.,</b> 6/5/2020 (9/10/1989)	<b>Holt, James F.,</b> 6/23/2020 (11/21/1991)	<b>Oliver, Danny G.,</b> 5/16/2020 (1/7/2006)	<b>Wassum, David W.,</b> 7/10/2020 (10/15/1983)
<b>Crossett, Benny R.,</b> 5/15/2020 (9/9/2002)	<b>Hudson, John B.,</b> 5/1/2020 (1/7/1986)	<b>Park, David T., Jr.,</b> 4/21/2020 (11/8/2008)	<b>Watts, Stetzel L.,</b> 7/22/2020 (2/15/2012)
<b>Daniels, Malcolm L.,</b> 6/1/2020 (10/17/1994)	<b>Hudson, Joseph C.,</b> 7/27/2020 (11/12/2005)	<b>Puckett, John W.,</b> 5/28/2020 (5/31/1989)	<b>Wells, Bobby L.,</b> 5/11/2020 (8/27/1985)
<b>Dean, Robert D., Jr.,</b> 6/24/2020 (1/3/2014)	<b>Hurst, Billie J.,</b> 6/16/2020 (1/30/1988)	<b>Ramsay, Dwight T.,</b> 6/13/2020 (7/30/1988)	<b>Wilhelm, Dale V.,</b> 5/25/2020 (10/3/2003)
<b>Donegan, Gerald W.,</b> 5/17/2020 (11/2/2013)	<b>Isom, Tom H.,</b> 4/23/2020 (3/21/1971)	<b>Roberts, Leonard E., Jr.,</b> 4/24/2020 (4/5/2003)	<b>Wilkey, Melvin,</b> 5/21/2020 (5/4/2002)
<b>Edens, Victor G.,</b> 4/29/2020 (4/2/2007)	<b>Jaffe, Dorothy S.,</b> 7/1/2020 (5/31/1986)	<b>Roden, Bryan K.,</b> 5/16/2020 (11/24/2018)	<b>Wilkins, Clarence D.,</b> 6/3/2020 (1/17/1994)
<b>Fox, Frank J.,</b> 6/1/2020 (12/1/1988)	<b>Jarvis, Reginald B.,</b> 5/4/2020 (8/3/1996)	<b>Rogers, Charles W.,</b> 6/14/2020 (12/30/1989)	<b>Williams, Clarence R.,</b> 7/25/2020 (9/27/1997)
<b>Garrett, Charlie M.,</b> 7/5/2020 (9/7/1991)	<b>Kenmore, Wesley H.,</b> 5/25/2020 (1/24/1995)	<b>Scott, Doyle,</b> 6/8/2020 (10/17/1994)	<b>Woodland, Linda K.,</b> 6/4/2020 (9/20/2005)
<b>Green, Lucian L., Jr.,</b> 7/14/2020 (9/18/1982)	<b>Lankford, William R.,</b> 7/9/2020 (2/17/1990)	<b>Scott, Barbara M.,</b> 5/3/2020 (7/6/2000)	<b>Wynot, William A.,</b> 5/8/2020 (3/6/1982)

## Is It Time To Reset Your Insurance Plan...continued from page 1

on competing offers from insurers for the same plan, and/or you can contact independent agents, insurance brokers, or insurance-company representatives, and let them do the work in identifying replacement policies and premiums.

AND, don't forget to ask for discounts, such as when both spouses switch to the same insurer.

Give them a call. Many of you will be pleasantly surprised at what's possible.

This is especially true of the Medicare Supplemental plans, but also may be of value to those on Medicare Advantage plans.

However, do not cancel your old policy until you have the new one in hand.

More detailed information is available on the TVARA website under the Healthcare tab at [mytvra.org](http://mytvra.org) and at [medicare.gov/supplements-other-insurance/when-can-i-buy-medigap/switching-medigap-policies](http://medicare.gov/supplements-other-insurance/when-can-i-buy-medigap/switching-medigap-policies).

Speaking of premiums, Delta Dental reduced its premium for two months as a result of a credit for decreased use due to COVID-19.

# Upcoming September 2020 Chapter Meetings

At press time, TVARA chapters either had already canceled or postponed their September meetings due to the uncertainties presented by the coronavirus pandemic, or were waiting to decide whether to cancel.

The Knoxville Chapter, meanwhile, announced it was going to conduct a virtual meeting on Sept. 10, using the technology of Webex, a videoconferencing service.

These are the chapters that had not yet canceled their meetings when the September TVARA News went to press:

## CHATTANOOGA

**October 20, 2020, 10:30 a.m.**

(subject to cancellation)

Coffee and Donuts, 10 a.m.

*Brainerd United Methodist Church,  
Fellowship Hall, 4315 Brainerd Road*

- Healthcare Insurance Presentation by TVARA Health Committee Representative

Tom Swanson, President

423-344-6892/[twswanson@comcast.net](mailto:twswanson@comcast.net)

## HUNTSVILLE

**October 8, 2020, 10 a.m.**

*First Baptist Church, 500 Governors Drive  
Entrance 3 (front-left of Mosaic), Door Code 53158  
Straight back Room 250 on left (formally Parlor)*

- Program: Medical news

Daniel A. Simmons, President

256-509-9781/[dasimmon@bellsouth.net](mailto:dasimmon@bellsouth.net)

## JACKSON

**September 9, 9:30 a.m.**

*Southwest Electric Membership Corp.  
1590 Highway 70E*

- Guest Speaker: Brian Smith, TVA Customer Service Manager, TVA Update on West Tennessee

Alan Campbell, President

731-988-8814/[abclax@eplus.net](mailto:abclax@eplus.net)

## JOHNSONVILLE

**September 17, 2020**

**Socializing starting at 10 a.m., with meeting at 11 a.m.**

*Johnsonville State Park Museum,  
Redoubt Ridge,  
New Johnsonville, Tenn.*

- Annual Picnic catered by Big Daddy Restaurant
- TVA Retirement System Update
- Healthcare Benefits Update

Mickey Blackburn, President

931-209-1352/[mickeyblackburn@gmail.com](mailto:mickeyblackburn@gmail.com)

## KINGSTON

**September 28, 2020, 10:45 a.m.**

*Kingston Community Center, 201 Patton Ferry Road*

- Program: TBD

Marcus C. Melton Jr., President

865-388-3919/[mcmelton@nxs.net](mailto:mcmelton@nxs.net)

## KNOXVILLE

**September 10, 2020, 10 a.m.**

Virtual Meeting on Webex

Information will be sent to members on how to access Webex meeting

- Guest Speaker: Dr. Steve Chardos, "Physical & Emotional Wellbeing During Covid-19"

- TVA Retirement System Update

- Healthcare Benefits Update

Jo Anne Lavender, President

865-300-8272/[jllavender@tds.net](mailto:jllavender@tds.net)

## WATTS BAR

**September 14, 2020, 10:30 a.m.**

*United Methodist Church, Life Center,  
Spring City, Tenn.*

- Program: Speaker to be announced

- BBQ lunch, \$7 per person; reply to 423-365-9048 or email at [eddiekathleen@bellsouth.net](mailto:eddiekathleen@bellsouth.net)

Kathleen Garrison, President

423-365-9048/[eddiekathleen@bellsouth.net](mailto:eddiekathleen@bellsouth.net)

## WESTERN AREA

**September 16, 2020, 10:30 a.m.**

*Lake Barkley State Resort Park*

- Guest Speaker: Dennis S. Baxter, Manager, TVA River & Reservoir Compliance Monitoring Program, presenting Status of Asian Carp in the Tennessee Valley

- Free Lunch giveaway in Lake Barkley Dining Room, if it is open.

- Sure hope we can have this meeting. Be safe!

K. Renee Turnbow, President

270-205-5277/[krturnbow@gmail.com](mailto:krturnbow@gmail.com)

The following chapters have **CANCELED** September 2020 meetings because of COVID-19 concerns:

## BROWNS FERRY

Terry Chinn, President

256-230-3660/[terryandjanachinn@yahoo.com](mailto:terryandjanachinn@yahoo.com)

## CLEVELAND

John Austin, President

423-472-2720/[austintnuffan@charter.net](mailto:austintnuffan@charter.net)

## GALLATIN

Ronnie "Blue" Monday, President

615-325-9473/[ronniemonday@att.net](mailto:ronniemonday@att.net)

## MEMPHIS

David L. Teuton, President

901-212-3822/[davidteuton@yahoo.com](mailto:davidteuton@yahoo.com)

## MISSISSIPPI

Tim Meeks, President

256-366-2530/[meekestim100@yahoo.com](mailto:meekestim100@yahoo.com)

## MUSCLE SHOALS

Timothy "Tim" Cornelius, President

256-757-5220/[timwccornelius1@gmail.com](mailto:timwccornelius1@gmail.com)

## NASHVILLE

Jeff E. Gammons, President

931-729-9974/[y2kunderthehill@gmail.com](mailto:y2kunderthehill@gmail.com)

## NORTHEAST ALABAMA

Larry A. Hancock, President

256-437-8220/[lah35772@gmail.com](mailto:lah35772@gmail.com)

## PADUCAH AREA

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## Retiree Appreciation event called off due to pandemic

The TVA Retiree Appreciation Picnic/Luncheon scheduled for Sept. 18, 2020, has been canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Planners say they regret having to call off the annual event, but hope to have an "even bigger and better" get-together next year.

Many TVARA chapters already had canceled or postponed their September meetings, while others were waiting until closer to their scheduled date to decide whether or when to meet.



Please visit the TVARA website at [mytvvara.org](http://mytvvara.org) and hover your mouse over the tab "Local Chapters" to find your chapter. Click on your chapter to view meeting details and announcements.

## Renew Membership Today

We hope you found the information in this newsletter insightful.

It is never too late to renew your TVA Retirees Association membership for 2020, if you have not already done so. The address label on this page has an Expiration Date (EXP) for your membership. Please write a check for \$15 made payable to TVARA, if membership has expired, and mail to the following address:

TVARA  
400 W. Summit Hill Drive  
WT8C-K  
Knoxville, TN 37902

You also can pay for multiple years (\$15 per year), if you wish. Please write the Membership Identification (ID) number — found at the top of the address label — in the memo line on your check. Don't forget to sign your check.

We will send you the March and June issues upon receipt, along with the December issue when published.

Thank you for renewing your membership today!

### Walkin' in the Balkans...continued from page 12

delightful university city. The center is closed to vehicular traffic except for city-run electric golf-cart-type vehicles. Just raise a hand, and they'll take you wherever you want to go, free.

Recycle containers are plentiful and used. The city is a walker's dream — the river, cafes, cleanliness, architecture, unobtrusive souvenir shops.

On our last trip there, we had toured the country and hiked in the Julian Alps. This time, Sherry and I stayed in the city and let the girls take the group daytrip to Lake Bled.

The entire country seems to be underlain with karst formations, so massive caves are plentiful. Our last trip, we walked for miles underground. The cave we visited this time had a railroad tour, together with extensive walking.

If you like huge, colorful caverns, go to Slovenia.



Plitvice Lakes region of Slovenia

Finally, our farewell dinner — a great meal with folk dancers, music, and fun and games for everyone who wanted to participate. The girls joined in the folk dancing, and I played the hat game, similar to musical chairs, where a circle of folks passed their hats from head to head. I was cheated and did not win. But it sure was fun.

Up the next morning at 4 to head for the airport.

The girls can't wait for our next trip. It's my mission to teach them that there is so much of our world to experience. And it's working. Caroline will be attending George Washington University as an International Business major.

*After 22 years of service, Charles Van Beke retired from TVA in 1988 as Assistant General Counsel-Complex Litigation. Sherry Van Beke retired from TVA in 2002 after 30 years of service in the Office of the General Counsel.*