

IS THIS ANY WAY TO TREAT A RETIREE? THAT AIN'T RIGHT!

By Marilyn Irwin, CWA Local 2108 Vice President

After 34 years of service with Verizon as a Light Truck Driver in Logistics Management, **Calvin Robinson** retired in November, 2003 with the Enhanced Income Security Plan (EISP) offer. Calvin was a dedicated employee who was proud to work for Verizon, and his supervisors said he did a good job. Since November, though, every aspect of his retirement has been botched by Verizon and/or the Verizon Benefits Center (VBC).

Some of Calvin's celebrity friends hooked up with him for a surprise retirement celebration, and they were anxious to find out if he was enjoying himself since he quit working. In attendance at the gathering were **Chris Rock**, star of the movie "Head of State", "Weakest Link" hostess **Ann Robinson**, Shock-Jock **Howard Stern**, and the "American Idol" judges, **Paula**, **Randy** and **Simon**. The following conversation was overheard there:



An unhappy Calvin Robinson BEFORE going to his Local about major problems with his retirement.

Randy: Congrats on your retirement, Calvin! After 34 years you went for it!

Calvin: This should be a happy time for me, but it's been a nightmare since I retired. Everything that COULD go wrong HAS gone wrong. I was gone for over three months before I got any money at all!

Paula: Poor baby! Aren't you entitled to a pension after 34 years?

Calvin: I sure am, but I had to fight and fight with the VBC to get my monthly pension check. I retired in November, and didn't get my first pension until March! I called the VBC over and over, and all they would tell me is that they had to "investigate". I waited patiently and called back repeatedly, just to hear that they were still investigating. Lots of investigating, but no money.

Chris Rock: Are you telling me that they didn't give you a dime for three and a half months, after you worked for them for 34 years? **THAT AIN'T RIGHT!**

Calvin: They **FINALLY** started sending me my pension checks, but they're still two months behind.

Chris Rock: After all this time, and they're still not coughing up the dough? **THAT AIN'T RIGHT!**

Randy: How's a man supposed to live?

Calvin: Let's put it this way-----I usually buy a Honey Baked ham for Easter. Not this year. This Easter it was Spam!

Howard Stern: Those no good b*&@#%\$!!!

Calvin: If you think that was bad, what they did with my health insurance was even worse!

Paula: You retired with over 34 years of service. You should have company-paid health care coverage, right?

Calvin: I'm supposed to, but I was admitted as an in-patient in the hospital for several days when the hospital staff came into my room and told me that I didn't have any insurance! I was afraid they would kick me out of the hospital. I had to fight to get the medical care which I needed---the care my insurance is supposed to cover!

Chris Rock: Let me get this straight---You're laid up in the hospital, and you get told you don't have insurance? **THAT AIN'T RIGHT!**

Calvin: And **THEN**.....I went to the pharmacy to pick up my insulin and my blood pressure medicine, only to be told by the Pharmacist that my prescription coverage was "dropped". I had to pay cash for those life-saving drugs or go without them.

Chris Rock: Are you telling me that you would have had to go without your insulin and high blood pressure medicine if you didn't have the money to pay the full cost yourself? **THAT AIN'T RIGHT!**

Paula: You poor baby, you could have died.....

Simon: They're just not good enough to call themselves the Verizon Benefits Center. There's nothing **BENEFICIAL** about them!

Randy: Dawg, what they put you through.....

Howard Stern: F#@*%&\$!

Ann: The Verizon Benefits Center is the weakest link! They should go bye-bye!

Calvin: Verizon offered many of us with 30 or more years of service \$76,000 as an incentive to retire in November. It was because of that EISP offer that I decided to leave at that time. I have never received a penny of that \$76,000, and on April 1st a Verizon manager told me that I won't **EVER** get the money.

Paula: How can that be?

continued, see That Ain't Right, page 10

CWA



From The President's Desk

ELECTING TO SUCCEED

Each spring CWA hosts the **Annual Legislative Conference** in Washington, DC.

Delegates from CWA Locals across America converge on Washington DC to do the political business of our union. This year I attended the conference along with Local 2108 Vice-President **Jenny Sylvester**, Chief Steward **Jennifer Martin** and **Calvin Foster**, Legislative Director for the CWA Local 2108 Retired Members Club.

Our mission was to listen to the speeches of our elected guests, study and discuss the CWA position for each item on our legislative agenda, and to meet face to face with elected officials from our states.

The CWA Maryland State Council, led by CWA Local 2106 Officer **Maggie Young**, was very successful in attaining access to our elected leaders.

Among the issues we discussed were some that will impact or possibly will impact our jobs and careers. We spoke of keeping our jobs here in America by putting penalties on employers who choose to outsource our jobs overseas. We made it clear that we oppose proposed changes to the current overtime rules and asked that our friends continue the fight against them.

Healthcare for all and affordable prescription drugs were discussed in each meeting. We also made a point to explain why the most recent rulings on the UNE-P issues so important to us should not be overturned, and why it makes sense that the "competition" should have to share in the costs of doing business.



President Campbell visits with legislators at the Annual Legislative Conference in Washington, DC recently.

The CWADelegations from each state were very effective in getting the Union message across to our elected leaders, but we were reminded that in order for our friends in Washington to be able to effectively address and act on our issues, we will have to help our allies regain the majority in both the House and Senate and elect a new President.

Since the Bush Administration took office, most "Labor" friendly bills have taken a backseat to the "Big Business" agenda. Only by regaining control in the House and Senate can we hope to maintain what we have and regain that which we have lost.

Each and every speech from our elected representatives, including those from **Ted Kennedy** and **Hillary Clinton** included the message that this is the most important election in our lifetime. Never before have we seen such an anti-labor administration in office.

This administration is out to break the backbone of the American Labor Movement.

Recently, I mailed information to the home of each CWA Local 2108 member about the **CWA COPE Program**, along with a payroll deduction card. Soon, you will see CWAactivists in your workplace who can help you register to vote in the November elections. You will also see in our larger locations, a **CWA COPE** table where you can get your questions answered and sign up for the **COPE** Program.

Why is this important? By donating to **COPE** and voting in the upcoming election, you make it possible for Labor's candidates to get their message across to the voters and when they get elected, your Legislative Committee members to be invited in to explain in detail why our issues are so important to us and why we need our friends in the Congress and Senate to fight to get them passed.

Politics and Unionism work when we get involved. We will be successful if each member steps up and is willing to

"DO WHATEVER IT TAKES"

BOB

Communications Workers of America

2108 news

published monthly by
CWA Local 2108

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RMC 2108: The Retired Members Club

April Showers Bring out the Members

RMC 2108 members weren't daunted by the lousy weather we had in April. Rain and gray didn't stop the club from getting the news and enjoying each other.

Our Club opened on a somber note remembering our RMC member **Jim Martin**, who passed away in March. **Shirley Phelps** was kind enough to do a biography of Jim. Members who had not known Jim for long got to know a little bit more as President **Kathy Harrison** read Shirley's notes. As has been said before, Jim will be missed.



Gwendolyn, Virginia, and Ida talk about the meeting.

One thing that came out of this is that we will now have several people who volunteered to make calls when anything like this happens in the future. **Argie Strong** and **Gwendolyn Walker** stepped up and volunteered. Hopefully we won't have to use them too often but next time the word will get out in a timely fashion.

Our scheduled speaker, **Sue Zwicker**, of U.S. Fish and Wildlife was unable to attend due to a death in her family. That however didn't stop us from getting tons of info.

Calvin Foster, our Legislative Chair gave us the details of the CWA Legislative Conference he attended. He was able to meet with our representatives and show our concerns as retirees. Though much of the conference dealt with "active" employ issues, many of the speakers addressed Medicare privatization and how it must be stopped and Medicare protected. Healthcare could be the one issue that will mobilize the middle class. And is definitely the issue that mobilizes RMC2108.



Kenny Roach reports on community activities.

Kenny Roach is making headway on our club Directory. Just a reminder that if you **DO NOT WANT TO BE LISTED** you need to let us know. E-mail to RMC2108@aol.com or call the local at **301 459-2108**.

Handouts at the meeting included "How to Prevent ID Theft." The handout included everything you need to know about how to protect yourself. This was a follow up to last month's speaker, **Brad Heavner** from **MARYPIRG**. Also from **MARYPIRG** was a list of Bills that have passed in the Maryland General Assembly. Among the bills passed was one that helps reduce the prevalence of ID theft by preventing companies from printing customers Social Security numbers on ID cards and other materials. Also an Internet Fraud bill that enhances the ability of prosecutors to bring to trial people who use the internet to commit ID theft.

At a past meeting a discussion about the impending grocery workers strike took place. Fortunately their contracts were successfully negotiated without a strike. Healthcare benefits were a big part of the negotiations, as will be for all contracts in the future. Thanks to those of you who passed out the "We're with you" cards to let them know we would support them. As a follow up I would like to list the local grocery stores who are Union: Giant Food, Safeway, Shoppers Food Warehouse/Metro, Costco, Magruder's, SuperFresh/A&P

These stores and their employees help strengthen our way of life. If you like the Union life and retirement, then you must be willing to support it. What you do now determines not only your future but future generations. We are a nation where money talks. If you support those stores who support their employees, then you will ultimately be helping yourself. If you don't, then in a few years you will probably wondering why we no longer have health benefits. Is losing your benefits worth a few pennies saved by shopping at an anti-Union store like Walmart? I hope you decide No. My benefits are depending on your actions too.



Vernon wins the 50/50 once again.

Vernon Lewis once again won the 50/50. We have all decided to be next to him when we visit Atlantic City on April 28th since he appears to be very lucky.

We should have bumper stickers available by the next meeting. They will be static type with our logo on them. Simple and to the point.

Our May speaker will be **Sue Anderson**, CWA Retiree Health Care Benefit Coordinator for Verizon. You don't want to miss Sue. She is a great speaker and very informative about your benefits including Medicare. See you on May 12th!

CWA LOCAL 2108 SCHOLARSHIP GRANT

CWA Local 2108 is proud to offer scholarships to our members and their families. Please read the rules below, and call the Local if you have additional questions.

1. Three \$2,000 scholarships are available.
2. Available to members in good standing since last negotiated contract, their spouse and dependent children or dependent children of deceased members.
3. \$1,000 will be mailed directly to the institution per semester.
4. Student must take at least 9 credits per semester.
5. Must have a letter of acceptance to college or accredited learning institution with application.
6. Drawing at July membership meeting as a raffle.
7. Community Service Committee will screen applications.
8. Applications must be postmarked by June 30, of current year.
9. Resignation from the union will forfeit scholarship awards.

NAME: _____ SOCIAL SECURITY # _____

RELATIONSHIP TO MEMBER: _____

ADDRESS: _____ HOME TELEPHONE #: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

MEMBER'S NAME: _____ WORK TELEPHONE #: _____

NAME OF SCHOOL: _____

SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE/CONSULTANT ALERT

Thanks to the combined hard work of our CWA Bargaining Committee and the CWA "Stress Committee" (which met with Verizon to address Service Representative/Consultant issues specifically), major improvements were negotiated in 2000 for those in the Service Representative and Consultant job titles. During 2003 bargaining, all of those agreements were continued through the life of this contract, which means they are all in force until August of 2008.

One of the improvements which was negotiated involved allowing Consultants and Service Representatives who met all standards on their appraisals except sales to be allowed to apply for non-sales related positions. The Letter of Understanding on page 165 of our General Agreement says:

".....Consultants/Service Representatives who are not meeting their sales objectives will be allowed to apply for non-sales related positions (positions without sales objectives or requiring sales skills) provided that they meet all other appraisal standards and other applicable qualifications except for sales objectives."

Many supervisors are unfamiliar with how to record the evaluation rating on a PED form in this situation, and some of our reps/consultants are being prevented from using STAR to apply for jobs in error.

If you meet or exceed all of your objectives except for your sales objective, your supervisor should mark your rating as "Meets All Requirements" or "Exceeds Requirements" on your PED form, and you should be able to apply for jobs in STAR.

If you apply for a job which has a sales objective or requires sales skills, you will not be considered for the available job if you don't meet or exceed requirements for sales in your current job.

If you Meet Requirements or Exceed Requirements on all aspects of your appraisal except sales, verify that your supervisor has shown your rating as "MR" or "ER" on your PED form. If your rating was shown as "IN" (Improvement Needed) or "DN" (Does Not Meet Requirements), show your supervisor the Letter of Understanding addressing this issue on page 165 of the General Agreement. If your supervisor won't change your rating on your PED, request that they check with Labor Relations, and refer the issue to your Union Steward right away.



CWA WALKS FOR THE CURE

Don't Forget..We March on May 16th

CWA has always been at the forefront of such efforts as United Way, Pediatric Aids, and Red Cross and now the WALK FOR THE CURE is being led by our CWA's own president **Morton Bahr**.

Come join us on **May 16, 2004** for a 5k walk around the tidal basin. For families with small children, there is a shortened walk available. The start and finish is at Freedom Plaza in Washington DC. The check-in is 830 A.M. and the walk starts at 10 A.M. Freedom Plaza is off the Metro Orange or Blue lines. For our members, free parking is available at our lot 4301 Garden City Dr., Landover, MD. Following the walk, there will be post walk activities with participation from Washington Redskins, Wizards, Mystics, Washington Caps and more.

Teams will be formed and each person on each team is asked to raise 100.00. **The Verizon foundation will be matching all monies raised.** You can join a team or put a team together in your work group. To register your team contact your steward / chief steward or call the union office at **301.459.2108**. For those of us who are unable to walk you can still participate by making a donation to JDRF or supporting a team with a pledge. Donations to JDRF can be mailed to at 4301 Garden City Dr., Suite 102, Landover Md. 20785 or see your steward/chief steward. You can also visit their website at: www.jdrfcapitol.org.

Davis Vision Discount Program for Retirees

Good eye health care is important to ensuring your overall physical well-being. In addition, routine eye exams can provide insight into your general health and uncover other health issues such as: diabetes, lupus and high blood pressure.

A letter was recently sent out to all retirees about the new Davis Vision discounted vision care services, which will go into effect on May 1, 2004. It is available to all retirees and their dependents.

There is no need to enroll, the program is automatic.

In order to utilize this service from Davis Vision, all you have to do is:

- Use a Davis Vision network provider. Davis Vision has an extensive network of vision care providers who offer significant discounts on professional eye care services and eyewear;
- Give your identification number (Social Security Number);
- Tell the provider you are a Verizon retiree.

More details about the Davis Vision Retiree discount program can be accessed by either calling them at: **877.999.7006** or by going to their website: www.davisvision.com.

Hopefully, all our retirees will be able to utilize this money-saving program.

CWA Vendor Offers Courses

Trying to figure out what you want to do with your future in Verizon? Want to keep a step ahead of rapidly changing technologies? Take a VZ-TAP approved course from a CWA represented vendor, Applied Professional Training, Inc.

They are CWA members (Local 9509) and have been funded and approved for tuition assistance for such current technologies as Fiber Optics, Central Office Telecommunications and VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol).

Add these courses as "additional qualifiers" to your PED form to give you that little extra advantage in our internal mobility plans.

You can receive more information about the program, courses or information about Applied Professional Training by calling them **800.431.8488** or by visiting their website at: www.aptc.com.

Take advantage of these course offerings today.



CWA On The Record

Each month from now until Election Day, Local 2108 will provide you with fact sheets on congressional bills we are following, supporting or opposing. Below are two items that are a major concern to working families. **Next Month: OUTSOURCING**.

Employee Free Choice Act

On July 5, 1935, during a period of economic distress unparalleled in American history, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed into law the National Labor Relations Act.

The purpose clause of that public law proclaimed: "It is ... the policy of the United States ... (to encourage) the practice and procedure of collective bargaining ... by protecting the exercise by workers of full freedom of association, self-organization, and designation of representatives of their choosing, for the purpose of negotiating the terms and conditions of their employment or other aid or protection."

This landmark law has been hailed as the "Magna Charta" of American labor. Yet 69 years after its enactment, the National Labor Relations Act has become a silent co-conspirator, aiding and abetting industrial scofflaws. Ironically, anti-union businesses have used America's basic labor law as an instrument to chill the rights of workers which the 1935 law sought to guarantee.

President Roosevelt and Members of the 74th Congress who voted to pass the National Labor Relations Act would be aghast to learn that nearly three quarters of a century later their stirring legislative achievement has been twisted into a sanctuary for corporate criminals and transformed into one of the most effective union-busting mechanisms since the blacklists, indiscriminate injunctions and yellow dog contracts of an earlier era.

Despite their heroic efforts, the Act was emasculated by the enactment of two subsequent laws, the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 and the Landrum-Griffin Act of 1959. Both of these amendments crippling America's basic labor law were passed by Congresses controlled by Republicans. The effect of these two weakening amendments was to tilt the National Labor Relations Act in favor of the business interests that had originally opposed it.

Current Abuse

Because of these crippling amendments and the growth of an army of anti-union consultants, the right of "full freedom of association," guaranteed by the National Labor from engaging in certain prohibited activity. Workers, however, do not have equal access to similar injunctive relief against employers. S. 1925/H.R. 3619 levels the playing field by providing workers with equal access to injunctive relief. In addition, the bill specifies civil fines of up to \$20,000 for violations of workers' right to join a union and to bargain collectively that occur during organizing efforts or when workers are seeking to negotiate a first contract.

For too long, the National Labor Relations Act has stood as a broken promise to America's workers, instead of symbolizing the fulfillment of the dream that its framers envisioned. Enactment of the Employee Free Choice Act would help restore the promise and make real the dream. It would resurrect the ideal of a national labor relations structure in which the law would serve not as a sanctuary for unscrupulous employers, but as an instrument to safeguard workers' rights. As such, enactment of the Employee Free Choice Act would rekindle the lamp of hope first lit in the 1930s by President Roosevelt and key Members of Congress, who sought, during the low watermark in our nation's economic history, to leave a lasting legacy that would illumine the rights of workers in future generations

Family and Medical Leave Act

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) has benefited more than 40 million Americans since President Clinton signed this legislation into law in 1993.

Under the FMLA, private employers and state agencies with 50 or more employees are required to provide up to 12 weeks a year of job-protected unpaid leave to a worker to care for a newborn or newly adopted child, or a seriously ill family member, or to recover from the worker's own serious medical condition. Workers are entitled to take all 12 weeks of unpaid leave at one time, or they may take intermittent leave in the smallest unit of time that their employer already allows for absences.

According to recent data, 52 percent of workers who have taken unpaid time off under the FMLA have taken that time off to care for their own serious illness; 26 percent have taken time off to care for a new child or for maternity disability reasons; 13 percent have taken time off to care for a seriously ill parent; 12 percent have taken time off to care for a seriously ill child; and 6 percent have taken time off to care for a seriously ill spouse.

CWA strongly supports expanding coverage of the FMLA so that it provides protection to more workers. Opponents of the law, however, are determined to diminish the benefits that this landmark law confers.

To strengthen the Family and Medical Leave Act, CWA strongly supports the Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act, S.304, introduced by Senator Chris Dodd (D-CN). This bill would expand coverage of the Family and Medical Leave Act to all private sector work sites with 25 or more employees within a 75-mile radius. By changing coverage under the FMLA to employers with 25 or more workers from the current level of 50 or more workers, S.304 would enable nearly an additional 15 million American workers to be eligible for family and medical leave. In addition, S.304 would enlarge the scope of coverage under the FMLA to include leave for individuals to care for themselves, a daughter, a son or a parent who was victimized by domestic violence. Also, S.304 would allow workers to use a total of 24 hours during any 12-month period to participate in a school activity of a son or daughter, such as parent-teacher conferences, or to take part in a family literacy program.

Most recently, Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey (D-CA) introduced a major new bill to strengthen the Family and Medical Leave Act. This bill is entitled the Family and Work Balancing Act of 2004 and is numbered H.R.3780.

H.R. 3780 would assist working families by providing paid leave for new parents, school events and family emergencies. The bill would also enhance the quality and availability of child care, school nutrition programs and after-school care.

The Family and Work Balancing Act would establish voluntary, universal pre-kindergarten programs for children from age three through age five. It would make breakfast at school available to all children who want it and provide dinner for children in after-school programs whose parents are working late. This would apply to students from kindergarten through high school. H.R.3780 would truly leave no child behind.

Enactment of S.304, the Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act, and H.R.3780, the Family and Work Balancing Act, would promote a more compassionate America. These bills would relieve millions of uncovered workers from having to make the wretched choice between work and family. The legislation would permit workers to be both responsible parents and reliable employees.

CWA strongly supports passage of these much-needed measures that would enable employees to achieve better harmony between their work duties and their family responsibilities.

CWA 2004 Legislative Conference

By Jennifer Martin, CWA Local 2108 Legislative Committee and Chief Steward

The 2004 CWA Legislative/Political Conference kicked off with keynote speaker **David Bonior**, affiliate of American Rights at Work. He thanked CWA for their commitment to American Rights and added, "Justice is not given, you have to take it". Union rights are slowly being stolen and the laws that allow people to join unions are being erased. Workers are being squeezed, when all they want is respect.

The Vice President of UFCW, **Susan Phillips**, expressed her thanks to the executive board and members of CWA for working to protect the benefits of the United Food and Commercial Workers in California during the six-month labor dispute.

Teresa Hommel spoke about the dangers of electronic voting and wondering how secure is it? Can it be programmed to select any winner? There is no paper trail. what do you do if there is a recount? Voters are not issued any type of receipt to show who they voted for.

The Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO, **Rich Trumka**, spoke about **outsourcing**. Over 2 million manufacturing jobs have been lost since **Bush** occupied the White House. There are 14 million people out of work and every day jobs are being shipped overseas. Wages are being cut by **21%**, 1 out of 2 African Americans are without jobs and 43.6 million people have no health care insurance.

Representative **Peter King** (R-3rd NY) says we need to work with Republicans that are willing to work with organ-

ized labor (the few that know and care about working families). He will speak to his colleagues about more support for working families.

"You can't be a beacon to the world, if your bulb is out at home," stated Representative **Bob Menendez** (D-13th NJ). He also stated that "We need to outsource George Bush." He commented that all elections have consequences, and the first move Bush made was to take away Workers Compensation.

Representative **John Lewis** (D-5th GA) says George Bush is out of step with the American people. **"TIME TO RISE UP, TAKE the COUNTRY BACK. Time to get in trouble, TAKE BACK THE CONGRESS and the WHITE HOUSE."**

We also heard from Senators James Clyburn, Barbara Boxer and Ted Kennedy. Senator Hillary Clinton closed the conference at the Congressional breakfast. The overall message was to **get out the vote** for the 2004 elections. We need to see where the candidates stand on health care and outsourcing.

What good is a tax cut if you don't have a job? Everyone needs affordable health care that addresses a prescription plan affordable to seniors. Homeland security is no more then homeland suppression, and we need to watch big brother before all of our hard earned rights are suppressed.



Sen. Hillary Clinton address the Conference stating that "We have a fight on our hands."



Ted Kennedy tells the Conference that " We can get the White House back."



Jennifer Martin(middle), Local 2108 Legislative Committee, waits to visit a congressional leader with two other CWA Activists.



Local 2108 Vice President Jenny Sylvester visits with Montgomery County Congressman Chris Van Hollen during the CWA Legislative Conference.



President Campbell waits to speak to a Congressional leader at the Conference

Membership Meetings Changes in Montgomery County

A new location starting in May

After years of holding membership meetings at the American Legion Post #86 in Rockville, we say a fond farewell to the facility. The Local, which alternates the monthly meetings between the Local Office and the Rockville site, decided to move the meeting to a new location because of time constraints applied to us by the Post.

Starting on **May 12, 2004**, we'll move the Montgomery County meeting to the American Legion Post #268 in **Wheaton, MD**. The Post is located at **11225 Fern St.** in Wheaton (see map on right) between University Blvd (Rt 193) and Georgia Ave (Rt 97).

The Post meeting room is larger, and can accommodate any lengthy meeting we may have. We are pleased that the Wheaton location will be closer to the Beltway for those of us coming from the Prince George's County area...it will certainly take less time to get there.

We hope to see many of you, from both counties, at the meetings at our new location on the second Wednesdays of May, July, September and November in 2004 at 6pm.



(MORE) PENSION ERRORS FROM THE VBC

(SURPRISE, SURPRISE!!!)

Christmas didn't come early this year. It wasn't even April Fool's Day. However, during two weeks in March, approximately **105** associates who logged onto the Hewitt website to estimate their pension lump sum cash out amount got quite a surprise. Their estimated lump sum cash out amounts increased by nearly **\$200,000** if their Benefit Commencement Date was December, 2004, as compared to their cash out amounts had they retired in December of 2003.

We've all been told not to look a gift horse in the mouth, but this seemed too good to be true. Many associates called the Verizon Benefits Center (you've read about **THEM** in this newsletter before! [See related story on page 1 of this issue of the 2108News.](#)) to question this gigantic increase. Everyone knows that the lump sum cash outs fluctuate based on your age, years of service and current interest rates, but this jump seemed beyond belief.

EVERY CALLER WAS TOLD BY THE VERIZON BENEFITS CENTER REPS THAT THE LUMP SUM CASH OUT AMOUNTS WERE CORRECT. THE HUGE INCREASE WAS ATTRIBUTED TO THE FACT THAT NEW ACTUARY TABLES WERE BEING USED, WHICH PROJECTED LONGER LIFE EXPECTANCIES.

Unless those new actuary tables predict you'll live to be 130 years old, a 66% jump in a lump sum pension cash out in one year is impossible. Unfortunately, the Hewitt reps that Verizon pays to answer your pension questions don't understand that. On call after call, they insisted that the cash out estimates were correct, due to the new actuary tables.

Thanks to one of our Stewards calling the Local to bring this to our attention, we were able to refer the problem, through Labor Relations, to the Verizon Pension Benefits Department. After researching the issue, they discovered that, due to a human error, incorrect overstated estimates were given.

The VBC has been instructed to call all those who received the incorrect, inflated cash out amounts and correct the error. If you were one of those affected and have already begun your retirement planning, you should:

- **Tell your boss you didn't really mean it when you said "Take this job and shove it;"**
- **Unpack your sunscreen and beach towel;**
- **Call the airline and ask if your ticket is refundable and**
- **Call the Local and let us know if you haven't been contacted by the VBC to explain that the cash out estimate you downloaded in March was in error, and grossly inflated.**

We in Local 2108 feel that Verizon should provide the same **quality of service** to **US** that they expect us to provide to our customers. Sadly it is once again evident that Verizon doesn't share our belief.

CWA Local 2108 Members

Personals

We wish to extend sincere sympathy to the family and friends of:

James D. Georgeson, Sr., father of **James Georgeson, Jr.** who died on February 26, 2004.

Jack Richard (Dick) Leftridge, brother of **Betia Leftridge** who died on February 27, 2004.

Ida Harper, mother of **Everett Suggs** who died on March 17, 2004.

Cecil Elmore, a retiree who died on March 20, 2004.

Virginia Winston Lee, grandmother of **Norman Field** who died on March 26, 2004.

Marion W. Brackett, father of **Mia Mills** who died on March 30, 2004.

Wali Shaheed, father of **Monique Smith** who died on April 1, 2004.

New Members

Melissa Lindsey

Cathy Bright-Hasty

Tonie Price

Blanca Ocampo-Lopez
Agustin Montout
Sara Mussenden

Chantelle Townsend

Natalia Gomez
Melissa Simms
Jose Alvarez

Joe Cooke

Herbert Zeigler, Jr.

Transferred Members

Melissa Lindsey

Sybil Covington
Michael Harris
Kenya Kinney

Linda Wombacher

Carolyn Bolden

Joe Cooke

Kevin Lloyd
Bobby Martin-Sexton

Sancia Shim

Angela Powell
Tanya Gaspard
Stacey Thomas

CONGRATULATIONS!

Jennifer Martin on the birth of her granddaughter, **Taylor Arnee** on March 27, 2004.

Aleta Hoy on the birth of her grandson, **Garion Alexander Hoy** on March 27, 2004.

Stephanie and Sherwyn Gabriel on the birth of their daughter, **Skylar Gabriel** on March 29, 2004.

Jen and Dan Kunes on the birth of their daughter, **Allison Paige** on April 7, 2004.

General Membership Meetings

The Local 2108 General Membership Meetings take place on the second Wednesday of every month, alternating between the Local Office in Landover, and American Legion Post #268 (see related story of new location starting in May 2004 on page 8) in Wheaton. All meetings start at 6 pm.

Retired Members Club Meetings

The 2108 Retired Members Club Meetings take place on the second Wednesday of every month, at the Local Office in Landover.

All meetings start at 11 am.

Is This Any Way to Treat A Retiree

That Ain't Right, from page 1

Calvin: Verizon claims that I didn't fax the **EISP** acceptance form to them. I did fax it, and I have supplied Verizon with copies of the forms I faxed. I gave them a copy of my fax confirmation proving that I faxed the forms, on time.

Chris Rock: They promised you **\$76,000**, and now they won't give up the cash? **THAT AIN'T RIGHT!**

Howard Stern: Cheap b@#%&*%\$!

Randy: Yo, Dawg, they're putting you DOWN!

Simon: Perhaps Verizon should change their slogan from "Making Progress Every Day" to "Making Problems Every Day".

All (in unison): Calvin, **can you hear me now?** You need to call your Union! They negotiated these benefits for you, and they will work to see that you get them.



Calvin: I know that's right. I've tried to handle all this myself, but I need their help. Thanks for the advice, everyone!

Calvin left the party and drove straight to the CWA Local 2108 office in Landover, and met with Executive Vice President **Amory Proctor**, and Vice President **Marilyn Irwin**. They immediately started working on Calvin's problems, assuring him that he wasn't in this alone, and that they would fight to see that he got all that he was entitled to. Calvin walked into the Local office as the beat-down, tore-up, defeated and "terminated" Verizon employee that the **VBC** had turned him into, but walked out with his head held high, as a proud **CWA** member who had retired, and knew he wasn't in this alone.

As this newsletter goes to print, most of Calvin's problems have been rectified. He will receive his past-due pension checks May 1st. It has been confirmed that his medical, dental and prescription coverage has been restored, so he won't have to worry about denial of any claims. He will be reimbursed for the prescriptions that he had to pay for out of pocket. **PLUS** his Local officers discovered that Verizon owes him pay in lieu of five days of vacation, so that check is now being cut for Calvin.

The biggest news is that today it was decided that Calvin **WILL** receive his \$76,000 EISP check! The bad news is that it took many months and Executive-Level intervention to figure out that he shouldn't lose \$76,000 because the company fax machine didn't work properly. The good news is that the right decision was finally made.

The final outstanding issue involves **Ivan Seidenberg**. Marilyn suggested that Ivan should invite Calvin out to lunch, to apologize for the shoddy way that he has been treated by Verizon since he retired. We haven't heard from Ivan yet.

(Celebrity friends were impersonated.).....

Once Again, It Pays to Belong to CWA

First Responder Awareness

By Carl Brogden, Local 2108 Safety Committee Member and Steward

CWAsponsored a **First Responder's Awareness** workshop in Dayton, Ohio on March 25th and 26th and CWA Local 2108 sent two members of our Safety Committee to attend. It was a most interesting seminar.

Our instructors were **Kenny Oldfield** from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (**U.A.B.**) and **Jesse Davis** and **Charles Barrett** from **CWA**.

At first we thought this was a minicourse for outside plant workplace safety only, but we quickly learned it wasn't. The workshop detailed information about our own homes and about the chemicals and solutions found in ALL of our employer workplaces. CWA sent brothers and sisters from all different career back rounds like **Mary**, an operator from West Virginia and **Matt Klingman**, a cable splicer in Southern Prince George's County, Maryland.

The first lesson we learned was how presentably dangerous our home and office cleaning cabinets can be with the many different chemicals found inside (they are most dangerous and potentially fatal if mixed). This part of the workshop raised our level of awareness about our surroundings.



We also learned the steps to take as first responders, this means what to do and, just as important, what not to do.

DO:

1. Recognize the hazard zone, identify them if possible;
2. Isolate and secure the area;
3. Protect yourself and others;
4. Make notifications.



DO NOT:

1. Enter the hazard zone for any reason;
2. Make contact with the chemicals;
3. Approach the leak;
4. Try to contain/clean up the spill;
5. Use protective equipment unless trained to do so.



We also learned what the National Labor Relations Act (**NLRA**) and the National Labor Relations Board (**NLRB**) laws say about our "**rights as workers**" and what are the employer's (in our case Verizon) responsibilities. This was 35 years of workplace safety crammed into a two-day minicourse, so we left there with even more questions than when we arrived. The saying "I don't know what I don't know" applied here at first. Now it should be "I now know what I don't know."

But at least now I know where to find the answers thanks to:

Jesse Davis – CWA: 202.434.9508
Charles Barrett – CWA: 202.434.9511
Kenny Oldfield – U.A.B.



Also a special thanks to **Johnny Brown**, Secretary-Treasurer CWALocal 2108; **Dave Lagrand**, CWA and **Tom Ward**, CWA Local 2100.

Local 2108 Union Calendar

May 2004

- 5 Chief Steward's Meeting 9:00 am
Local Office, Landover, MD
- 9 Mother's Day
- 12 Retired Member Club Meeting 11am
at Local Office, Landover, MD
- 12 General Membership Meeting 6pm
at American Legion Post 286, Wheaton, MD
(NEW! See article page 8 this issue!)
- 16 Juvenile Diabetes 5K Walk For The Cure
Washington, DC (see story page 6)
- 26 Stewards Meeting 6pm
At Local Office, Landover, MD
- 31 Memorial Day
Union Negotiated Holiday

June 2004

- 2 Chief Steward's Meeting 9:00 am
Local Office, Landover, MD
- 9 Retired Member Club Meeting 11am
at Local Office, Landover, MD
- 9 General Membership Meeting 6pm
at Local Office, Landover, MD
- 20 Father's Day
- 23 Stewards Meeting 6pm
At Local Office, Landover, MD

Visit Local 2108 On The Web: www.cwa/local2108.org

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