ALUMNI CONNECTIONS

June 2014

NEWS FOR AND ABOUT RETIREES AND FORMER EMPLOYEES OF CITGO.

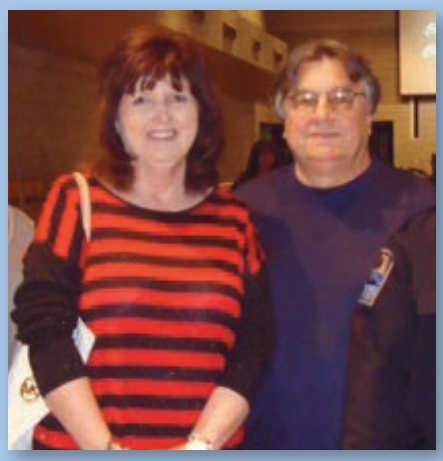
2014 Spring Luncheon Meeting Draws Overflow Crowd!

The CITGO Alumni Group's 2014 Annual Luncheon Meeting was held on April 7, 2014, at Montereau in Tulsa, with a great turn out. The luncheon was sponsored by Energy One Credit Union and a wonderful buffet meal was prepared by Rami Hasbini and his staff at Montereau. Outgoing Alumni Group President, Herb Whitney, opened the luncheon with a prayer, and a moment of silence for CITGO Alumni members who recently passed away.

The overflow crowd was fortunate to have Tom White, General Manager, Business Analysis and Enhancement, from the CITGO Houston office orchestrate a very informative, interesting and entertaining presentation about the current plans and programs for CITGO. Tom did a great job and he praised the group of CITGO Alumni present on the wonderful contributions they had made in their careers to propel CITGO to its formidable position in the energy industry. His PowerPoint presentation included safety and crude spread graphs, as well as the changes in CITGO branded locations, and expansion and improvement projects underway to assist CITGO in gathering, storing and refining the domestic sweet crudes. Tom also outlined personnel changes and did a wonderful job of bringing the attendees up to speed on the current CITGO.

Continued on page 2.

PERSONAL PROFILE



Ramona and Vinny Falzone

Ramona Falzone ... Still Working On Her Retirement "To-Do" List

How did it get so late so soon? It's night before it's afternoon. December is here before it's June. My goodness how the time has flewn. How did it get so late so soon? ~ Dr. Seuss

It's very hard to believe that I have been officially "retired" for almost nine years. I have many great memories of my twenty-six years at CITGO, but I also recall those last days when I thought I could not wait another minute to be "free at last." There's something exciting about the prospect of having time to do all the things you have wanted to do but weren't able to fit into a busy work/home/family schedule. It's rather interesting, however, that there are still projects on my "to-do after I retire" list that just haven't happened, but that's ok. There are also some things that have occurred that I did not anticipate, and that's OK too.

Since retiring, the greatest joys I have experienced have been getting to be with our four adult children (isn't that an oxymoron?) and two sweet

Continued on page 3.

2014 Spring Luncheon Meeting ... *Continued from cover.*

Carolyn Stewart gave the treasury report and it was approved. Kent Powers gave the membership report, along with the good news that future newsletters will include a list of recent CITGO retirees. Dave Hynes spoke about changes to the website, the syncing up with Lake Charles retirees, and the value of the enhanced website was mentioned to Dave's credit. Tom Spann addressed the crowd detailing the April 17th and 25th tours of the new state-of-the-art studios of KOTV, Channel 6, and the May 28th Tulsa Drillers baseball game outing, instructing the attendees on how and where to sign up for the events.

The luncheon also included the approval of the updated by-laws and the 2014 Board Members.

Curt Coffman, President of Energy One Credit Union, gave us a comprehensive report on the credit union's current status and detailed what he projects as the possible headwinds and tailwinds in the financial world. It was a very entertaining and informative presentation. Curt mentioned how valuable CITGO has been to Energy One in its 80 year history. It will be interesting to see what happens in the next couple of years in the financial fields.

Special thanks goes to Kathy Moore, whose hard work and diligent planning created a terrific luncheon/meeting, and CITGO Alumni get together. It was wonderful to see so many old friends gathered in one place.

CITGO Alumni Get A Glimpse Behind The Scenes During Channel 6 Tour

April 17, 2014, a group of 17 CITGO Alumni and spouses met at the new Channel 6 Building which is located at 303 North Boston in Tulsa's Brady district for a VIP tour of the facility. Jonathan Ferrante, the Statewide Marketing Services Coordinator, conducted the tour and did an excellent job.

The entire staff at Cannel 6 were so nice and friendly to all of us. Jonathan explained how they program newscasts, schedule commercials and supply teleprompts for the newscasts. We got to see the facility's safe room and we even got to see the brand new storm chaser truck they have. Jonathan opened the vehicle so we could view all the equipment inside – very impressive! We saw the stage where they conduct cooking shows and the stage where they interview guests. It was amazing how up-to-date the facility is with thermo heating/cooling and incredible LED lighting. All of us who wanted to could pretend to be Travis Meyers (the weather man) by standing in front of the "green screen" and pointing to the computer graphics on the screen. We also saw where news stories are drafted and learned that when there is a local disaster or other newsworthy event, one of the newscasters, along with a camera person, are dispatched to the scene. They are then able to stream video back to the station where it is inserted into the current program.

There are almost 200 employees in the Tulsa building and on the second floor of the building there is spectacular view of downtown Tulsa. Jonathan said that sometimes they use the balcony with the view as the set for filming and photographs. Also, something I did not know, is that Channel 9 in Oklahoma City and Channel 6 in Tulsa are owned by a private corporation, Griffin Communications.



Members of CITGO Alumni (and spouses) during Channel 6 tour in April.

It was a truly memorable, informative tour and, again, an amazing facility.

Ramona Falzone ... *Continued from cover.*

granddaughters. This past summer we spent several hours a week with Raelyn and Kellie, ages 7 and 4, while my son, Garred, was back in school and his wife, Monica, was working. It was fun to take them to the water park or to a movie or just to have them playing in the gameroom upstairs. Their energy levels were significantly higher than mine, but it was great to have the time to spend with them. My daughters have both graduated from OSU and are happy in their new careers. Angie is a Human Resources Director, taking after her Aunt Carolyn (Weese), and Ali is a buyer's assistant at Miss Jackson's, taking after me. My younger son, Vinny, is starting his eleventh year with QuikTrip in the Transportation Department. His wife, Lauren, is a CAP Tulsa early childhood education teacher. They have provided us with a "granddog" but no grandchildren yet.

Retirement has been interesting for my husband, Vinny, and me. We've learned that even though we have been married for thirty-three years, 24/7 togetherness can be too much of a good thing. When that happens, I may head to The Market or River City Trading Post to browse the home décor. Meanwhile Vinny plays his drums and remembers his teenage rock-and-roll band years.

The first two years of my retirement, our travels were far from exotic. They included many trips to OSU with cars packed "to the gills" with "stuff." There were mutterings of "we're too old for this" (Vinny) and "are we there yet?" (me). In all, we have moved the girls in and out of apartments and houses at least 10 times! We did get to make a pleasure trip to Arizona to visit my sister and brother-in-law, Carolyn and Don Weese, who spend several months there each year. This was enjoyable and we hope to head that way again later this year. We also started a family reunion last summer to help the next generation of cousins, Carolyn's five daughters and my four kids and their families, share some time together.

Since retiring, I have volunteered to help with preparations for the Honor Flights which take Veterans to Washington, DC for the day. I have also had the opportunity to get to know many of my neighbors better and serve as secretary of our neighborhood homeowners association board, (thanks to Bill Paluso who drafted me). I joined a non-denominational Bible study which includes a great mix of young and "older" women, including some other CITGO retirees. This has been rewarding in many ways. I also have gotten to know several of my former CITGO colleagues better during monthly lunches. The topic of these luncheons can be a little unnerving when it turns to doctor visits, medications, insurance, and other AARP topics!!! When did WE become senior citizens??!!

Reviewing those ambitious items on my "to do when I retire" list, I find that despite participating in several neighborhood garage sales, I have not cleaned out the attic completely. In fact, the contents may have even expanded somehow! With Ali back at home, the garage once again looks like a used furniture store...but that's ok. She can't wait to move but we're not sure we really want to be empty nesters, even in our sixties. She just asked me to come "stand on her feet" so she could do an exercise ... I can barely stand on my own feet ... priceless! We will miss our entertainment!

Another "to do" on my list is updating our home's interior and this IS going to be the year. I hope that will fulfill some of my need to be creative since I have not yet resumed artistic pursuits that I promised myself I would. I AM going to paint with oil and watercolors, one of these days! As far as writing that #1 best seller, I have to be honest...not happening!

Since retiring, I have become more proficient at texting and Google-ing and occasionally visit Facebook. I still rebel against spending too much time on the computer, since that was my career for so long. Despite not wanting to become a couch potato, I do like Dr. Phil, some of the housewives, and movies on Netflix. For all those years I worked, I rarely watched television, so it has been fun to indulge, especially this past winter. Spring will take me outdoors and I can't wait to plant flowers and enjoy the sunshine.

Overall, my retirement has been relatively quiet, but definitely not boring. There have been holiday dinners, new babies, weddings, and graduations. There have been losses, fears, and tears. My "to do" list is still in my head but I have decided to hit the delete key for some and mark others "LOL". The ones I actually complete will hopefully be the most meaningful. As Dr. Seuss said, "the time has flewn" and I am looking forward to what lies ahead.

IN MEMORIUM

Ted Ernst
(Pipeline Controller)

Charles Mattei
(Vice President)

Cuba Visit Like Traveling Back in Time for Jeanne Sturgis

In March of this year I had the good fortune to travel to Cuba. It was a country that I had wanted to see, but prior to 2012, US citizens were prohibited from traveling there due to the US embargo of Cuba. However, beginning in 2012, the US State Department began issuing travel licenses for trips to Cuba under the 'People To People' educational and cultural programs. I booked a photography trip through Natural Exposures, Inc. who had obtained the required US State Department licenses and visas. With the official licenses, we were able to take an American Airlines flight directly from Miami, Florida, to Havana, just a short one-hour flight.



Before taking this trip, I read two history books on Cuba for background. Spain was the first country to colonize Cuba, after the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492. However, as there was no gold on the island, Cuba's role for the next two centuries was limited to an in-transit shipping port and farming for the production of food to support the exploration efforts of the New World. Land was appropriated from the indigenous population and granted to Spanish soldiers, slaves were imported and large cattle operations began.

The Spanish Monarchy established a state monopoly on tobacco, and sugar cane became the primary cash crop. Slave plantations were the prevailing agricultural system until the late 1880's, long after slavery was abolished in the US. Spain no longer viewed Cuba as an integral part of the Spanish Kingdom, but rather a valuable sugar colony to be exploited. Similar to the Americas' revolt from British rule, the local Cuban independence movement took root at the end of the 1860's and rebellions against Spanish rule were fought through the end of the century. US sugar companies began investing heavily in Cuba in the 1890's which set the stage for the US support of Cuba's independence from Spain in 1899. A new era in Cuba began–the period of US intervention. The US had no clearly defined policy on Cuba. Some wanted it as a colony, others wanted annexation, and others favored Cuban independence. Cuba evolved into a new republic tightly controlled by the US. A combination of economic exploitation of the sugar industry by the US and weak local Cuban government riddled with corruption, set the stage for the last Cuban independence revolution led by Fidel Castro in 1950's, ending in 1959. The Soviet Union replaced the US as the partner of influence, until their collapse in 1992.





The transition to Socialism began in 1959, and in many ways, Cuba today looks like Cuba in 1959. All property and businesses were nationalized. The government provides housing, health care, education and jobs. Today, the average Cuban worker earns the equivalent of $20 per month–but they have free housing, health care, education and they get coupon ration books for a portion of their food. Because socialism does not have incentives or rewards, (everyone gets the same) there is little incentive for Cubans to work hard. Their attitude is "you pretend to give me a job (for $20 a month) and I pretend to work." The lack of capitalism and low economic

Continued on page 5.

Cuba Visit ... *Continued from page 4.*

output, results in a very poor country with little available investment for the infrastructure of the country. The beautiful buildings built in the late 1800's and first half of the 1900's are crumbling and in disrepair, but there are no funds to rehabilitate them.

Everyone who goes to Cuba is looking forward to seeing the old cars, and they indeed are everywhere, many rusted and in poor condition, and others restored to perfection. At least 50% of the cars on the road are 1959 or older, another 25% are cheap Russian Lada cars, and the rest are various imports from Europe. Most of the old cars are not running with their original engines however, because they have been converted to diesel engines, the main automobile fuel available in Cuba. But if you are an "old car buff," this is the place for you!



We spent most of our time in Havana, but did have a two-day trip through the countryside to the other side of the island to the historic town of Trinidad. I felt safe walking around anywhere we went and, to my surprise, we were not restricted in any way. The Cuban people were very warm and welcoming, and many spoke some English and were eager to talk to Americans. Many of them invited us to come in and see their homes as we walked by. Food was basic, and every meal had the staple of black beans and rice. We also had chicken, pork and fish, but these meats are in very short supply for the locals. We also had yucca (which I found surprisingly very good) and other root vegetables. As in Venezuela, the food is bland and not spicy. The water is not safe for us to drink in Cuba (we had bottled water all the time), so we avoided salads and any other raw foods–but none of us got sick on the trip.

Our hotels were modern with air conditioning in the rooms. I was surprised that the televisions in the rooms had CNN and BBC, but later found out that access to such news stations was limited to the tourist hotels, and that the locals don't have them. Because of the political situation, US phones and credit cards do not work in Cuba. We had to bring US cash, and then convert it at the hotel to the Cuban CUC (pronounced "kook"). Although the hotel had Internet, it was very slow and didn't work for most people. So if you go to Cuba, you are basically out of touch by normal communication channels while there.

Obviously the Cuban cigar is very important, and the smell of cigars is everywhere! I bought one with the intention of smoking it just because we can't get them in the US, but I got so nauseated being around all the cigar smoke I couldn't bring myself to light it up and gave it to my bus driver on the last day there!



In the last three years since Raul Castro (Fidel's brother) has become President of Cuba, he has started allowing small changes that are helping to bring the Cuban people into the 21st century: they can now have cell phones and some access to the internet, some free-enterprise is now allowed with individuals able to own businesses like restaurants and produce stands and other personal service businesses.

The people are now able to buy some real estate, but very few have the money to do so. The over 50 year old US embargo makes life more difficult for the average Cuban, as it makes many essentials of daily life – like soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, razors, etc. – unavailable or too expensive. In fact, we were told in advance of our trip that if we wanted to bring small personal items and candy for the kids, that the locals would really appreciate it. So I took pens and candy, and many others brought disposable razors, toothbrushes, toothpaste, hotel size soaps and baseballs. The locals were delighted to get them, and we used them as our 'payment' for asking permission to photograph them. I would take more baseballs if I go again, as that is a very popular sport with the kids.



I got a kick out of seeing the political billboards. One that really stood out to me had pictures of Fidel Castro, Hugo Chavez and Nelson Mandela, with a title of "The Three Fathers You Can Trust." The street art, or graffiti, was spectacular all

Continued on page 6.

Cuba Visit ... *Continued from page 5.*

around Havana. It is a very artistic place. Because of the US embargo, the only items we were allowed to bring back into the US were education materials like books, and art. We did go to a large Cuban art show and I bought two original canvas oil paintings of old cars for $30 each. These were my only souvenirs but other than a Panama hat, not sure there was anything else I would have wanted to purchase.

The buildings and people were very colorful and interesting, and there was just so much to photograph. I took over 3,000 photos, but have pared it down to about 50 for you to look at on the CITGO Alumni website. It was like taking a time-travel trip back in time, and was a wonderful experience. I would highly recommend it, and would go back again in a heartbeat.





There are many groups that offer the US State Department approved trips to Cuba. Besides Natural Exposures (which is primarily for photographers), other reputable tour operators I have traveled with that go to Cuba are: Tauck, Abercrombie & Kent, and National Geographic Explorers; and any of these would provide you a great Cuba experience. I think it is just a matter of time before the US embargo on Cuba is lifted. Once it is lifted, I predict there will be a flood of money toward Cuba, and the reconstruction will begin. I am glad I got to see it before this happens. If you decide to go and have any questions, don't hesitate to send me an email at: Djs5417@aol.com.

Peggy Jackson – On the Mend and On Her Way Home!

As most of you are aware, Peggy Hill Jackson was in a head-on automobile accident during a trip to Ireland in May. She was seriously injured and has since been in ICU at the hospital in Waterford, Ireland, undergoing multiple surgeries to repair numerous broken bones (legs, foot, shoulder, many ribs & cervical vertebrae).

We are pleased to be able to report that the most recent update from her daughter, Jennifer, is very positive. Jennifer indicates her mom was able to sit up for the first time on Friday, June 6th, for about 90 minutes and that the most recent brain scan came back fine. The hospital in Ireland will be releasing Peggy to travel and plans have been made for Peggy and her husband Denny to return to Tulsa by air ambulance. She will be admitted immediately to the critical care unit at St. Francis for three days of evaluation and assessment, and will then go to Kaiser rehab in Tulsa.

In her June 6th update, Jennifer expressed the family's appreciation for all the prayers, kind words, posts and texts sent during this difficult and trying time. Their church, Asbury United Methodist in Tulsa, has established a special fund to collect money to help with their mounting expenses. Checks should be made payable to **Asbury Seekers** with a notation at the bottom of the check "For Denny & Peggy Jackson." Please mail your check to *Pris Brown, 5130 S. Columbia Ct., Tulsa, OK 74105-6643.*

We want the ***CITGO Alumni Connections*** to offer information from and about ALL retirees and former employees of CITGO. If you participate in activities with other CITGO Alumni in your area, we want to hear from you so we can share what you're doing with the rest of our membership.

Please send announcements or updates you would like to see in the Newsletter to cornelia.schlecht@cox.net.

The CITGO Alumni Group's membership year runs from January 1 through December 31 and dues are paid once during that period. If you haven't paid your $10.00 membership dues for calendar year 2014, now is the time to do it. By paying your dues, you will receive copies of the ***CITGO Alumni Connections*** newsletters to keep you up to date on news and events of the CITGO Alumni Group. Send your $10 membership fee (*Made payable to the CITGO Alumni Group*) to:

Carolyn Stewart
7509 E. 91st Pl. • Tulsa, OK 74133
bstewart47@cox.net

Please include your E-mail address and/or any mailing address updates with your payment. THANK YOU.

If you pay your membership dues in cash, please attach your name to the cash so Carolyn will know who she received the payment from.

Please send newsletter article contributions for the ***CITGO Alumni Connections*** by e-mail to:

Ray Yarroll at rpyarr@cox.net

or by U.S. Mail to:

Ray Yarroll
7421 E. 74th St. • Tulsa, OK 74133

Congratulations To The Most Recent CITGO Retirees

Jo Adams
John Allain
Dorothy Appleby
A. Aubert
Stephen Bills
James Bolliger
Donald Brown
Thomas Chapman
Jacob Chinderle, III
Amzi Collins
Daryl Colvin
Riley Crayton Jr
Darrell Crochet
Carlos Dominguez
Chris Douglas
Bonnie Drumwright MD
Lois Duplechain
Mark Edwards
Susan Faulkner
Charlsie Fittz
Carl Fontenot
Geoffrey Gannaway
Gilbert Gonzales
Earline Guillory
Beverly Hatcher
Thomas Haycraft
Allen Hodges
Mark Iverson
Aaron Joubert
Shirley Labbe
Diana Marini
Diana Mcfarland
Willard Mcgee
Bobby Meadows, Jr.
Stephen Newman
Robert Niemi
Michael Parker
David Pierce
Gussie Pitre
Miguel Quintero
Douglas Reiter
Rodolfo Salazar
Kathleen Schraer
Beltrando Soliz
Betty Strunga
Roger Tucker
Leon Ulfers
Susan Viator
Joan Wallace
Charles Wharton
Barbara Wilburn
Melody Williams
Stephen Woods
Mary Ann Worst

Reminder ...



Our CITGO Alumni Group e-mail directory is available on our website **http://www.citgoalumni.org/**

Simply click the "directory" tab.

The password is the current day's date (for example 02132012 ... tomorrow it will be 02142012, etc.)

If you have any questions or corrections, please let us know.