

**Rutgers  
AAUP-AFT  
Retiree  
Assembly**

# Newsletter

Volume 24 – Issue 2

Spring 2022

## Newsletter Committee

John Krenos, Isabel Wolock &  
Richard Bumby



## Report from the AAUP-AFT Executive Council Representative and Assembly Chair Ann Gordon

Each year the Retiree Assembly elects one member to be its delegate to the Executive Council of Rutgers AAUP-AFT. I'm in my second year of service in that position—all of it virtual. Our by-laws charge me with bringing news of union activity back to the Assembly and being “a conduit” through which retirees can bring business before union leaders. According to the union’s by-laws, the Assembly’s delegate is a voting member of the council with limits: I cannot vote on matters of collective bargaining or dues increases.

News: In the bargaining between the AAUP-AFT and the Rutgers administration that has just started, the union proposes:

**The University shall pay for the full cost of health benefits for the surviving spouse of a retired faculty member that are substantially equal to the benefits received by a retired faculty member prior to their death.**

You may be contacted over the summer if the union needs the help of retired faculty to win approval. To get this extended benefit for Rutgers retirees was a project of Rudy Bell, and the union agreed to bring the proposal to the bargaining table.

Rudy Bell proudly announced, in the week before he died, that he had all but finished a list of programs for our gatherings in the coming year. Then he forgot to send anyone a copy of the plans he'd made. Please, if you made an agreement with Rudy about speaking to an Assembly meeting, let me know! Only two people--out of a possible ten--have so far revealed themselves.

We share the statement issued by the Rutgers AAUP-AFT on April 11, two days after the death of our chair, Rudy Bell.

<https://rutgersaaup.org/rudy-bell-academic-colleague-and-union-brother/>

## **Report from the Secretary, Jon Lurie**

Attention is called to the amendment unanimously approved that enables us to hold elections either by mail ballot "or by electronic means as may be deemed appropriate." At the September 20th meeting, we took advantage of the new by law, and unanimously reelected Ann Gordon as the Emeriti's group's representative to the RU AAUP-AFT executive council. We also deleted the word "acting" from Ann's title as our chair, and she will hold that position until her term expires on July 1, 2023.

Respectfully submitted, Jon Lurie, Secretary



**In Memoriam**  
**Joseph Potenza**

Joe passed away on January 4, 2022, after a long illness. He was a stalwart member of our Retiree Assembly; his dear wife Janet remains an active member.

Born in November of 1941, in Queens, New York, Joe earned a bachelor's degree from the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn (now NYU Polytech) and a doctoral degree in chemistry from Harvard University. He was christened on Dec. 7, 1941, a day that lives in infamy (he enjoyed telling).

Joe was a valuable colleague and dear friend. Joe and I (John Krenos) co-authored a Study Guide for a major Honors General Chemistry textbook from 1999 till 2013 (six editions). As an emeritus member of the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology, Joe invited me to share his office in Wright-Rieman labs after my retirement in 2016. Joe also encouraged me to join our Assembly.

A tribute from Rudy Bell follows:

Dear Retiree Assembly members:

I am deeply saddened to be writing this email to inform you that our colleague Joseph Potenza passed away on January 4, 2022. His last years were challenging, and his wife Janet takes some comfort in the fact that she and their sons were with him at the end.

Joe and I began at Rutgers in the same year, 1968, and he was always a supportive colleague, even during his years of service as an "administrator" in the New Brunswick Provost's office and the Graduate School. He cared deeply about Rutgers, about his research, and especially about his chemistry students. A brief biographical sketch may be found at:

<https://chem.rutgers.edu/11-news-events/10-joseph-potenza-named-american-chemical-society-fellow>

Please read Joe's interview in a prior **Newsletter**:

<https://rutgersaaup.org/wp-content/uploads/securepdfs/2021/01/Retiree-Reporter-Spring-2019.pdf>

---



**In Memoriam**  
**Rudy Bell (Obit)**

Rudolph M. Bell of Somerset passed away on Saturday, April 9, holding his wife and daughters' hands, surrounded by family who adored him. His sentiment in facing his own mortality, expressed many times, was immense gratitude for living such a wonderful life, and for the love of his wife, children, and grandchildren. He was 79.

Rudy is predeceased by his parents, Rudolph and Aimee Bell; and sister, Carol Bell. Surviving are his wife of 57 years, Laura; daughters and sons-in-law, Tara and Steve Giovannetti of Highland Park, New Jersey, and Alessia Bell and Mark Proctor of Westport, Connecticut; brothers and sisters-in-law, Richard and Katie Bell of Stanfordville, New York and Ronnie and Melinda Bell of Syracuse, New York; and his six beloved grandchildren, Gabriela, Luca, Katia, Carolina, Alex, and Juliette.

Born in New York City, Rudy was raised in the Briarwood section of Jamaica, Queens, in a neighborhood filled with smart, striving kids, mostly the children of immigrants. With education the clearest way up and out, the Bell children were expected to excel in school. Blessed with an exceptional innate intelligence, Rudy did excel at every subject and in every grade. But where he lacked a natural advantage, propelled

by his fiercely competitive spirit, Rudy flexed his ingenuity and street smarts. In games of stickball and touch football, Rudy devised offensive attack plans against his archrival athletic neighbors that exploited any weakness and befuddled his opponents just enough to make match-ups competitive. Rudy's fondest memories of childhood were with his siblings.

Rudy earned a scholarship to Queens College, and upon graduation, he was recruited by Metropolitan Life Insurance into the computer programming department. To pay the bills as he studied in graduate school, Rudy led the team that wrote code that powered massive early-stage mainframe computers. At MetLife, at age 21, Rudy met Laura Tomicic, fell in love, and in what he called "the best decision of my life," Rudy and Laura married ten months later. Working overtime as a new father, Rudy completed his PhD in medieval history at the City University of New York and accepted a teaching position at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Rudy served as a History Professor at Rutgers University for 52 years before retiring as Distinguished Professor Emeritus in early 2020. He authored one book on American history but soon thereafter became enthralled with Italy and the renaissance period. Rudy went on to write five books and numerous scholarly articles on medieval and renaissance history, including the groundbreaking book on aestheticism of female saints, *Holy Anorexia*, which was translated into many languages, and *How to Do It*, which brought to life the 15th century perspective on child-reading, relationships, and living well. Rudy's intellectual curiosity, original thinking, and creative fire burned bright until his final days, as he continued to work on new scholarship and new ideas.

At Rutgers, Rudy served as the Chair of the History Department and was considered "the heart and soul of the department." His colleagues, mentees, and students remember Rudy as "a vital life force" and "a truly special person," admiring his leadership, tenacity, decency, caring, and steadfast commitment to doing the right thing. Rudy also served as President of the American Association of University Professors and the Rutgers University Retired Faculty Union, where he led the fight for better pay and medical coverage for teaching assistants and continued benefits for surviving partners of retirees. A consummate fan of all team sports, Rudy was the ultimate Rutgers Football fanatic.

Rain or shine, championship bound or 0-12, Rudy sat on the banks of the old Raritan, cheering his beloved Scarlet Knights.

Above all, Rudy's source of joy was his family. Laura and Rudy shared a life of 57 years in all its glories and difficulties, lived to the absolute fullest. They traveled everywhere, always together: through the deserts of Mexico in a broken down, overheated Fiat, their girls bickering endlessly in the itchy backseat; to the halls of La Scala in Milan, their nursing infant waiting in the opera house wings; to the ruins of Sicily, with dozens of junior year abroad college students in tow.

Rudy loved the years he spent with Laura, Tara, and Alessia in Italy, mostly living in Florence, which served as the creative inspiration for his scholarship. But his heart was firmly in Laura's hometown of Skvaranska, in Istria, Croatia, where the rugged natural beauty, the culturally complex and varied history, and above all else, the warmth and rawness of the people, allowed Rudy, with his ever-active mind and boundless energy, to relax. He expressed his love for his grandchildren by bringing them to his version of heaven on Earth, surrounded by olive and fig trees, overlooking the Adriatic Sea.

Daddy and Nonno Rudy, as he was called, was for Tara and Alessia and his six grandchildren the consummate champion, teacher, and font of adventure and fun. His enduring legacy is the wisdom, unconditional love, and stunning example of growth well into age that he provided for his children and grandchildren.

A mass followed by burial will be held on Tuesday, April 19, at 10am, at St. Joseph's Parish, 34 Yorktown Rd, Hillsborough, NJ. There will be a celebration of life luncheon right afterwards at Laura's home.

If you would like, in lieu of flowers, donations can be made to St. Jude Children's Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, Tennessee 38105

Copied from: <https://universitysecretary.rutgers.edu/memorial>

Link to:

<https://universitysecretary.rutgers.edu/files/obituary-rudolph-bell>

Word File: [.docx](#)

## Guest Speakers/Meetings

[Rutgers Online History Association](#) (ROHA), “Archiving Our Years at Rutgers” (January 2022). Director **Shaun Illingworth** and researchers **Kathryn Rizzi** and **Donald Koger** talked about ROHA’s work as it has evolved over the past 20 years to become a nationally recognized center for historical preservation and a central repository for recording the history of Rutgers University.

**Paul Tractenberg** [“Justice Delayed and the Strange Case of Lakewood’s Public ‘School Students’: Is the State of New Jersey Trying to Back Away from the Constitutional Guarantee of a Thorough and Efficient Education for All Students?”](#) (February 2022). Our retired colleague **Paul Tractenberg** from Newark Law School discussed an important case involving the Lakewood public school system that he and one of his former students are currently litigating before the New Jersey Appellate Division court.

**Neil Sacks and Associates Edgar Lara and Jaime Young** [“Your New Jersey Alternative Benefits Plan \(ABP\) Pension: Strategies and Options”](#) (March 2022)

**April 2022: Speaker Judith Weis Postponed because of the Funeral of our Chair Rudy Bell, who passed away on April 9. Judith’s scheduled talk “NJ Tidal Marshes: Their Status and Future in the Face of Sea Level Rise”** Our retired colleague **Judith Weis** from the Newark Biological Sciences Department planned to bring us up to date on the formidable challenges facing New Jersey. What is happening, why, and what we can do about it? **To Be Rescheduled.**

**Michael Rockland** [“Why I Write Two Books at the Same Time, Fiction and Nonfiction: No, I’m Not Crazy”](#) (May 2022) The speaker told us how co-authoring a book on the NJ Turnpike somehow liberated his imagination for the novel he was writing, so he followed this dual strategy twice again, both times with great success. “Eggs in multiple baskets” is how he says he does it.”

**Final Spring Semester Meeting Cancelled (June 2022).**

## RETIREE ASSEMBLY MEMBERSHIP DUES

The fee for **AAUP-AFT Retiree Assembly** membership is **\$10** per year beginning each September. If you haven't already done so, please send your check made out to "**Rutgers Council of AAUP/Emeriti,**" to the following address: **Mala Kakkad, Treasurer, Rutgers AAUP-AFT, 11 Stone Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1113** (sorry, cash cannot be accepted). You may also renew membership for one, two, or three years by paying **\$10, \$20, or \$30**.

The **AAUP-AFT** faculty union subsidizes the **Retiree Assembly** at the rate of **\$20** per member who joins by November of any given calendar year.

---

**Below is a list of Organizations and their Contact Information including Web Sites you may find useful**

# RUTGERS

**AAUP Retiree Assembly**

11 Stone Street  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1113

Phone: 732-964-1000

Fax: 732-964-1032

E-mail: [aaup@rutgersaaup.org](mailto:aaup@rutgersaaup.org)

<http://www.rutgersaaup.org/Retiree-Assembly>

**RWJMS Retired Faculty Association**  
<http://rwjms.rutgers.edu/faculty;index.html#>

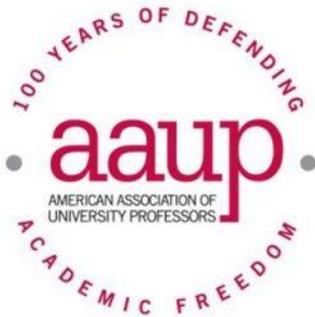
**Retired Faculty & Staff Association**  
<http://retirement.rutgers.edu/>

**Rutgers Retiree Benefits**  
<http://retirement.rutgers.edu/retiree-benefits/>

**Rutgers Council of AAUP Chapters-AFT**

11 Stone Street  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1113  
Phone: 732-964-1000  
Fax: 732-964-1032  
E-mail: [aaup@rutgersaaup.org](mailto:aaup@rutgersaaup.org)  
[www.rutgersaaup.org](http://www.rutgersaaup.org)

---



**American Association of University Professors**

1133 Nineteenth Street, NW, Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: 202-737-5900  
Fax: 202-737-5526  
E-mail: [aaup@aaup.org](mailto:aaup@aaup.org)  
[www.aaup.org](http://www.aaup.org)

---



**NJ Department of Treasury**  
**Division of Pensions and Benefits**

Links for Retirees  
<http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/pensions/retiree-home.shtml>

---



**American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO**

555 New Jersey Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
Phone: 202-879-4400

[www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org)

---



**AARP**

601 E Street NW  
Washington, DC 20049  
Phone: 1-888-OUR-AARP (1-888-687-2277)

[www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)

303 George Street, Suite 505  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
Phone: 1-866-542-8165 (toll-free)  
Fax: 609-987-4634

E-mail: [njaarp@aarp.org](mailto:njaarp@aarp.org)

Web site: <http://www.aarp.org/states/nj/>

---