

Retirement

Matters

Newsletter of the
UFCW Local 21
Retiree Caucus
May 2009

Going Wild on eBay: *The Sad Tale of a Senior's Addiction*

by Paula Lawson,
Local 21 Retiree



In the last newsletter article I sort of mentioned my growing fondness for eBay. My involvement began by accident..

I mean it, it really started by accident. It was like this. I had my well used and much appreciated pressure cooker sitting on the front burner of my glass top stove doing its thing when I decided I had to use the back burner. Within minutes I smelled in the air that peculiar smell of burning plastic...and pressure-cooker innards. I had turned on the front burner by mistake!

Grabbing my cherished QVC pressure cooker I ran out of the back door streaming threads of plastic as I traveled. Tears flowed from my eyes, and from my lips came a wild inhuman wail... then a cry of helpless rage as I realized that my cooker was dead, I had

killed it, and now I was mourning it loss. Not being too swift on the internet, I, nonetheless, went on the computer the next day to see if QVC had more.

They were fresh out of PC's (pressure cookers) and anyway my brand had been replaced by Wolfgang Puck's less worthy model. I put my head down on the computer table and took some deep breaths. For the first time ever, I typed www.ebay.com into the

address bar and registered myself. I knew that, among the millions of things for sale there, that there must be at least one special pressure cooker to replace the one I lost.

Within an hour I was bidding and losing out on another PC just like mine (limited stock from QVC .. *still in the box*) but I began to see the possibilities and in the process I was beginning to see how the to win at the bidding game. I was in Pressure

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The Wal-Mart Threat

Wal-Mart threatens the wages, health-care, benefits, and livelihoods of workers across the country and around the world. Whether you work or shop at Wal-Mart, the giant retailer's employment practices affect your wages. Wal-Mart leads the race to the bottom in wages and health-care. The company's disregard for the law and systematic suppression of the basic democratic rights of workers is undermining fundamental American values.

There is no questioning the company's incredible efficiency and

shrewd market sense. The innovative business strategy of Sam Walton has transformed the retail industry. But along the way his successors have lost track of the community and worker focused values on which Walton built his success.

As the largest corporation in the world, Wal-Mart has a responsibility to the people who

Wal-Mart threatens the wages, health-care, benefits, and livelihoods of workers across the country and around the world. Whether you work or shop at Wal-Mart, the giant retailer's employment practices affect your wages.

built it. Wal-Mart jobs offer low pay, inadequate and unaffordable healthcare, and off the clock work. Having a job at Wal-Mart means relying on family, the community, or the government to pay the bills and provide health care. Wal-Mart's growth actually depresses natural wage increases. In areas where Wal-Mart increased its share of the retail food market by 20% or more 1998-2002, cashiers' wages fell 40%-31% below the national average increase.

Wal-Mart's disregard for its workers encourages other employers to do the same.

Wal-Mart's disregard for its workers encourages other employers to do the same. The company pressures its extensive network of vendors to cut labor costs and lower prices every year. The demands force clothing, toy, plumbing, and grocery suppliers to layoff workers, lower wages and benefits, and take their factories overseas or move from one low cost country to another.

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Recipe of the Month: Creamed Kale

So rich in calcium it can satisfy any after-meal hunger and protect bones.

Select a large bunch of fresh Kale.

Use one half of bunch. Remove the bitter single center ribs of each leaf, using only the tender part. Steam kale until dark green leaves turn bright green and then turn dark again. While steaming the kale, prepare a white sauce using:

3-5 tablespoons of corn *or* wheat flour to thicken
2 tablespoons of coconut oil *or* Unsalted butter
1/3 cup of heavy cream *or* whole milk *or* ¼ cup water
2 pinches of sea salt *or* to taste
a whisper of pepper

Fold in *thoroughly* steamed kale into white sauce and simmer together for the time it takes to further reduce fluids and thicken to a custard consistency.

Serve portion of 3-5 tablespoons or more immediately with meal or chill for later re-heat.

Thanks to James Mendell for the recipe!

Labor Organizations Unveil United Framework for Immigration Reform

Change to Win [which included the UFCW] continues to play a leading role in the movement to defend the rights of immigrant workers to join a union and be protected on the job. The fight for fair treatment and legal protection for immigrant workers in this country is inextricably linked to the fight for better wages, benefits, and working conditions for all workers. We will not allow workers to be pitted one against the other because of their national origin. Everything labor has ever won came by building a grassroots movement and strong community alliances. Our unions have been organizing and fighting for the rights of immigrant workers, and we will continue to do so.

These are the immigration reform principles that Change to Win unions are united on:

Provide a Workable Path to Legalization for Undocumented Workers

Undocumented workers who have established themselves should be able to earn legal status and citizenship if they work, pay taxes, learn English, undergo background checks, and pay a fine.

Undocumented workers must have the freedom to change jobs, and not be tied to any one employer because of their immigration status.

A stable and legal supply of farm workers should be provided by passing the Agricultural Job

Opportunity, Benefits and Security (AgJOBS) Act, which would permit undocumented farm workers to obtain temporary immigration status with the possibility of becoming permanent residents, and would permit employers to hire a limited number of workers to fill seasonal agricultural jobs.

Our future labor force should be strengthened by passing the DREAM Act, which would ensure that eligible undocumented students can legalize their status so they can go to college and contribute to our economy.

Protect the Wages and Working Conditions of All Workers

All undocumented workers should have the same labor, employment, and civil rights protections that U.S. citizens enjoy, otherwise discrimination and exploitation are inevitable.

All undocumented workers should have the right to organize into a union and to receive back pay for being illegally fired; the right to fair and prevailing wages; the right to a safe and healthy worksite; and whistleblower protections that protect them from employer retaliation.

Undocumented workers who have established themselves should be able to earn legal status and citizenship if they work, pay taxes, learn English, undergo background checks, and pay a fine.

Employers must be prohibited from misclassifying immigrant workers as independent contractors or from using subcontracting arrangements to avoid their responsibilities as employers because these schemes allow them to avoid paying payroll taxes and deny workers labor, employment and civil rights protections.

Hold Employers Accountable for Seeking to Exploit Undocumented Workers

A strong employment verification system is needed that is accurate and efficient, contains sufficient due process and privacy protections, minimizes workplace disruptions and prevents discrimination.

Once reforms are put in place providing an earned path to citizenship for undocumented workers already here, tough legal penalties should apply to employers who recruit, hire or exploit undocumented workers, produce fraudulent documents, retaliate against workers who

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Rick's Report

Our April 25th meeting was held on blustery, rainy and in some places a snowy day. Nancy Holland Young from the Puget Sound Labor Agency was our guest speaker.



Nancy is a former UFCW member and now directs the Labor Agency.

When union members in the King & Snohomish area hit hard times the Labor Agency is there to help them through those times. Even if you are not in this particular area they can still help out by directing people to available resources in other areas. If you know of people that need help, have them call 206-448-9277. The Agency provides direct services to: underemployed, unemployed, low income, elderly, persons with disabilities, and homeless individuals & families. They also pick up household items in good condition—one of the few organizations that still offer this service.

People that came to the meeting made food and cash donations; for the size of the meeting people were very generous.

It was decided that at the May meeting we would start to choose a new name for our retire group. The winning name will receive two Local 21 coffee cups. Get creative and help name our group.

There was a committee of people that was charged with coming up with some fun stuff for us to do as a group—so bring your ideas! Someone already floated the idea

of a barbeque which I really liked. I can smell the charcoal as I write.

We had a discussion about the Employee Free Choice Act which is coming up in the U.S. House and Senate this year. Basically, it would make it easier to form unions. It gives more power to the people who would like to have a union and takes some power from the employer. The employers are screaming that it takes away the secret ballot. During this “voting” period union supporters are intimidated and fired. Union access to the people who want to be organized is severely restricted. The employees are on private property when they are at work after all.

What the Employee Free Choice Act does is give the power to have an election to the employees. They get to decide if an election process is needed. For more information go to www.changetowin.org, click on issues then click on Employee Free Choice Act. Then pick up your phone and call your Congressman and Senators to support working people by voting for this legislation.

After the meeting a few of us went to the Wing Luke Museum in Seattle's International District. This is a community museum full of the history of the Asian Pacific peoples in the Pacific Northwest. I would like to thank UFCW member Sharon Maeda for being our guide. Her first hand knowledge made our

visit much richer. When we saw a picture of a prominent person she was able to make that experience come to life through her knowledge of that person's contribution to their community.

Joan Harshfield has an article in this issue of “Retirement Matters” on her impressions of our visit to Wing Luke (see next page).

Finally, I would like to thank Eleni Henry for the tasty food. She made Mediterranean beans with turkey bacon, corn bread with chunks of feta cheese in it, and a salad. (I am now hungry and salivating) Eleni has the only union restaurant and catering service in Seattle.

The name and address is Kouzina Restaurant and Catering @ 8403 Greenwood Ave. Seattle, Wa. 98103. Phone at 206 784-4224 and the e-mail address is eleni@zoeycatering.com.

Puget Sound Labor Agency

The mission of the Puget Sound Labor Agency is to improve the quality of life for people needing assistance and to provide avenues for unions and their members to help.

*www.pslaonline.org
206-448-9277*

Seattle: 2800 First Ave.#126
Everett: 2810 Lombard Ave #205

Wal-Mart

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As one Honduran manufacturer, worried that his business will soon lose out to Chinese factories, told the *LA Times*, “We’re earning less and producing more.”

But even in Wal-Mart’s shadow, every business must take responsibility for its own choices. In the contract dispute that ended in 2004 in Southern California — which resulted in 70,000 grocery workers on strike and locked out for four and a half months — three of the most profitable companies in the industry hid behind Wal-Mart while effectively eliminating health care for their employees. Safeway, Kroger, and Albertsons control 61 percent of the grocery market in Southern California and their combined profit rose 91 percent over the five years leading up to the strike; yet, the companies demanded their workers to sacrifice their health to increase those profits even more.

At the heart of this fight is a question of values — the values of the hard-working, middle class American worker or the underlying greed of the largest company in the world. Every person working hard for a living earns the right to a decent wage, affordable health care and a voice on the job. But Wal-Mart’s greed provides other companies a license to chip away at the rights of working America, influencing everything from wages to working conditions. Wal-Mart is transforming America from a secure middle class country to one of extremes: those struggling to survive at the bottom and the rich getting richer at the top.

Reprinted from ufcw.org

A Visit to the Wing Luke Museum



By Joann Harshfield

Following the March 31st Retirees Meeting, a few members visited the Wing Luke Museum in Seattle.

I have always been curious as to what was in this museum, so this was a great opportunity to have a guided tour with Sharon Maeda as our guide. She is extremely knowledgeable about the museum and made the tour very interesting. She explained the different aspects of this museum and the history of the building and the surrounding area.

As you go through the museum and read the stories of the Asian Pacific American Community members and their families that came to this country and state and to the city of Seattle you realize how many different cultures were involved in helping to build America.

It is a fascinating, educational and historical journey of an earlier time.

There is an area that features the impact of the Korean War and another area featuring Cambodia.

Take the time to visit this museum in the Chinatown-International District.

Sign up for a guided tour to fully understand the different areas of the Museum.

It’s FREE the 1st Thursday and 3rd Saturday of the month.
10:00am - 8:00pm

Otherwise the museum hours are
Tues - Sun 10:00am - 5:00 pm

Monday it is closed.

Check out their website at www.wingluke.org

The Museum is located at
719 South King St., Seattle 98104

RETIREE PROFILE: Myrtle Jenkins

Myrtle Jenkins is a member of one of Seattle's historic families. Myrtle's grandfather fought in the US Army during the Spanish American War, ending up in the Philippines and brought home a Filipina wife and settled in this area.

Myrtle's father, Frank Jenkins, was a well known longshoreman on Seattle's docks and a leader at ILWU Local 19. She grew up hearing that "you had better not ever cross a picket line!" She said that her father was in the "regular" union (Local 19), but she said her brother was "all up into the Filipino union" (ILWU Local 37, the local for Filipino cannery workers who dispatched out of Seattle to work in the Alaska salmon canneries).

After graduating from Garfield High School, Myrtle worked for several clothing wholesalers in downtown Seattle. When she was between jobs, a friend suggested that she apply at Lucky Stores and she ended up working there for 23 years. She is well remembered as a feisty activist on the picket line in the strike of 1973, one of the longest grocery strikes in Seattle. Myrtle still likes to visit new grocery store openings with a keen eye to what works and doesn't work on everything from layout and displays to traffic patterns.

Myrtle celebrated her 88th birthday earlier this year. She loves to try different cafes from White Center to the University District. Diversity in friends and food always been a part of her life. She remembers fondly going



Myrtle Jenkins is a member of one of Seattle's historic families.

Myrtle has lived at Sunset House for many years and is the only UFCW retiree living there now. She has an easy chair placed so she can see the ferries go back and forth on Puget Sound while her cat, Curly, sits on her lap.

to ethnic festivals and events in her old neighborhood, including church sukiyaki dinners; she also remembers racial injustice and how in 1942, her Japanese American friends and their families were suddenly taken away to internment camps during WWII.

Now, Myrtle marks spring by the arrival of the cruise ships at Pier 66.

And, when President Obama was inaugurated, she was full of pride, like millions of other Americans.

May 30th March for Health Care

**Health care for all in 2009—
Mothers Leading the Way!**

Saturday, May 30th in Seattle

**Starts at 12:30 pm at Pratt Park
(20th Ave S & E Yesler Way, Seattle)**

Bright balloons to deliver a message



by Will Parry, Puget Sound Alliance of Retired Americans

Handing out hundreds of leaflets and colorful balloons to shoppers, some 200 people took part in lively “informational actions” April 25 at Macy’s stores in Southcenter, downtown Seattle and Alderwood Mall.

It was an impressive showing of community support for Macy’s employees, whose union has been in contract negotiations for the past two months. United Food & Commercial Workers Locals 21 and 44 represent 1,500 workers at seven Macy’s locations in the Puget Sound and Bellingham areas.

Members of the Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans joined contingents from other community organizations and from supporting unions in handing out leaflets and balloons. Many customers expressed support for the workers’ demands. For the union members working inside, the spirited demonstration of community support was a solid morale booster.

Union negotiators report movement in some areas, but with the contract expiring April 30 critical issues remain unresolved, including fair wage increases, consistent days off, fair rules governing commissions, seniority for scheduling, and card check neutrality in union organizing campaigns.

Questions about your health care or pension benefits?

Retirees who receive benefits from Sound Health & Wellness (formerly the Retail Clerks Trust) can contact:

soundhealthwellness.com
(206) 282-4500

For questions about pension benefits, contact Sound Pension Trust (former Retail Clerks Trust):

soundretirementtrust.com
(206) 282-4500

Viewpoint on Health:

Flaxseed

by James Mendell,
Local 21 Retiree

The seeds of the flax plant contain oil (sometimes called linseed oil). The U.S. Government changed names decades ago calling fresh flax or fresh ground flax “flax” and then calling stale, baked or boiled “hardware store Linseed”, to avoid confusion. *Linseed* can *not* be used for food, but for putting in oil-based house paint, lubricating machines and as a wood preservative available in hardware stores.

What's It do?

The laxative effect of flaxseed meal creates a dependable, and gentle bowel movement that stops both diarrhea, constipation and plays a role in the cancer protective effects of this herb. The list of benefits of flaxseed (such as the prevention and treatment of heart disease and arthritis, asthma, lower LDL etc) are likely due to the omega-3 fatty acid. Crushed, ground flax meal releases the active oil.

Available Forms

Fresh ground meal or extracted flaxseed oil should be kept refrigerated; when not, the super nutritious oil in the ground meal or oil extract becomes rancid and harmful at room temperature after only a few hours. Refrigeration and/or freezing only extends consumability up to six months for oil or ground meal. Whole flaxseeds must be used before two

years. Whole flax seeds are only useful for relieving constipation.

How to Take It

Pediatric: Flaxseed oil can be added to a child's diet to help balance fatty acids. If an infant is breastfed, the mother may ingest oil or fresh ground seed to increase fat content in breast milk.

Children (2 to 12 years): 1 tsp daily of ground flaxseeds or fresh flaxseed oil for constipation, proper lung development [asthma], and general proper membrane and muscle growth.

Adult: 1 tbsp two times per day or 2 tbsp one time per day. Grind before eating to release the active oil and take with lots of water, juice and / or with any breakfast cereals.

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, contain active substances that can trigger side effects and interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, under the supervision of a practitioner knowledgeable in the field of botanical medicine.

People with either diabetes or schizophrenia may lack the ability to convert ALA to EPA and DHA. Therefore, people with these

conditions should add omega-3 fatty acids from dietary sources rich in EPA and DHA, such as fish.

Possible Interactions

Blood Thinning Medications
Omega-3 fatty acids may increase the blood-thinning effects of aspirin or warfarin (Coumadin) or the stroke-causing herb Ginkgo Biloba. While the combination of aspirin and omega-3 fatty acids may actually be HARMFUL under most disease circumstances (such as heart disease), they should only be taken together under the guidance and supervision of your healthcare provider.

For normal health, prevent the need for aspirin, coumadin or ginkgo later by eating the flaxseed now. Aspirin tears down all proteins in muscles, hair, fingernails, organs, heart and brain creating a possible bleeding crisis while flaxseed strengthens all the proteins while maintaining proper blood thinning without bleeding.

Cyclosporine

Taking omega-3 fatty acids during cyclosporine therapy may reduce toxic side effects (such as high blood pressure and kidney damage) associated with this medication in transplant patients. All drugs make other drugs and foods dangerous.

Immigration Reform

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exercise their labor rights, or evade the payment of taxes on undocumented workers.

Secure Our Borders

A major overhaul of the immigration system will make border enforcement more realistic and doable. Improvements to border enforcement should include “smart border” measures that combine personnel, equipment and technology to reduce illegal immigration; efficient processing and fair proceedings; and strategies that focus on detecting and deterring terrorists and cracking down on criminal smugglers and employers that break the law.

Keep Immigrant Families Together

The Department of Homeland Security should not engage in military-style raids of workplaces that subject workers and their families to inhumane treatment and violate their basic due process rights.

Our immigrant quota system should be updated so that families do not have to wait years to be reunited, and so that a major cause of illegal immigration is removed. The federal government should reduce the long administrative backlog that exists in processing legal permanent resident visas, or “green cards”.

Have Health Insurance Questions?

SHIBA Helpline: 1-800-562-6900

The Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors (SHIBA) Helpline provides free health insurance education, assistance, and advocacy to all Washington residents.

The SHIBA Helpline is a great place to get help with questions or problems regarding Medicare, Medicaid, Basic Health, or your own private health insurance. Each year, the SHIBA Helpline serves about 150,000 people, saving them nearly \$1 million! You can reach the helpline by phone at **1-800-562-6900**, online at **www.insurance.wa.gov/shiba/**, or by emailing **SHIBAHelpLine@oic.wa.gov**.

Solve Economic Problems that are a Root Cause of Immigration

The U.S. government must reverse current harmful “free trade” policies that hurt workers in developing countries by undercutting their domestic agriculture programs and by preventing strong unions from forming that could lead to higher wages and better working conditions.

The U.S. government should implement strong investment and aid programs that will promote job growth in primary migrant-exporting areas, including infrastructure development and improved educational opportunities.

Our immigrant quota system should be updated so that families do not have to wait years to be reunited, and the Federal government should reduce the long administrative backlog that exists in processing... green cards.

Re-printed from changetowin.org. In our area, UFCW 21 works with OneAmerica and other organizations on the issue of immigration reform. For more information on OneAmerica, visit them online at weareoneamerica.org

Are You Kidding Me?!

by Rick Erickson,
Local 21 Retiree Coordinator

- Washington State has the 4th largest union membership in the U.S. **20%** of the work force is union.
- Washington State also ranks **4th** in the U.S. for the number of millionaires that live here.
- Washington State is **44th or 45th** in the U.S. for money per capita spent on our public school children.
- Washington State has one of **the most** regressive tax systems in the U.S.
- In “liberal Washington” the poor pay **18%** of their income on taxes, while the rich pay **3%**.
- The middle class lost **\$15 billion** during the 8 years of the Bush administration.
- Working & middle class earners have lost a **third** of our disposable income over the last 30 years. The earners 30 years ago were single earner families, today the families with less disposable income are double income families.
- A woman at my dry cleaners works 5 days, 12 hours a day totaling **60 hours a week**. She needs to work 3 more hours a week to qualify for overtime hours established 103 years ago. Who says we do not need the Employee Free Choice Act?
- The combined 2007 income of 1,130 CEO's around the world was **\$2.224 trillion**.

Did you know...

Retail clerks were the 1st to establish overtime pay in Lynn, Massachusetts.

Local 131, in 1906 won a **30%** increase after **63 hours** had been worked in a week.

- These **1,130 people** were paid more than the combined incomes of all **922 million** people on the continent of Africa.
- May 1st or May Day is celebrated by working people around the globe. This holiday actually celebrates the fight for the **8-hour day**, which began here in the U.S.A.
- It took around **50 years** before the first contacts were won which established 8 hours as the time worked in a day.
- **50%** of Americans say they cannot meet their financial obligations for more than a month.
- Disturbingly, **28%** of that 50% say they couldn't support themselves for more than **2 weeks** of unemployment.

For sources, contact Rick at 206 436 6598 or e-mail at rerickson@ufcw21.org. I will gladly share my sources. If you read anything that makes you say “Are you kidding me?!” pass it on and it may be published in a future edition of the newsletter.

Going Wild on eBay

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cooker heaven but at the same time I was exhilarated and excited by the challenge.

It was like going on a hunt. You might find something, maybe not. And it would depend on your own skills whether you would be successful and drag it home or not. Surprisingly, eBay had 9,000 PC's from which to choose. All makes, some old and used, some new. At that point, I was confident that I'd find what I needed eventually...and I did.

I ended up buying a larger PC of the same kind I had..it was new and I bought it for \$50 less than I paid for it on QVC.

So then I bought two more for me as backup in case I did something careless (stupid) with the stove again. And while I was at it I thought my daughter would like one too.

My husband started being concerned, as the eBay deliveries started to arrive, that I was going crazy buying Pressure Cookers. But it was too late for me.. I was hooked, like a fish, and couldn't get off. The wide world of eBay opened my eyes to the infinite possibilities of buying. I could get anything I wanted without moving a muscle. No more aching back or sore feet from tromping through the mall looking for things that were sometimes impossible to find. I could just sit comfortably scrolling down through pages and pages of endless material offerings. From Pressure Cookers I branched out to updating my music collection and then I bought up every DVD available. My wall shelves became

packed with so many DVDs that visitors probably thought that I was in a home-based video rental business.

I traveled into the book section of eBay and began to add to my cookbook collection. I spent \$60 each buying two more well preserved 35 year old copies of the same Betty Crocker cookbook I bought in 1973 and used like a bible in my kitchen. Now each of my girls would have a cherished memory from their early years.

I couldn't seem to stop..I was on a roll. Our house was burglarized and all my husband's diamond and gold rings, that I had lovingly given to him, disappeared. So going back to eBay I found the jewelry category and though I knew better I was not in control of my digits. I pecked out maximum bid amounts on rings and eventually by Christmas I had collected 23 rings to put in a special jewelry box that was wrapped and placed under the tree. It was a remarkable gift given in love.

And then I should have stopped. But with a sideways glance I saw the multitude of gemstones offered by thousands of Chinese and Thai gem dealers and then the world stretched again and I started to seriously buy gemstones.. For fun and then for future investments. My husband saw the seriousness of my addiction when I bid and won a 2.73 ct Tanzanite for the mere price of \$360 (A triple AAA grade D' Block Tanzanite generally goes for \$600 to \$1100 a carat)

Hey, is there a 12 step program for eBay addicts?

what a steal!! Then I bought up some Bixbite or red emerald as an investment.. Its 1000x rarer than diamonds and can sell for up to \$50,000 a carat.

Now I know that I don't own museum grade gems in my collection but it's pretty stuff. And if you have 400 gems you need somewhere to put them so they're nicely displayed. Those kind of cases I learned are easily found on eBay at Jewelry findings sites. While in my gem purchase stage I met people from Thailand and Arizona and Texas. They're nice people who probably started like me and probably like me are in complete denial. Each time I feel "completed" I find a new direction to spin off..a new thing I feel I must own.

My husband is almost on a first name basis with the UPS man. I'm getting so many packages coming from Asia that the mailman carries it up to my door in a box when I need to sign for it. I suppose enough is enough. Even a shopaholic can finally run out of things to buy. Then again eBay has new dvd's for sale, you can buy a 6' x 3' Chinese picture on silk for \$30 ... mounted, and houses are getting pretty cheap to buy in Arizona.

My world has definitely been expanded by eBay and the Internet, unfortunately my wallet hasn't. Hey, is there a 12 step program for eBay addicts?



UFCW Local 21 Retiree Caucus
5030 First Avenue South, Suite 200
Seattle, WA 98134-2438

Join Us for the Next Meeting of the Local 21 Retiree Caucus:

**Tuesday,
May 26, 2009**

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

UFCW Local 21 Office
5030 First Ave S, Seattle

sw/opeti8/20090313

Golden coffins and brass urns

By Rap Lewis

When Joe Worker dies, his widow Jane will receive a check for \$255. That's Social Security's princely death benefit. It's been pegged at \$255 for years.

When Eugene Isenberg, the president of Nabors Industries, dies, the company will award his estate a death benefits worth about \$263.6 million. That's enough to pay one million Social Security death benefits, with spare change left over. We figured it out on our excellent AARP calculator.

Payments such as the one due to the Nabors estate are sometimes

called "golden coffins." A check for \$255 may not even buy a brass urn for a deceased worker's ashes.

Nabors Industries is not unique. The Wall Street Journal reports that many companies include in their executive pay packages posthumous stock awards, posthumous severance payments -- even a continuation of executive salaries and bonuses for years after they have gone to that glorious corner office in the sky.

Lockheed Martin even paid its top executive a \$1 million "death benefit" while he was still alive.

Corporate boards make much of the need to match executive pay to executive performance. But how do you measure the performance of a dead executive?

We're not against death benefits for executives. We just think they ought to be pegged to the Social Security death benefit. And we think Social Security's death benefit should be at

least tripled if it is to be anything other than insulting.

(Reprinted from The Retire Advocate, September, 2008)