

At Your Service

Orange County Employees Retirement System

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Robert Thomas' life doubles as history lesson

At Your Service



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Board of Retirement Meetings:
All regular business meetings are held in OCERS
Board Room at 8:30 a.m.

October 22, 2007
November 19, 2007
December 17, 2007

Sign up for Direct Deposit

If you are getting ready to retire, or have already retired, now is the best time to sign up for direct deposit.



There are a number of important reasons you might want to consider getting your monthly retirement from OCERS via direct deposit:

- In the event of a natural disaster such as an earthquake or in the wake of an act of terrorism, it might be several weeks before OCERS would have the ability to mail out paper checks.
- In August 2006, several Retiree checks were stolen sometime after they had been delivered to a U.S. postal facility in Orange County. Although OCERS did reissue the checks, the Retirees didn't receive the checks until well after the first of the month.
- Convenience. It is simply easier for you to have your funds deposited directly into your bank, credit union or other financial institution at the beginning of the month, providing you with immediate access to your money.

Retired Members can sign up for direct deposit by completing the "Retirees Authorization for Electronic Deposit of Retirement Checks" form, which can be printed out at www.ocers.org. And for those Retired members who have a PIN number and are enrolled at the Member Information Center, they can use the "Direct Deposit" tab to sign up to have their allowance deposited directly into their financial institution.

"The most important thing that a Retired member can do to insure they get their monthly retirement allowance from OCERS at the beginning of each month is to sign up for direct deposit," said Suzanne Jenike, OCERS' Member Services Director.

Robert E. Thomas: rich life doubles as history lesson

Those who enter the Robert E. Thomas Hall of Administration at 10 Civic Center Plaza in Santa Ana don't likely give much thought to the man whose name is inscribed on the County building.

But Thomas' roles as Director of Building Services for Orange County in the mid -1960s and subsequent service as County Administrative Officer – as well as his service on the Orange County Employees Retirement System Board of Retirement – have left a lasting legacy for those who live and work in the region.

But it was a fateful series of events that began on Dec. 7, 1941 that ultimately led Thomas to a two-decade management career with the County of Orange in 1964.

“I graduated in the class of 1941,” Thomas, now 88, recalled of his undergraduate education at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. “They pushed us out early (February) because war was coming.”

The young ensign reported to the USS Nevada, a battleship that proceeded from California across the Pacific to Hawaii. For much of that year, Thomas mastered the use of an anti-aircraft battery in exercises south of the island of Oahu involving the USS Nevada, USS Oklahoma and USS Arizona.

But despite the countless hours he spent at sea preparing for battle, Thomas admitted he didn't believe the winds of war would reach paradise. “I said ‘War? You should see Hawaii. You can smell the flowers. There will be no war.’ ”

On Sunday morning, Dec. 7, 1941, Thomas was awakened from a sound sleep in his bunk on the ship when the alarm sounded. He recalls words to the affect: “This is no drill; we are being bombed.”

Thomas ran topside and immediately began working with other members of the crew to fire at the Japanese bombers attacking the American fleet. But the surprise attack was devastating.



USS Nevada on December 7, 1941



“The Arizona exploded and there was a huge orange fireball,” recalled Thomas, noting the blast blew him off his feet.

Soon thereafter, a bomb hit the deck of the USS Nevada and Thomas was enveloped in a concussion that included thick smoke and a loud noise that still resounds in his memory more than 65 years later.

The 22-year-old sailor quickly realized he was hit, severely wounded in both his right wrist (which he was unable to move) and

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Financial Strategy Seminars help prepare for future

If you are planning to retire within the next 3 to 30 years, you should plan to attend a free Financial Strategies for Retirement Planning Seminar.

The Financial Strategies for Retirement Planning Seminar consists of a three-session workshop. Each meeting will cover important topics for successful planning. The third meeting concentrates on information from an OCERS representative. Individuals and couples are welcome to attend. There is plenty of free on-site parking for those attending.

Various topics of interest and importance will be covered over the course of the three-session workshop. Some of them are:

- Deferred Compensation investment choices
- Tax-free and low-cost investing for profit
- How to determine retirement goals
- Investment choices to consider in the current stock market

The third meeting of each workshop focuses on information relating to OCERS, including such topics as:

- Eligibility for Retirement
- Reciprocal benefits
- Benefit calculations, and how to apply for your retirement benefits from OCERS online
- How to determine your future OCERS benefit

Don't miss out on this valuable information. It will help you prepare for your future. The seminars are free, but reservations are required. To make your reservation to attend this seminar, please log on at www.ocers.org and click on "Retirement Seminars."

An important note: anyone registering for the Financial Strategy Seminar should plan on attending all three sessions. For more information on upcoming Financial Strategies for Retirement Planning Seminars, please call Catie Flores at Financial Management Specialists, (714) 245-1954.

OCERS' staff to host info booth at OCEA Health Fair on Oct. 2

OCERS will be hosting a booth at the upcoming "Medieval Pageant" Health Fair, presented by the Orange County Employees Association. Members of OCERS' Communications and Member Services divisions will be available to answer questions that members have about retirement seminars, enrolling in the Member Information Center and other topics. The 2007 OCEA Health Fair will be held at OCEA Headquarters, 830 North Ross St., Santa Ana, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 2.

SCHEDULED DATES:

The Financial Strategy Seminar is a three-session workshop, and persons signing up should plan on attending all three sessions of the Workshop.

Dates are as follows:

Workshop

Wednesdays

October 3, 10 and 17, 2007

6 – 9:30 p.m.

Workshop

Wednesdays

November 7, 14 and 28, 2007

6 – 9:30 p.m.

OCERS offers Pre-Retirement Planning Seminars

Now is the perfect time to begin thinking about your long-term financial well-being. Because when it comes to retirement planning, it's never too early – or too late – to get started. So no matter when you plan to retire, it is important to attend a Pre-Retirement Planning Seminar offered by OCERS.

The few hours you spend at the seminar can have a beneficial and long-lasting impact on your quality of life after you retire.

The Pre-Retirement Planning Seminar is generally held twice a month at OCERS, 2223 Wellington Ave., Santa Ana, and includes a presentation by an OCERS Retirement Program Specialist. The one-session, five-hour seminar is free, and there is plenty of free on-site parking for those attending.

Various topics of interest and importance to you will be covered. A representative from “Deferred Compensation” will be addressing options for withdrawing funds from your 457 plan; a Social Security representative will discuss your Social Security and Medicare benefits; a representative from Retiree Medical will discuss medical benefit options; and an OCERS Retirement Specialist will focus on your OCERS retirement plan. Among the topics covered by the OCERS representative:

- When you are eligible for retirement
- How to determine your future monthly benefit from OCERS
- How to determine OCERS-related benefits for your spouse or other eligible beneficiaries
- When should new retirees expect their first retirement check
- Reciprocal benefits for employees who have worked for two or more retirement systems
- How to enroll and use the Member Information Center
- Deferred Retirement
- Returning to work under OCERS after retirement
- Cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) after retirement
- How to schedule an appointment with an OCERS Retirement Program Specialist

Don't miss out on this valuable information. It will help you prepare for your future. The seminars are free, and no registration is necessary. For more information, please log on at www.ocers.org and click on “Retirement Seminars.”

SCHEDULED DATES:

These one-session seminars will be held from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays.

Dates are as follows:

October 3, 2007

October 17, 2007

November 7, 2007

November 28, 2007

OCERS' staff to host info booth at OCFA Health Fair on Oct. 2

OCERS will be hosting an information booth at the upcoming Orange County Fire Authority Health Fair. The event will be held at the Orange County Fire Authority, 1 Fire Authority Road, Irvine, from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 2. A representative from OCERS' Member Services division will be available to answer questions that Orange County Fire Authority employees have about retirement seminars, enrolling in the Member Information Center and other topics.

Investment Performance Review: U.S., International Equities fuel growth in second quarter of 2007

By Shanta Chary, Chief Investment Officer



Each quarter, the Board of Retirement receives a capital markets overview from the investment consultant (Callan Associates) and undertakes a thorough review of each investment manager's performance as measured against the appropriate benchmark for the asset class and the manager's peer groups.

At the regular Board of Retirement meeting held on Aug. 27, 2007, it was reported that OCERS' total fund increased 3.68 percent in the second quarter of 2007, and the fund increased 6.17 percent during the first half of the year (Jan. 1, 2007 thru June 30, 2007). Total assets at quarter end were valued at approximately \$7.7 billion.

Indeed, as of June 30, 2007, OCERS' one-year return was 15.69 percent, while the retirement system's fund recorded a 12.64 percent annualized return for the three years ending on that date. Additionally, OCERS' five-year annualized return as of June 30 was 11.26 percent.

OCERS' International Equity portfolio posted significant increases in the second quarter (ranging from 6.84 percent for Developed Markets to 15.83 percent for Emerging Markets), while the Retirement System's Domestic Equity Account portfolio posted a 6.16 percent return during the three-month period. Domestic and international fixed income posted negative returns for the quarter. The portfolios returned -0.74 percent and -1.62%, respectively. Both OCERS' Real Estate (3.07 percent) and Alternative Assets (6.15 percent) classes recorded positive returns for the three-month period.

We have been seeing the subprime loan crisis unfold which in turn has impacted the credit markets and the overall health of the economy. In the last couple of months, there has been an unwinding of leverage and a repricing of risk which means investors have started to demand a higher return for risky investments. Meanwhile the Federal Reserve has been monitoring the credit markets very closely and will make a decision in September on whether to cut interest rates to keep the U.S. economy from experiencing a significant slowdown.

For the OCERS portfolio, the asset allocation policy adopted by the Board is broadly diversified with a low risk profile and is well positioned for the challenging investment environment ahead. In addition, if the fund experiences lower investment returns in the coming years, the approaches described below will help:

- Maintaining a long-term perspective on investing.
- Carefully determining the amount of risk taken.
- Focusing on efficient use of the risk taken.
- Banking gains to help cover potential losses.

THOMAS: a rewarding life spent in service

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his right leg (broken).

There was no first aid kit on the ship, but other sailors helped by using torn pieces of his uniform to temporarily stop the bleeding. And he and other wounded sailors were transported to the hospital on shore.

“I remember a Japanese plane crashed in the hospital yard,” he said. “By night time, I was looking out at the harbor and could still see all the fires (from the attack).”

It would take almost a year for Thomas to recover from his wounds; indeed, there would be three operations performed on his leg before it healed.

It was during the final stages of his medical recovery that he was shipped to Norco (in Riverside County) in summer 1942.

“I didn’t know Orange County from a hole in the ground,” admitted the Springfield, Ill. native.

But one day, another sailor and he borrowed a nurse’s car and headed from the Inland Empire to enjoy a day at the beach in Corona del Mar. En route, they drove through Old Towne Orange.

“In 1963, when I was thinking of retiring (from the U.S. Navy), I remembered that Circle (at Chapman Avenue and Glassell Street) in Orange; that’s why I live here.”

Thomas would serve in the U.S. Navy until 1964 and the master’s degree he had earned in civil engineering and experience overseeing building projects around the globe helped prepare him for a career with the County of Orange.

And the type of heroism and courage Thomas saw on the deck of the USS Nevada on a tragic December morning almost 66 years ago was something he saw throughout his 21-year career with the County.

“I found the employees of the County and department heads were as competent and conscientious as anyone I served with in the Navy.”

Thomas oversaw a number of significant construction projects for the County, including the building of the Civic Center, a new jail, law library, juvenile hall, several courthouses, the Probation Department, four fire stations and a new airport terminal.

Thomas has kept busy since retirement in February 1985, including speaking to various groups about his experiences at Pearl Harbor and even serving on OCERS’ Board of Retirement from July 1985 through September 1996.

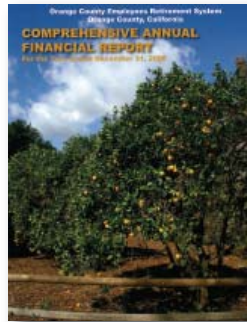
As for his goal of keeping his legacy anonymous, Thomas admits his efforts were not entirely successful: “They named the Hall of Administration after me.”

Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, Popular Annual Financial Report available online

The 2006 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) is now available to view or print from OCERS' Web site. In addition, copies of the 102-page document are available at OCERS' office in Santa Ana. Information in the CAFR is designed to provide a complete and accurate review of the year's operations. It contains information about OCERS' investments and investment portfolio, financial statements, funding status and membership for the year ended December 31, 2006.

Our first edition of the Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR) for the year ended December 31, 2006 is also available to view and print online or obtain at our office. This financial report is a short summary of our financial report written in plain English.

The CAFR and PAFR are among the many resources and information available to members at OCERS' Web site. To view the CAFR or PAFR online, learn about upcoming retirement seminars or download copies of brochures on a number of important topics, visit www.ocers.org.



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