

Three Requests

I have three requests for you. First, log on to www.actorsequity.org and go to the “Members Only” part of the website. (If you don’t have a computer, I have four requests for you – the first being to buy a computer. Really. It’s here to stay.) On the Members Only site, click on the “Go Green/2011 AEA Vote” icon, and sign up to vote online – whether you plan on voting or not. It costs a bunch of money (your dues money) to print the ballots and candidate bios and more money to mail them to you and (if you actually vote) yet more money to mail the ballots to the ballot counters. I’d also really like you to read the bios and vote – but that’s not one of my requests.

Secondly, while you’re on the Members Only part of the AEA website, click on the “My Profile” link under my picture, and then click on “Contact Info.” Check to make sure that AEA has your current address, phone number and e-mail address. That way, if AEA gets a check for you or if someone wants to offer you a job, Equity knows where to find you. If you still haven’t bought a computer since the previous paragraph, you may write AEA or call membership with your contact information.

My third request is to make sure that the Equity-League Pension and Health Funds have your correct contact information. This way, if you are fortunate enough to earn health coverage, the Fund can reach you before the deadline for accepting the \$100 premium. E-mail them at health@equityleague.org or pension@equityleague.org or, once again, write the P&H office or call them at 212-869-9380. You’ll notice that is a different number from the AEA number; that’s because AEA and the Funds are two separate organizations: separate staffs and separate boards.

Speaking of P&H, here’s a little commercial: it’s easier to qualify for the Equity-League health plan than the SAG or AFTRA plan and our premiums are lower. As for our pension plan, it’s MUCH easier to qualify (two weeks of work in a year makes it a qualifying year and five years makes you vested.) When you get your annual statement from the Pension Fund, check out how your benefit accrues: not only do you get a percentage of your earnings added to your annual retirement benefit, but you have eleven dollars per month or \$132 per year added to your benefit for every year of work. If you work two weeks when you are 25 and you lived for 25 years after taking your pension, those two weeks of work would put an extra \$3300 in your pocket.. The moral is: whenever you can, make sure you work at least two weeks each year under an Equity contract; it may not pay you much in the moment, but it will pay you handsomely later.

As long as I am in this mother-hen-mode, let me remind you of the three-legged stool theory of retirement planning. One leg is Social Security, one leg is your union pension plan(s), and the third is your personal savings – such as our 401(k) Plan, which you can use to grow your savings on a tax-deferred basis under most Equity contracts. Don’t be like your foolish President, who in his 30’s disdained to set aside money from his Broadway salary for his children’s education because he was so sure that when it finally came time for college he would be pulling down a nifty six-figure salary on some sitcom. There was no sitcom; and the kids, with the aid of several loans, went to state schools. However, despite my terrible financial planning, I won’t spend my declining years eating cat food – all thanks to my union pensions.