When dockers in the Netherlands discovered that their pension funds had been stolen by a big multi-national corporation, they knew it would be a tough fight. The thief, they say, was Aegon – a powerful company with impressive holdings in the United States, including the Transamerica insurance empire and signature “pyramid building” in San Francisco’s financial district.

When the dockers first contacted the ILWU, they asked for a letter, and International President Bob McEllrath responded quickly with a strongly-worded message to Aegon executives. Aegon finally agreed to meet with the dockers, but refused to return the pension funds. That’s when the dockers decided it was time to go public, expose Aegon’s misdeeds, and start building community support on a global scale.

In the United States, the dockers approached the ILWU and Teamsters, because both unions had a track record of international campaigns and solidarity support. Niek Stam, National Secretary for the Dutch dockers union (known as FNV Bondgenoten in the Netherlands) explained that his union and the ILWU have worked together on several projects, including support for the Blue Diamond workers in Sacramento and the Maritime Union of Australia when it was under attack by employers and government union-busters.

Working together, the ILWU, Teamsters, and Dutch Dockers organized an impressive event in front of Aegon’s Transamerica pyramid building in downtown San Francisco on January 12th. The Teamsters provided a 16-wheeler with a sound stage, and a 20-foot tall inflatable “fat cat” to illustrate the growing danger of corporate greed. The ILWU Local 10 drill team and members added snap and style to the event.

ILWU President Bob McEllrath emceed the rally, telling the crowd that “Americans are sick and tired of seeing corporate greed destroy America. We’re fed up with companies that throw-away good jobs, steal pensions, and ruin communities just to make a buck.” At the end of the rally, McEllrath joined Chuck Mack from the Teamsters, Niek Stam, and Dutch pension advocate Ton Jansen to meet briefly inside the pyramid building with an Aegon representative who promised to take the group’s unified message of solidarity to his superiors.

Coast solidarity: Committeeen Ray Ortiz, Jr., (R) and Leal Sundet (L) attended the Dutch docker rally on Jan 12th. “The Coast stands 100% behind the Dutch dockers,” they said.
Dear Editor,

In looking at "The ILWU Story" (a history of our union available for purchase from the ILWU book sale), I feel that I contributed to help building a certain part of the union by being the first Black longshore worker from Local 8 to become a Walking Boss/Foreman and member of Local 92. The other Black was Jasper Bohanin, who is deceased. I had 34 years in the industry before two back surgeries forced me to retire.

Our union is the best in the world and, even at retirement, I will still walk the picket line. This isn't a job but just a point of information.

Elvis L. Carter, Sr. ("Cassius")
Portland, Oregon

Dear Editor,

I'd like to set the record straight about an important ILWU leader from Local 19. Frank Jenkins was an imposing, charismatic, extremely handsome man. In 1968, Local 19 President Martin Jugum first introduced me to Frank, who was then a recently-retired ILWU Local 19 longshoreman. At the time, I was young man. Frank and I became friends, later soul mates, and he became my mentor.

Frank started working as a Seattle longshoreman in 1918. After working fifty years on the docks, Frank retired – then took a job with Seattle Stevedore as a superintendent. It was this job, late in life, that generated some controversy which I hope to clear up in this column.

Frank was a dedicated family man. He always refused to work weekends because he and his wife Marie – a caustic, witty, beautiful lady – were totally devoted to raising Frank’s grandson, Brian Jenkins. Frank worked hard for our union, but felt it was important to spend quality weekend time with Brian. I think this devotion to his family and grandson may have been due to Frank’s early years when his own family life was less stable.

Life hadn’t been easy for Frank because he was Black, and because his father was a career U.S. Army soldier who had to move often, so Frank and his family were constantly being relocated. When Frank’s father left the Army, the family settled in Seattle where Frank’s dad became the head man at a waterfront pier. This opened the door for Frank to become a longshoreman. For many years, Frank was a behind-the-scenes leader of ILWU Local 19. Frank said that he didn’t enjoy being in the limelight, and was always modest and humble. But it’s also true that opportunities for a black man at that time were more limited than today.

Frank lived on the Pacific Ocean and spent many weekends at my home on the Washington Coast in the little town of Cosmopolis. My wife, Jacque, would spend time with Frank’s wife, Marie, while Frank and I would talk union business long into the night. From those sessions I learned a great deal about the history of both Frank and the ILWU.

It was always clear to me that Frank’s main passion in life was to advance unionism, which he knew was the only way for workers to earn a respectable living. Frank contributed four decades of rank-and-file leadership to the ILWU, including his participation in the 1934 Seattle strike. In the 1950’s, he testified at Harry Bridges’ fifth trial, when the government was attempting to revoke Harry’s citizenship. Although the U.S. Supreme Court had previously overturned Harry’s criminal conviction for perjury, Frank was persecuted for helping Harry on the witness stand. The Coast Guard confiscated Frank’s waterfront pass, preventing him from working. The Coast Guard finally returned the pass four months later.

After Frank retired as a longshoreman in 1967, he took a Superintendent position the next year with Seattle Stevedore. This move angered a small group of ultra-left critics in Local 19. They’d say: “Frank Jenkins did many good things for the members of our local, but he showed his true colors when he sold the union out and switched sides to work for the employer.”

I thought this criticism was unfair and wrong. I felt Frank was always totally honest, unassuming and extremely effective in helping the members of Local 19. Frank’s critics in Local 19 couldn’t accept the fact that he was a good union man who later became a good superintendent after retiring. Having known some bad unionists in my time, I always preferred working with the ones who were decent and respectful, like Frank. But that kind of common sense didn’t hold water with the radicals who said that Frank had “sold out” and worse.

I had a chance to set things straight in 1986, when Local 19 was celebrating their 100th Anniversary. The local officers invited me to come from San Francisco where I was working as an ILWU Coast Committee, to speak at their historic event. I was honored to be seated at the head table with Harry Bridges, his wife Nicky Bridges, and Martin Jugum. I wish that Frank Jenkins could have been there with us at that table, but unfortunately he passed away in 1973.

As I was finishing my address to the celebrants, I said that I wanted to talk about Frank Jenkins, and his decision to take the job of Superin- tendent after retiring as a longshoreman. I noted that Frank had put in 50 years of hard, dirty work on the waterfront. I told the audience that Harry Bridges and the other International officers wanted Frank to work as a superintendent because they knew containerization was exploding in the 1960’s, and a man of Frank’s caliber could help the ILWU by having fair, decent people in management to help us cope with the dramatic changes that were coming. Frank initially turned down Harry’s suggestion, but Bridges persevered and Frank reluctantly took the Superintendent’s job with Seattle Stevedore.

After my speech, the chairman asked me if there was anything he wanted to add to my statement about Frank and the ILWU officials who encouraged Frank to take the superintendent job. Harry stood up, turned to face the audience, and said: "That is correct. Every word Randy spoke was the truth." Martin Jugum later told me that Frank Jenkins had more principle in his little finger than most people have in their entire body.

An appropriate ending to Frank’s story is the following unedited, hand-written statement from Bob Swanson, a retired ILWU longshoreman and life-long activist, who is the last living longshoreman that was a friend and co-worker of Frank Jenkins.

"Frank was a very active union man, 100% union. Frank served on the executive board of local 19 and a caucus-convention delegate seven times.

To this man the union was number one. In the evening TV, radio, etc. were all second. He would be studying the contract so he would be familiar with the bargaining points seven times.

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To this man the union was number one. In the evening TV, radio, etc. were all second. He would be studying the contract so he would be ready for the employers the next day. My brother, LeRoy Swanson, was in Frank’s gang for many years.

I’ve missed Frank for the 35 years since his death, and I hope others will remember and appreciate the contribution he made to our union.

(For Frank Jenkins, #55143, was born on November 11, 1903. He retired on January 1, 1967, and passed on April 4, 1973) Elvis L. Carter, Sr. ("Cassius")

Randy Vekich, Local 24
Aberdeen, Washington

Send your letters to the editor to: The Dispatcher, 1188 Franklin St., San Francisco, CA 94109-6800 or email to editor@ilwu.org
Rite Aid workers are proving why the Employee Free Choice Act is essential

When the 600 workers at Rite Aid in Lancaster’s distribution center in Lancaster, CA, voted to join the ILWU last March, they had to overcome a nasty union-busting campaign, so there was plenty to celebrate when they beat the odds by winning their union election.

Rite Aid didn’t stop their union-busting campaign after the Lancaster workers voted the won, and the company is now blocking agreement on a first contract. Those tactics are frustrating but common with union companies. What’s different is that Rite Aid’s behavior is beginning to attract national attention as the U.S. Senate considers passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, a new law that would protect the rights of workers who want to join labor unions.

“There’s no better example for why we need the Employee Free Choice Act than what’s happening to workers at Rite Aid in Lancaster,” says ILWU International Vice-President Joe Radisch, who oversees the Rite Aid organizing campaign.

Radisch points out that Rite Aid started attacking workers back in 2006, using illegal threats and intimidations to intimidate employees. During the next two years, Rite Aid took dozens of federal law suits, but existing laws let the company walk away with only a slap on the wrist.

Now the Rite Aid workers are facing another challenge, as employees try to negotiate a first contract with an anti-union employer.

“It’s obvious to everyone that Rite Aid is only pretending to bargain a first contract,” says ILWU Organizing Director Peter Olney. “The company’s strategy is just like other union-busters: stall the talks and hope workers will get demoralized and give up.” He said, adding that Rite Aid has consistently underestimated the resolve of Lancaster workers in the past, and seems to be doing the same thing again.

In the past, Rite Aid might have had a better chance of winning the waiting game, but not anymore, says Joe Radisch. “The rules of the game are changing, and Rite Aid’s arrogance is attracting attention in Washington and around the country,” he says, offering some examples:

• Union leaders who gather each week in Washington to discuss strategy for passing the Employee Free Choice Act, are citing the experience of Rite Aid workers in Lancaster as a prime example of why the new labor law is needed.

• Members of Congress and their staff are becoming more familiar with the Rite Aid experience in Lancaster. Several key members have met with Rite Aid employees to get detailed information about the company’s union-busting tactics.

• Labor unions, including unions that already have contracts with Rite Aid, are coordinating with the ILWU to support the workers in Lancaster, and are joining forces on February 13th at the company’s headquarters in Hawthorne, PA, and at retail stores on the West Coast.

• In Southern California, the Los Angeles Labor Federation, representing 800,000 workers, recently held briefings on the Rite Aid situation in Lancaster. The Federation is planning a 10-mile march for justice on February 5th to press for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act and call attention to union-busting by Rite Aid and other companies.

• Consumer, senior, and environmental groups are getting involved. Senior groups are concerned about consumer protection problems in Rite Aid stores, and union retiree groups are angered by the company’s union-busting. In late January, the Sierra Club endorsed the Employee Free Choice Act, recognizing that good jobs and environmental protection should go together. The California Alliance of Retired Americans recently passed a resolution denouncing Rite Aid’s union-busting at their annual convention, and pledged to help educate shoppers at key Rite Aid stores.

• Shareholders and Wall Street analysts continue to raise concerns about the company’s mismanagement and performance problems. Rite Aid’s fraudulent overstatement of past earnings has seriously damaged the company’s credibility, spurring fears for current and future shareholders. Accountability Rite Aid worker Carlos “Chico” Rubio attended the company’s emergency shareholder meeting in New York City on December 2nd, where he spoke to concerned shareholders, analysts, and reporters.

• During the meeting, Rubio urged CEO Mary Sammons to work with employees to solve problems, and invited her to visit with employees at the Lancaster distribution center. Sammons declined the invitation.

• Journalists are requesting more information about Rite Aid’s experience in Lancaster, and are beginning to file reports that document the company’s union-busting tactics. In late January, the Washington Monthly published a 3,000 word article featuring Rite Aid’s anti-union effort in Lancaster.

• ILWU members and persons recently learned that their health insurance plan paid Rite Aid almost $8 million dollars for prescription drugs last year. Other unions are undertaking similar investigations to see if they have been doing business with a union-busting company.

With momentum moving their way, Rite Aid employees in Lancaster are confident they will prevail. But the real game-changer in this struggle could be the new President in the White House. “The ILWU and other labor unions are in much better shape to deal with union-busters now that Barack Obama is President,” says Radisch. “We can expect politicians to do all the heavy lifting – that’s our job – but Obama’s promised to sign the Employee Free Choice Act, and if Rite Aid continues their stalling and union-busting, it will increase pressure on him and the White House to take action.”

ILWU seeks solidarity with other unions in Food & Drug Council

until the Employee Free Choice Act passes, workers will have to survive by using smart strategies and old-fashioned solidarity, and that’s where the Food and Drug Council comes in,” said ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams who was a featured speaker at the Council’s 2008 convention in Las Vegas on December 13-16. The Council is a company-wide group representing more than 250,000 workers in the Western United States, including Teamsters United Food and Commercial Workers Union, and the ILWU. Local 26 President Louisa Graiz was active in the Council for many years in the past, and ILWU Organizing Director Peter Olney has participated in recent years, explaining that solidarity and support from other unions is a critical part of most organizing campaigns.

In his speech, Adams shared details of current struggles by Rite Aid workers, and outlined the ILWU’s new effort to send the company a message. “We have to speak to Rite Aid management in terms that they can understand, and one of the things they want is money,” said Adams, who noted that ILWU members and pensioners spent almost $8 million dollars on Rite Aid prescriptions last year. “This kind of business isn’t something that Rite Aid should be able to use for granted, and it isn’t business that they can afford to lose,” he said, explaining that the company is foundering financially. “Rite Aid is behaving like the rest of corporate America right now by squeezing workers, crashing unions, and losing money, while their CEO and other executives are lining their own pockets with millions of dollars in compensation. This kind of behavior is insulting to both employees and shareholders.”

The response to Adams’ talk was supportive, with leaders from other union pledging to follow the ILWUs lead by investigating the prescription drug plan. “Rite Aid is earning from different union health plans.”

“I left the meeting with pledges of support and phone numbers from concerned union leaders who want to help the Rite Aid workers. It was great to see that solidarity is alive and well when it comes to a united response to companies that are abusing workers.”
TransAfrica celebrates the fight for justice

For over 30 years, the TransAfrica organization has joined forces with labor unions to promote worker rights in Latin America, Africa, and the Caribbean. In the U.S. On December 3rd, 2008, ILWU Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams travelled to Washington, D.C. to attend a TransAfrica event honoring General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi of the Coalition of South African Trade Unions who received the Pan-African Lifetime Achievement Award for COSATU’s historic role in ending Apartheid (photo on left). President Leo Gerard of the United Steelworkers received a Champion for Justice award for supporting the heroic effort by Firestone rubber workers in Liberia who recently won their struggle to organize an independent union willing to oppose child labor and raise wages beyond $3 a day at the African rubber plantation (center photo). U.S. Representatives Maxine Waters from Los Angeles and Donald Payne of New Jersey were also honored for advancing social justice struggles. Musical entertainment was provided by nine-time Grammy winner and Maraisi (photo on right). Hip-hop artist Chuck D was also honored with a Pan-African Lifetime Achievement Award for organizing other artists to support social justice campaigns.

Garcia Lopez was killed just before 8 p.m. while waiting for a chassis on Pier A at the Port of Long Beach. Port officials say that the forty-year-old father of three was apparently struck by a forklift, then pinned between two chassis and died of massive internal injuries after being taken to the hospital. CalOSHA and Long Beach Police are investigating the incident. Local 13 is encouraging members to march on February 5th and show up at the rally to support Rite Aid workers in Lancaster and the Employer Free Choice Act. Executive Board member Mark Justice is encouraging his brothers and sisters to attend, explaining “It’s the most important piece of union legislation in 50 years... The work slowdown is hurting hard at Local 13. Casuals are suffering the most. Class A’s are waiting for weeks between jobs. And for the first time in many years, some members are becoming eligible for the Longshore Company’s Pay Guarantee Plan.

Local 12 members voted in new officers in December. The new President is Mitchell Currie and Vice President is Terry Montoya. The Local 12 President and Executive Board members functioned as Caltrans officials for failing to respect longshore jurisdiction.

Local 10 President Melvin Mackay got a call on Christmas Eve from an anonymous tipster who said a ship full of steel parts that had been to Bay Bridge would soon be arriving at the Port of Oakland. The problem was that Caltrans officials were planning to unload the cargo without Local 10 workers. When the ship arrived at Pier 7, Caltrans officials told Local 10 that the state agency had leased the pier, considered the berth to be a “construction site,” and had assigned any work there to another union. Local 10 members turned out at the pier at which dusk which shut down while negotiations continued for nearly a week. News coverage was heavy, including lots of speculation about potential cost increases resulting from delays caused by the union discontinuance. A short-term compromise was reached, but more shifts are expected soon, so talks are continuing on a permanent solution. These bridge parts generated even more controversy in January when it was reported that they may contain defective welds. The parts were manufactured in China by the Shangai Zhiben Heavy Machinery Co., Ltd., of ZPMC, whose main competition in China has been selling lots of expensive cranes to west coast ports. The company quickly dominated the crane business by failing to meet delivery deadlines and charging low labor costs. The crane business is lucrative and has sometimes involved arm-twisting and payoffs, according to news reports. ZPMC’s cranes have generated concerns about alleged design flaws and other defects. The company took heat several years ago for allegedly paying Chinese workers as little as 94 a day to install the cranes, according to a lawsuit filed by the former workers. Safety issues were also a concern, with Cal/OSHA finding ZPMC for numerous violations. One Chinese worker was crushed to death while working on a project, and some reports say that ZPMC employees actually were paid bare minimum out of grass instead of hard hats, and used ladders made out of bamboo instead of OSHA-approved models. Local 10’s Drill Team got two checks in the mail recently for winning a competition in June.

Local 19 members voted in new officers in December. The new President is Matt Ventosa. Jerome Johnson is Vice President, and Curt Cianelli was re-elected to serve as Recording Secretary of the Seattle local. Former President Gerald Ugljes says he’s happy about spending more time with his family, but will serve on the Area Labor Relations Committee. Container business is down in Seattle, like everywhere else, but record shipments of corn, soybeans, and surghum were a bright spot last year, thanks to a 20% increase over 2007. Most of the grain is coming from the Midwest via rail terminal to terminal 86, then shipped to Asia when it’s needed for livestock feed. The Local is working on getting a check.

Local 23 members raised over $30,000 and piles of toys for a super-successful holiday drive.
Witness to history

Editor's note: LeRoy King is an ILWU pensioner who remains active after six decades of service in the union, beginning with a job at Edwards Coffee in San Francisco where he worked after leaving the Army. His co-workers there elected him shop steward, and King kept moving up through the ranks at Local 6, eventually taking assignments for the ILWU International that included International Organizer and Regional Director. King remains passionate about political action, serving for many years on the ILWU's Northern California District Council, and he continues to serve on San Francisco’s Redevelopment Commission after 30 years - making him the longest-serving Commissioner in City history.

When ILWU Local 6 pensioner LeRoy King travelled to Washington D.C. this January to attend President Obama’s inauguration, he couldn’t forget the last time that he passed through the Capitol when he was 21 years old in 1944, travelling on a troop train with other soldiers heading to fight the Nazis in Europe. Those were the days of segregation, and the Army offered King and other African-Americans no refuge.

“We left from Fort Ord in Monterey on an integrated train, but when we got to Texas, all of us had to get off so they could segregate the cars,” he recalled. When the train made meal stops in Texas, “we ate back in the kitchen while the whites sat up front at the dining tables.” When they reached the Army base at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, King took a quick side trip to visit his Aunt Vic, but had to ride in the back of the bus because the seats up front were “reserved for whites only.”

When King arrived in the war zone shortly after D-Day, the racist policies continued, including a rule that prohibited him and other African Americans in their unit from carrying weapons. “The Nazis were shooting at us, usually at night around bed-check, but we couldn’t shoot back or defend ourselves,” said King who noted that race seemed less important in the combat zones, but increased when he came back home.

“My trip to Washington this time was a totally different experience,” said King, “I had to be there for the inauguration because I wanted to honor Martin Luther King’s dream of a day when we could elect a Black President. I’ve seen plenty of changes in my life, and some of the changes were hard to imagine when I was young, but the election of Barack Obama was just amazing.”

While in Washington, King attended the inauguration ceremonies with his daughters Carolyn and Rebecca, son Leroy, Jr., grandson Leroy III, and niece Norma Taylor. He made his political rounds, beginning with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who had appointed him and other African Americans in the White House. Pelosi greeted him warmly at her Washington office and arranged for a special tour of the Capitol that included seeing Dr. Martin Luther King’s bust in the capitol rotunda. Later, the family visited the offices of Senators Feinstein and Boxer, and Congress member Barbara Lee. Other highlights included a visit to the Lincoln Memorial and seeing the statue of labor organizer A. Philip Randolph in Union Station.

Aside from seeing Obama being sworn-in as President, King says the other special moment was watching George W. Bush fly away for the last time in his helicopter. “All of us clapped our hands together and waved as he glided away into the distance, and I said, ‘Goodbye, George!’

How do you think Obama’s Presidency will change race relations?

“I think it’s good from a historical perspective to have elected an African-American President. It wasn’t just Black or Hispanic voters that put him in office, so that shows we’ve moved a long way as a country. He’ll have opposition as he tries to move forward and get things done, especially if he has new ideas. More people should be able to live out their dreams now because we’ve just done something that nobody thought was possible. Looking at him and seeing what he’s achieved should make color much less of a barrier here at home and round the world.”

Eddie Patterson, Local 26
Long Beach, CA

“Race relations have gotten a lot better since I was born 73 years ago when we couldn’t even talk to a white woman. Black men were sometimes hanged for that. I was the only Black in my Navy unit and I always turned-in early to be safe. Things started to change with Dr. King. Then Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton helped pave the way to the White House, but they only talked to Blacks. Barack Obama talks to everybody and isn’t afraid to visit other countries and talk to our enemies, which is good for our country and good for the world. Barack and Michelle worked hard for what they have, and can inspire other to think, ‘I might be able to do this too.’”

Martin Moore, Local 40
San Pedro, CA

“Though Barack Obama is African American, I’ve never thought about him in terms of race. He just seems to inspire people and is a dynamic leader. After the last eight years, he feels like the right guy for the job. Since I grew up in a pretty diverse community in Southern California with Black, White, Mexican and Vietnamese classmates and friends, I guess that affects my perspective and maybe it’s the same for others of my generation.”

Donovan Russell, Local 13
San Pedro, CA

“I hope that people who didn’t support Obama in the beginning, who hesitated because he isn’t white, will say, ‘Now that I see him in this position of responsibility, it was silly of me to ever think that he couldn’t do this job because of his color.’ I hope that we’ll see a new way of thinking that trickles-down to schools and other places where people share ideas with their co-workers and neighbors. The color of your skin doesn’t have anything to do with the kind of job you do, and we can all do a good job regardless of the ethnic differences in our backgrounds. It’s groundbreaking to have someone in the White House who isn’t white. Hopefully, this will be a revolution, a major change in the way people think, and it’s about time.”

Carolyn Espe, Local 5
Portland, OR

MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

An injury to one is an injury to all.

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ILWU solidarity scores victory for mariners in Hawaii

When the Japan Tuna #3 docked in Hawaii, members won a union contract.

The exploitation of maritime workers, including crews of ships, is a long-standing problem, but Engels is confident that the Hawaii team can handle the next situation on its own. “It’s a great feeling that the ILWU and ITF now have teams in place that can help workers win some justice with solidarity and action.”

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progress with the Alaskan Way Viaduct improvements to ensure that freight mobility is enhanced and not hindered as the project moves forward. Washington Governor Chris Gregoire has appointed a workgroup of Port and other agencies to support a deep-bore tunnel that will direct traffic underground, allowing Seattle’s waterfront to be used by pedestrians and for other public purposes. The tunnel will require approval from state lawmakers during the legislative session that’s now underway.

Local 21: Members have elected Dan Coffman as their new President, and is former coach of the Rainier High School basketball team and is former coach of the Rainier High School baseball team. He’s a second-generation longshore worker who began his career 34 years ago and has told the local reporters that he’s ex- cited to take office at the same time as Barack Obama, and hopes the new President will be a strong supporter of labor. The working population of the country is finally going to have a voice for the first time in 30 years,” he predicted.

The Local 23 holiday gift drive was the most successful ever, thanks to a friendly competition among members in different terminals. The dispatchers and their team of supporters alone raised more than $8,000. The real winners, however, were the clients in the community who received more than $30,000 in gifts from Local 23 members who donated cash and toys.

Warehouse Local 26 members ratified their contract last week, with some gains on personal and pharmaceutical products…Talks continued with PMA to try and reach agreement with waterfront security guards, but steady progress is being made. Concerns were expressed by nearby plants by Byron Steel in the City of Vernon that a mean will that 8 workers out of nearly 50 remain on the job producing metal and steel products…Talks with local unions for big pharmaceutical compa- nies…Talks for a new contract at Pacific Coast Recycling are being scheduled.

warehouse workers at the Henry Company in the City of Southgate recently ratified a new contract. Local 26 is nominating Zina Boudra to be honored at the 16th annual Cesar Chavez Labor Tribute Banquet. Zina is a security guard at the long beach container terminal, a former chief steward, and she served on several negotiating committees over the years. She defended the company’s money to fight diabetes and is a local presi- dent of the National Council of Negro Women.

Local 29 members will be receiving the “Local of the Year” award from the San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council on April 18th for their leadership role in mobilizing volunteers to de- feat Measure B on last November’s ballot. Mea- sure B was the only ballot initiative to make it to the polls and was turned over to the public for a private development that would have destroyed good waterfront jobs. Local 29 dockers are also second in line for the local’s union contract with improvement of the company’s “Flyer Station,” a longshoreman’s neighborhood. Any company strike will receive the “Community Service Award” on March 12th. Local 29 President Jim Shipman will also be recognized for his community work at the event.

Local 20 is dealing with layoffs at Ro Toyo’s Port of Long Beach facility. The company has sent out 120 layoff notices, saying that job cuts could include both mid-Fall and early March. President Dave Liebenwog said, “Management told us to expect 60 layoffs, but they said it might go up to 120.” In addition to the layoffs, the company is encouraging early retirement, but so far their plan leaves a lot to be desired. Management asked Local 20 to withhold dozens of grievances, and the fi- nancial impact of these layoffs is likely minimal. “I believe the company that we can’t withdraw grievances, and pointed out that their previous early re- tirement deal in 1993 included enough wages and health benefits to appeal to older workers.” There are currently 134 workers at the mine older than 55, and 24 were over 62. Liebenwog said the District Board and General Membership will review the proposals, but he doubts any- one will be impressed with what’s on the table.

San Francisco Bay Area Clerks’ Local 29’s Electronic Data Processing unit experienced a change, with Richard Puca- dous being elected the new President. Doudous previously served as Local 54’s Business Manager, where he specialized in technology issues for Clerks. Sean Farley is the new Vice President, replacing Randy Rehndahl. Outgoing President Richard Cawell was praised for a variety of roles and International positions, including several terms on the International Executive Board. He began working the waterfront in 1968. “When I started, there were only four container cranes on the entire West Coast,” he said, adding that he’s looking forward to returning to the waterfront and about negotiating an additional holiday for co-workers in the latest Pacific Coast Clerk Contract that is due to take away the first Friday. “Our goal will be to look at what we’ve already agreed on and make this work. We’re committed to continued coverage of the CHC agreement,” he said.

Local 40 members elected Dawn Des Fri- say as their President and John Robinson as Vice President. almonds Hendricks re- mains Secretary-Treasurer/B. The annual Pensioners Branch has been scheduled for April 25th at the Doubletree Hotel in Portland. Local 47: In early January, members loaded the first of many Japan-bound ships that are ex- pected to call on Olympia this year. A second ship arrived at January 1st, unloading 4,500 metric tons of gemet and providing work for 70 longshore workers over two shifts. The new business is being sparked by Weyerhaeuser. The company tried to begin operations back in 2005, but concerns over歳escaped truck traf- fic in the city delayed the project until now. Weyerhaeuser ship and barge work is expected to generate half of the ports jobs in 2009. The PORT of Olympia stated a 5-week effort to deepen part of their main channel from 32 feet to 39.5 feet, the first improvement in 31 years. President Keith Bausch said the lo- cal has wanted the improvements for years be- cause it would allow larger Weyerhaeuser ships to use the Port, and Bausch says smaller vessels will also benefit. The current project is just a fraction of what needs to be done, but further dredging will depend on how much downstream has been contaminated by the harbor bottom…Presi- dents continued on page 8

TRANSITIONS

RECENT RETIREES:
Local 8: Patrick G. Griswold; Tim L. Coddington; Lanny B. Burdett; Local 10: Baird L. Bramer; Local 13: David Aron; David J. Zastrow; Local 14: George R. Dunn; Phillip J. Costillo; Roosevelt Carter; Edward C. Brown; Michael V. Pulisich; Philip L. Jones; David T. Delgado; Robert Tyler Jr; Jesus Z. Ramirez; Horace D. Hall; Mary S. Martinez; Jack W. Davis; A. Lewis Gomero; Silvina J. Pesquich; Local 136: David A. Bates; Local 137: David A. Bates; Local 138: Turner; Isaac; P. Cona; Local 21: Danny L. Dunivan; Roy M. Modrow; Local 46: Eligio C. Ballesteros; Local 21: Daniel B. Ates; Local 63: Rudy C. Brako; Martin L. Bellhouse; Robert D. Love; Local 94: Leslie D. Winston; 94: Robert Perez, Quincy L. Ross; Philip L. Negrete; Eugene J. Svec; Local 58: Terrance L. Ohnshag

DECEASED:
Local 8: Levan Johnson; Martin J. Kennedy; Local 10: William S. Young; Dave Lawson Jr.; Local 12: Frank E. Younger; Local 13: Paul A. Test; Rudy F. Alvarado; Local 63: Charlie J. Greer; Jose Frias; James V. Covello; Marjian Bozicic; William S. Hickey; John J. Guerrero; Thomas T. Davis; Local 19: Weldon Boysland; Local 21: Richard H. Mode; Local 32: Marieta A. Andrews; Local 34: Donald K. Parkhurst; Raymond A. Seiterlein;

Local 25: Frank A. Lecker; John T. Calkins; Local 34: Frank A. Garcia; Local 63: Frank J. Bivinetto; Clarence R. Ellis; Local 53: Edward Rudderham

LOCALS:
Local 6: Rose B. Johnson; Mary P. Johnson; Local 10: Drucilla Jones; Pauline Bennett; Phyllis Marques; Marguerite Cobb; Local 13: Viola F. Kee; Louise Simpson; Linda Abreu; Mattie J. Moore; Lois Ackerman; Lucy A. Nieto; Local 19: Mary Hubbard; Local 21: Betty J. Herron; Local 24: Auni M. Kingski; Local 32: Pearl E. Stevens; Local 34: Celeste Graham; Local 40: June A. Boone; Local 46: Edith A. Black; Local 83: Catherine Fiamengo; Local 91: Lois R. Nelson; Local 92: Mary Grubmoos

NEW SURVIVORS:
Local 8: Lois E. Huntley (George); Lois J. Kennedy (Martin); Local 13: Judy Brown (Ramon); Local 14: Jenny Rozman (Eva); Anna Bozicic (Marjian); Alivana Apos (Bella Padilla); Julie R. Eubank (Ramon); Isabel Nieto (Anthony); Local 21: Diane E. Bredeson (Jack W. Ware); Local 22: Mark Connable; Ken Freeman (Roya); Local 53: Frances E. Fogarty (George); Local 63: Rosalie Mattie (Jorge); Local 94: Berntsen (Dorothy); Local 95: Cathy Hanwood (Raymond); Local 98: Bet A. Breig (Gladys); Local 92: Betty J. Walker (Thomas).
Ah Quon McElrath’s legacy of struggle

Ah Quon “AQ” McElrath died on December 11th, 2008, just four days short of her 93rd birthday. She was a highly respected ILWU pioneer who served for years as Local 142’s Social Worker. In the 1960’s, McElrath was appointed to the University of Hawaii Board of Regents. During the early twenty-first century, she remained a frequent and forceful speaker at ILWU events and often appeared in television, radio and newspaper reports. The interview below was excerpted from a longer oral history compiled by Harvey Schwartz, which appeared in the September 1996 issue of the Dispatcher. McElrath’s autobiography is included in Schwartz’s forthcoming book “Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU,” which will be published in the Spring of 2009, and will be reviewed in a future issue of the Dispatcher.

I was born in 1915 at Iwilei on Hawaii’s capital island, Oahu. Iwilei was the location of the world’s largest pineapple cannery. My mom and dad came from China. Dad came as a contract laborer. My parents had seven children. My father died when I was five. We did everything we could to survive. We lived near the beach where we picked kiawe beans and dried bones to sell to the fertilizer company. We didn’t have electricity.

All of us started working in the pineapple canneries when we were 12 or 13 years old. There were no child labor laws then. In season we worked 12 hours a day. That was how we supported the family and got back to school during the fall.

Education was extremely important to me. I felt it was a window to the world, and that being able to read, write, and speak English was very important. I learned the English language well.

I went to the University of Hawaii during the period of the Spanish Civil War in the late 1930’s. The cause of the anti-fascist struggle captivated me. We felt we had a part because we boycotted Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. We felt we had a part that I did rely on very early on. I’d had experience as a social worker with the Department of Social Security even before the attack on Pearl Harbor, but during Hawaii’s 1946 tidal wave crisis, I was not employed. I volunteered for services to the union to do the investigations of need, because the entire union was collecting money to give to families that suffered a death or the loss of a home or personal belongings.

This was the prelude to what needed to be done during the long 1946 sugar strike, which was a major test for the ILWU in Hawaii. Another crisis started in 1947 when Ichiro Inukai published a red-baiting pamphlet that was inherently a move to separate out various ILWU groupings so they would become independent unions. This move failed, but we felt a great need to close ranks. We decided that for the strength of the organization and its members it was better to have one consolidated local. That’s how we eventually became Local 142 in a consolidation process that began in 1947 and concluded in 1951. We ended up with one big local of longshore, sugar, pineapple -- plus, and later -- the supermarkets, hospitals, and hotels.

In 1954, I was hired as ILWU Local 142 Social Worker. I ran an educational program. I talked with members about things they needed to know beyond collective bargaining, like how to access services available from public and private agencies. Lobbying the state legislature was also part of my social work for the union. I worked for increases in public assistance, and I used to testify for the ILWU about disability insur- ance issues. We helped push through a “Little Wagner Act” for Hawaii’s agri-cultural workers in 1945, and later on unemployment insurance as well as the Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) Act. On the island of Oahu, we were able, by forming into a non-profit housing organization, to get federal funds to build a cluster of homes for individuals of low incomes as well as seniors so they could rent homes in public housing. One of the last things I was able to do before I retired from the ILWU in 1981 was to get a six-million dollar community development block grant for refurbishing the infrastructure and the homes at the Ewa Plantation village in Oahu.

In 2003, delegates at the ILWU’s International Convention, WHEREAS: The men and women who sacrifice to build and defend the ILWU in Hawaii and on the mainland are many, but few have given as much for so long as Ah Quon McElrath; and

WHEREAS: Ah Quon McElrath’s entire life – beginning as an impoverished child laborer in the pineapple canneries of the 1920’s – has been devoted to improving the lives of her neighbors, community, and of all workers; and

WHEREAS: Through her decades of service as a dedicated and effective social worker – first as a volunteer and then as a staff member of Local 142 – she helped achieve legislative protection for Hawaii’s agricultural workers, low-cost community housing, improved public education, disability insurance, and improved social services; and

WHEREAS: Through her decades of service as a dedicated and effective social worker – first as a volunteer and then as a staff member of Local 142 – she helped achieve legislative protection for Hawaii’s agricultural workers, low-cost community housing, improved public education, disability insurance, and improved social services; and

WHEREAS: Her unceasing devotion to the ILWU’s cause of militant, multicultural democratic industrial unionism in Hawaii and on the mainland has always strengthened labor unity, union organizing, and international worker solidarity; and

WHEREAS: Her commitment and expertise continues to enrich us all today in her capacity as a Regent of the University of Hawaii and as a mentor and in- structor in the ILWU’s leadership education and development program; and

WHEREAS: Her lifetime of service to and fighting for the ILWU family has always been as a volunteer or as an employee of the ILWU; THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED: That we, the Titled Officers and assembled Convention delegates of the ILWU, hereby bestow upon Ah Quon McElrath the status of lifetime honorary member of the ILWU.

Ah Quon McElrath was buried at Oahu’s Punchbowl Cemetery on January 23. She was survived by her loving partner Bill (who is also a member of Local 500), beloved daughter Richelle, father Robert, mother Shirley, as well as Bill’s parents, brothers and sisters. She is predeceased by her younger sister Kim in 2002, and will be sadly missed by her brother Craig, his wife Cindy, loving aunts, uncles, many cousins, and very close and devoted friends. A memorial service and celebration of Cheryl’s life was held on January 23.

Ah Quon McElrath inspired delegates at the ILWU International Convention in 2003.

Cheryl was taken by ambulance to Lions Gate Hospital at 9:57 a.m. She passed away at 11:30 a.m. during emergency surgery.

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Local 51 members elected their President, David Brewer were re-elected to their posts. Scheduled to vote on the loan in late January. Loanborrow Clatsop County video lottery funds for committee gave the Port a unanimous thumbs-up to chase the 40-acre Tongue Point, which includes members are happy to see Washing-Rose were re-elected to their respective offices.

Celebrating the Harry Bridges School: Wilmington will soon have a new school named for the ILWU organizer and President who died in 1990. (left to right) Ryan La Books and videos about the ILWU are available from the $5.00 for the 1990 memorial service in San Francisco. DVD $5.00 a 17-minute DVD of the original video production by California Working Group, Inc., memorializes Harry bridges, originally produced video by still photographs, recorded interviews, and reminiscences. A Spark is Struck: Jack Hall & the ILWU in Hawaii. by Sanford Zalburg: a high quality campaign in the northern California warehouse and distribution industry. @ two for $5. = $_____. Along the Shore/Por la Costa—ILWU Coloring Book. A bi-lingual English/Spanish coloring book about waterfront workers and their union. Originally developed by the California Federation of Teachers’ Labor in the Schools Committees in consultation with member Patricia Aguirre and the ILWU Local 13 Education Committee. Meets K-3 classroom standards for History and Social Studies. Two (2) for $5.00. The Legacy of 1934: An historical exhibit by the ILWU. Published as a catalogue to accompany the new traveling historical exhibit about the origins of the ILWU in the 1934 maritime strike, this brief but vivid publication stands on its own as a pictorial history of the coastwise strike and an account of the extraordinary sacrifices and democratic principles of the founding members of the union. Two (2) for $5.00. Harry Bridges: The Rise and Fall of Radical Labor in the United States. By Charles Larson. A limited number of copies of this out-of-print and useful biography are now available through the book sale by special arrangement with Bolerium Books in San Francisco, which specializes in rare publications and documents about radical and labor history. $10.00. The ILWU Story. This book unrolls the history of the union from its origins to the present, complete with recollections from the men and women who built the union, in their own words, and dozens of rare photos of the union in action. $5.00. The Big Strike. By Mike Quin. The classic partisan account of the 1934 strike. $9.00. The Union Makes Us Strong: Radical Unionism on the San Francisco Waterfront. By David Wollman. The important new study of longshoreming in the ILWU. $20.00. (paperback) A Terrible Anger: The 1934 Waterfront and General Strike in San Francisco. By David Selvin. Perhaps the most comprehensive single narrative about the San Francisco events of 1934, $16.50. The March Inland: Origins of the ILWU Warehouse Division 1934-1938. By Harvey Schwartz. A new edition of the only comprehensive account of the union's organizing campaign in, the northern California warehouse and distribution industry. $9.00. Eye of the Storm: Our Fight for Justice and a Better Contract.” A 58-minute DVD feature documentary film produced and directed by Amy Williams. Eye of the Storm tells the story of the 2002 longshore lockout on the West Coast. DVD Version $5.00. “We Are the ILWU.” A 30-minute color video introducing the principles and traditions of the ILWU. Features active and retired members talking about what the union meant in their lives and what it needs to survive and thrive, along with film clips, historical photos and an original musical score. DVD or VHS version $5.00. Life on the Beam: A Memoir to Harry Bridges.” A 17-minute DVD of the original video production by California Working Group, Inc., memorializes Harry Bridges through still photographs, recorded interviews, and reminiscences. Originally produced for the 1990 memorial service in San Francisco. DVD $5.00.

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A Spark Is Struck: Jack Hall & the ILWU in Hawaii. By Sanford Zalburg: A high quality re-issue of the informative epic account of Jack Hall and the birth and growth of the ILWU in Hawaii $13.50. (paperback)

Along the Shore/Por la Costa—ILWU Coloring Book. A bi-lingual English/Spanish coloring book about waterfront workers and their union. Originally developed by the California Federation of Teachers’ Labor in the Schools Committees in consultation with member Patricia Aguirre and the ILWU Local 13 Education Committee. Meets K-3 classroom standards for History and Social Studies. Two (2) for $5.00

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