Women’s History Month has deep roots in the labor movement, and this should not be a surprise to working families. Since the first woman went into labor in the birth of the first man, women have worked. And since humans first learned to gather plants, fish hunt and make clothes, women have worked.

In the labor movement women were often the first out the door when strike time came. They formed cooperatives and unions, and before they had the right to vote, they formed political parties. But they were often the last to be recognized.

Women also faced discrimination, harassment and assault on the job and in their unions. Their efforts have often been marginalized, even in the labor movement, which they co-founded. Labor must remember that women fought against slavery when they were little more than chattel in their own homes. Labor must remember women like Frances Perkins, President Roosevelt’s Secretary of Labor and the first woman cabinet member. She had witnessed the Triangle Shirt Waist Factory fire in 1911, where a quarter of the 600 women garment workers had died, and she made a life-long commitment to labor rights. Women’s History Month was founded in part to remember that tragedy. As Secretary Perkins would administer the National Labor Relations Act, a New Deal bill that legalized workers’ rights to form unions and, if necessary, to strike. Under her leadership, the National Longshore Arbitration Board ruled the ILWU had a right to coastwise bargaining with maritime employers. That was because the employers acted as a group and it was only fair the workers should have the same rights. The coastwise longshore contract is that legacy.

She crossed paths with the ILWU again in 1939 when she refused to deport Harry Bridges. The Labor Dept. ran the immigration service then, and right wing Congressmen threatened Perkins with impeachment for her refusal. She stuck to her guns and Bridges won. While the New Deal reforms might have blunted the militancy of workers, it also provided many gains. Every time a worker cashes a Social Security check she can thank Perkins, who helped write the Social Security legislation.

This month The Dispatcher remembers the founding of warehouse, retail and allied Local 5 through the words of its former president, Mary Winzig. While this is only one example of women in the ILWU, it shows women will carry the union’s banner into the 21st Century.

Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, the first woman Speaker of the House of Representatives, honored the Harry Bridges building with her presence in San Francisco in support of the Employee Free Choice Act. She warmly greeted Local 6 retiree Leroy King, co-chair of her first congressional campaign. See Marcy Rein’s story on page 3.

—Tom Price
ILWU Secretary-Treasurers’ Conference, 2007

By Gene Vrana, Director of Educational Services and Librarian

Photos by Frank Wilder

The largest and most diverse group of ILWU officers ever to attend the union’s Secretary Treasurers Conference assembled in San Francisco to update their understanding of local union administration. The Jan. 29-Feb. 2 program was designed to help ensure ILWU compliance with federal regulations and internal union procedures. Participating were 31 local secretary-treasurers, 21 who hold other office (e.g. president, business agent, patrolman), nine trustees, and 11 clerical employees, such as bookkeepers and office managers.

ILWU International President Bob McElfresh, Mainland Vice President Joe Radisch, and VP Hawaii Wesley Furtado welcomed the participants.

“You are the core of the union,” said International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams in his opening remarks. “You keep us going and serve the members needs and keep us in compliance with federal regulations and union procedures. The members need you to know how to protect the union so they can be without worry to focus on doing their jobs and taking care of their families.”

Instructors for the conference, which has been held about every two years since 1998, included ILWU attorneys Chris Hwang, Philip Monrad, Beth Ross, Rob Remar and Peter Salzman; ILWU auditor and CPA Jong Lee; ILWU staff members Russ Bargmann and Gene Vrana; and ILWU Secretary Treasurers Jack Wyatt, Sr. (Local 17), Guy Fujimura (Local 142), IBU National Secretary-Treasurer Terri Mast, and Willie Adams.

The rigorous schedule included presentations on reporting requirements under the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA), fiduciary responsibilities of the local union and its officers, Beck procedures regarding financial core members, prohibited union expenditures and payments or gifts from employers, the role of trustees, local union election procedures and regulations, record keeping and records management, understanding and conducting an audit, and fiscal guidelines for political action funds and committees.

On the right, Local 142 bookkeeper Linda Suzuki and Local 142 Office Manager Desmond Koch review a workshop exercise. The participants also had a wealth of written information to take back to their locals for future officers and staff.

Conference participants worked together throughout the week to digest information about administrative regulations and procedures. Shown here, from left to right: Dan Hardisty Local 28, A.J. Wright Local 26, Edward Calloros Local 142 Office Manager, Frank Koch review a workshop exercise. The participants also had a wealth of written information to take back to their locals for future officers and staff.

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ILWU Secretary-Treasurer

Ken Bauder, Secretary-Treasurer

ILWU Canada: “This gives Canadians a way to see how it’s done in the US, where the reporting rules are generally more punitive. It was very useful to get instructions on what documents to save and archive, and which documents you shouldn’t. I’m taking that back and will implement it in my office.

“The ILWU traditionally has had a good turnover of officers, and often the staff has to train the new officers in how these things work to protect our history and be stewards of the union. I see many staff members here and we are able to collaborate with each other in training.”

Kristi Lovato, President Local 5:

“In our local we have a high turnover rate and not a lot of institutional memory. So it’s helpful to have these trainings as new officers come in to gain the expertise of more experienced officers. I appreciate the examples, the question and answers in each packet that we can take back to our hall.

We saw a big change in the last Congressional election, and I hope that with a new presidential administration there will be less of a focus on penalizing unions and looking for ways to make our jobs more difficult.”

Martha Hendricks, Secretary-Treasurer/BA Local 40: “There are pros and cons of rank and file people running our offices, and often one of the cons is that at times there’s a lack of continuity in education and knowledge. The conference was such an education, with amazing speakers, and the actual tangible info we can take back to our locals to pass on. These conferences are wonderful to help us follow the laws and do it well.”

ILWU Titled Officers

ROBERT McELRATH
President

JOSEPH R. RADISICH
Vice President

WILLIAM E. ADAMS
Secretary-Treasurer

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Labor launches battle for the right to organize

by Marcy Rein

The U.S. House of Representatives stands poised to pass the biggest labor rights law in 80 years. House approval of the Employee Free Choice Act (H.R. 800) will set off a frenetic battle over the next few political seasons as the Democrats seek to flex their majority.

The question at the heart of the American people asked for a new direction," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) told hometown press conference in support of the Act on Feb. 21. "This is the beginning of that."

By Tom Price

The Novato Labor Relations Board found Blue Diamond guilty of more than 20 labor law violations, including the firings of Camilo and another union supporter, Mike Flores. The two walked back into the almond plant almost exactly a year after Camilo got sacked.

The Hawaii State Dept. of Labor launches battle for the right to organize for a boycott of Del Monte, which was not so lucky. He lost his job in 1984, shortly after the Smithfield workers started organizing. The NLRB ordered Smithfield to hire the company appealed, and lost. Ludlum got back to work 13 years after he got fired.

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi introduces former Blue Diamond worker Ivo Camilo at the San Francisco Labor Council.

The Act had the backing of a bi-partisan group of 233 co-sponsors when Rep. George Miller (D-Martinez) introduced it Feb. 5. It passed out of committee Feb. 14 and is due to hit the House floor when Congress comes back after its Presidents’ Day recess. With more than half the 435 House members behind it, it should pass, said IVO Legislative Director Lindsay McLaughlin.

This will be a heavy lift in the Senate, ”said Durazo. “It won’t work unless there is a mass movement behind it."

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The next day Ludlum sent back the union’s future well-being, and to its timing in Los Angeles, Long Beach and throughout the union.

The majority of the delegation has swirled around the majority sign-up clause, but the first-contract section also addresses a huge law in the Local 5 gathers support for Del Monte boycott

by Tom Price

When workers at Evergreen State College were told to serve Del Monte products with the 60,000 meals they served each month—and why not? Their ILWU Local 142 brothers and sisters in Hawaii were told to serve the pineapple. Union sailors and ILWU dockers shipped the fruit to the neighboring capitals of San Francisco and Wash., and Local 5 members served it.

But in Feb. 2006 Fresh Del Monte Produce, served in Hawaii operations in 2008. Then last November the company decided to shut out the Local. It laid off 550 Local 142 members off the farm with little or no notice to prepare the operation for shutdown.

When Del Monte refused to bargain—a proper sequence, Andrew Price filed an unfair labor practice charge and asked the ILWU International Executive Board for a boycott. Del Monte, which was approved at the Dec. 2006 Executive Board meeting.

Local 5 members have had a contract with Aramark food services, the Evergreen State College contractor, for three years. The union has a good relationship with Aramark, according to Local 5 Vice President Paul Malleck.

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“We have monthly shop steward meetings with Craig Ward, the food service director,” Malleck said. “Last week we sat with him to discuss some work issues and we brought up the boycott against Del Monte and asked if he was interested in figuring out ways to work with workers and hold wrongful compa-

The next day Aramark sent back all Local 5’s letters. It decided in favor of workers and unions when it passed in 1948 and continued with the Landrum-Griffin Act in 1959. The National Labor Relations Act included few restrictions on unions when it passed in 1935, said Carder. Those restrictions were lifted with the infamous Taft-Hartley Act in 1948 and continued with the Landrum-Griffin Act in 1959.

“The Employee Free Choice Act is the most significant change in labor law since Taft-Hartley, and the most in the spirit of the original Act,” Carder said.

• Take an up close look at three important Chinese sea-


The Chamber spent $24.5 million in the 2004 annual report."

• Make majority sign-up (“card-

“Federal speakers with shotguns lined the long driveway to greet the delegation. The mission to the People’s Republic of China (PRC) from October 8-15.

• Deepen the union’s ties with

• Meet players in international commerce particularly LA-based toy and apparel importers.

About fifty-five people participated in the China leg of the mission. The majority of the delegation was businesspeople, equally divided between importers, real estate and investment people. Only three representatives were from labor: Maria Elena Durazo, Executive Secretary Treasurer of the California Federation of Labor, Kent Wong Director UCLA’s Labor Center and myself from the ILWU. It was very important for the ILWU to spend time with Ms Durazo who leads the second largest labor council in the United States and who will play an important role in supporting ILWU contract and organizing efforts.

MEETINGS WITH CHINESE TRADE UNIONS

Beijing—Kent Wong from UCLA facilitated a meeting for the ILWU and Maria Elena Durazo with leaders of the ACTFU. The ACTFU has 130 million members in 10 affiliated industrial unions and provincial and municipal councils. We met with the following persons:

- Wang Ying—Division Chief for Grass Root Organization and Capacity Building Department. She has been primarily occupied with the recent organization by the ACTFU of 62 Wal-Mart retail outlets.

- Tan Tao—Deputy Chief of the International Liaison Department.

- The discussion focused mainly on
Introduction by Harvey Schwartz

O honor women’s history month, we are featuring Mary Winzig, who recently became the ILWU Columbia River organizer. Winzig was the founding president of warehouse, retail and allied workers Local 5, which represents employees at the nation’s largest independent book company, Powell’s Books of Portland, Oregon.

Mary Winzig was a shop steward, a member of the Organizing Committee, and a key figure in the 1998-2000 unionization drive that brought more than 400 Powell’s workers into the ILWU under a new charter. I interviewed her in June 2001, ten months after Local 5 secured its first contract with Powell’s. Our discussion focused on the Powell’s organizing drive, which attracted much community support and media attention.

MARY WINZIG
Edited by Harvey Schwartz, Curator, ILWU Oral History Collection

I was born in Houston, Texas, in 1964. My parents were Republicans, but odd Republicans. They told me never to cross a picket line. When President Reagan fired the air traffic controllers in 1981 for going on strike, my parents said, “That’s what I want you to know that there was a union drive a couple of years ago, but we don’t need a union here.” Immediately I thought, “Oh, if you’re willing to say this right off the bat, you must really need a union.”

What I heard about that union drive was that they tried to organize just the big Burnside store, which is just one of several Powell’s shops. They realized too late that they needed to organize the rest of the company. They never did get enough pledge cards signed to get a union certification vote with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

What happened to us was that we felt desperate. Management pulled so many things all at once that I had no momentum and they had some to gain us.

I started working at Powell’s right after they computerized. Powell’s went from a fairly small family business to a multi-million-dollar corporation. There began to be a split between management and the workers. I remember thinking about the bottom line, more about themselves than about what the workers needed. When I started at Powell’s we up here, “We’re going to get you by hello, and even help me shelf. But as time went on, management pulled away.

By the time we unionized, management didn’t have personal relationships with us anymore. I think this worked to our advantage, because they were out so of touch. It also helped that we liked each other. We got stronger as we went along. We became family. I don’t think management had that.

Michael Powell, who owns the company, is a liberal. To his credit, he opposes discrimination and censorship. We felt he had been there longer were making only 50 cents, 75 cents more. It’s great to be against censorship, but when people are working in a store and making very little, the employer has to come to grips and do right by his workers. If you are going to be the planet’s bookstore, get online and be a multi-millionaire, you need to give people their fair worth. Michael Powell wasn’t doing that.

We felt degraded, too, when the company restructured our jobs. Before we were working in areas we understood and enjoyed. But suddenly I would be shelving in railroads or automotive that I didn’t know what we were doing. The UFCW charge and had us introduce ourselves. The UPWC and the Wobbly organizers were trying to organize, but things didn’t seem quite right yet.

There was a meeting at Justice suggested we try the ILWU, which was democratic and representative a bookstore in San Francisco. In October we met with Michael Powell, the ILWU Columbia River organizer, at the longshore Local 8 hall. Some of our group had looked into the history of the ILWU and learned about its militancy and support for different causes. When we met at Local 8, Michael gave a good spiel, and those of us who were there decided to sign cards that night.

Once the main organizing drive started, the company held a series of meetings with the workers. These were commonly at the Powell’s corporate office. Michael Powell would sit there with his top managers and ask how come we didn’t take our concerns to him. He said, “We just didn’t unionize, things would get better. We told the workers who were skeptical of us that this would happen. When it did, those workers felt, “Wow, they know what’s going on.” It made us look smart. That helped us in many ways.

One way it helped was in overcoming this class thing that existed. Many people working at Powell’s had college backgrounds. The NLRA, he said, “Longshore! I’ve been to college. Why do I need a dock worker to represent me?” This was even though some longshore workers made five or six times as much money as Powell’s employees. It also helped that Bigman had gone to Reed College, because a lot of people from Powell’s had gone to Reed.

It was hard talking to some people, especially in other stores away from Burnside, where we had no contact at first. Some of the locals talked about the Powell’s books store complained, “Here’s this union being thrust upon us.” Then, at one of the management meetings, I talked up and said to those people, “You’re mad, but don’t blame the union. Blame me. I was one of the first to bring in the union.” That felt kind of like cutting yourself. I thought, “Can’t go back now!”

Mary Winzig speaks at rally, May 2000

Mary Winzig, June 2001

The Dispatcher

March 2007

ILWU Oral History

Volume X

Mary Winzig

Powell’s Book Drive, 1998
Michael Powell shook his head and looked over at me like he was thinking, "Oh, no, a voice of reason." I was taking responsibility. It was not what he wanted to hear. Others of us went to management meetings held at various stores. They said, "If Michael Powell's going to give his spiel, we're here to support him." This was quite grandiose.

The company also sent letters to our homes. We never got letters before, but now managers sent letters signed with their first names and the letters identified us as the wrong union. Our members said, "You're telling us the union is bad and you can't even do the right research?"

When we were organizing we had people who we called communication stewards. We had stickers labeled "Peter Olney papers," because Peter loved the stickers. There were charts with people's names and locations and we would pick workers to talk to. I had a group of 10. When we were making decisions or having a meeting, we would contact those people to let them know what was going on.

We got help from the outside from progressive community groups like Jobs with Justice and Art and Revolution. The ILWU Local 5's president, Larry Longshore, told the Powell's workers about his trips to the local Vancouver, Washington, stores and that they were profits. They said, "If you vote 'no,' you're doing Woody Guthrie's work." That was a good way to start the campaign.

One of the best things we did is have open negotiations where any Powell's employee could watch. I went into a federal mediation because they could see 30 or 40 workers trooping in. We asked for better wages, reinstatement of the compensation group, the same healthcare, the union shop and a successor clause. Michael Powell fought long and hard to try to have an open shop. We tried to tell him he was putting himself in the same company as George W. Bush, who supposedly didn't like it. Ultimately we were able to come to a compromise, so a limited number of people who didn't want to join the union could stay out. Fewer than 20 signed up for that, and later some of those joined the union anyway.

We had a series of demonstrations and short strikes before we finally got a contract. Once Art and Revolution, which does visual street theatre, made these huge puppets for us. We actually had the marriage of the puppet Larry Longshore to the puppet Michael Powell. Larry Longshore was holding a union contract. At the same time, there was a carpenters' union conference in town and 300 of their people joined our rally.

The Teamsters helped us, too, by sending their truck around the block at the Burnside store blaring really bad '80s music. Some of the more friendly management who actually did the work on the floor, said, "If that truck goes by one more time, you'll get that contract!" We also used a lot of written material. Marcy Rein, The Dispatcher reporter, prepared for us.

In April 2000 management underestimated us again. A lot of amazing things happened convention week that turned the campaign around. On May Day there was a parade headed for the Burnside store. The cops yanked the permit and started beating people. TheILWU was surrounded by cops in riot gear. I could see my co-workers being pushed up against the wall by cops with bullies and shields. Helicopters were overhead. It was horrible and scary. It looked like a war zone.

As we marched up, Brian McWilliams, the president of the ILWU, approached the head of the police. The cop said, "There's just a bunch of anarchists across the street." Brian looked at him and said, "Those are our people. We're going across." Brian McWilliams was walking the picket line. I knew then we were going to win. We went into federal mediation and now negotiations were totally different. The workers couldn’t watch this time and the mediator negotiated between the two bargaining teams that were in different rooms.

The contract proposal agreed upon called for an 18 percent raise over three years. We retained our health care. Now there was a grievance procedure, so we couldn’t be fired at will. The compensation group was put back in place. We didn’t get the successor clause we wanted, but I don’t think Powell’s is going anywhere. We got a profit-sharing program, so if a customer goes through our website we get a percentage of the sale price. The vote in favor of the contract that August was 291 to 37. After we won our contract we were on the cover of The Oregonian. Of course, that contract symbolizes much more than its various clauses. We have a sense of community at Powell’s now that we never had before.

When I visited the International library in San Francisco, there was this glass table with all these medals that looked like they came from when Harry Bridges was around. Beside them was a Local 5 button. I thought this represented such a blending of past and future, longshore workers and booksellers. Today unions have to expand their jurisdiction to survive. It clicked for me then that what we had done together was pretty cool.

[Editor’s note: Powell’s and Local 5 still have the internet-based profit-sharing program established in that first contract. If you go to www.powellsunion.com to order books, 10 percent goes to the workers at no extra cost.]
RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

Continued from page 3

he has involved in an effort to organize the work force of 20,000. He says that he has 800 port workers who the ILWU, the head of the HKCTU has been helpful to us in building solidarity for Blue Diamond workers. The ILWU visited the Modern Terminals facility in Hong Kong. These three terminals have five cranes. (One is a terminal operation in a huge port). There is no on-dock rail, all traffic on land is by truck. A massive ten-story warehouse rises up next to the terminal. The warehouse is so large that tractors cannot be driven inside the warehouse on circular ramps to pick up and drop off cans. Several of these warehouses exist in the Port of Hong Kong. There is insufficient real estate or terrain to build out so everything builds up.

Guangzhou—Guangzhou is the capital city of the province of Guangdong. Kent Wong arranged a meeting with leaders of the Guangdong Provincial Trade Union Council. The principal leader of the CPTUC at the meeting was Peng Fang, Director of the Council’s International Department. Mr. Peng assembled a large group of leaders, including some members of the Chinese teachers’ Union to meet with the ILWU. The ranking member of the Guangdong Provincial Trade Union Council was Mr. Xiao Jian Kun, the chairman of the Auditing Committee (Financial Secretary-Treasurer). They also discussed the ILWU’s 70 kilometers down the Pearl River Delta to see the Nansha Terminals of the Port of Guangzhou. Mr. Wong arranged a meeting with Mr. Deng, the terminal manager, who also serves as the vice chairman of the Nansha Port Trade Union. He was aware of the lockout in 2002 and expressed an interest in knowing what would happen in 2008. CSCL ships call regularly in Oakland and Los Angeles from Nansha Terminals. These trade union leaders are very anxious to meet with a future delegation of ILWU leaders.

Nansha Terminals was built in the last two years and is already handling over 1.3 million TEUs per year. The facility is simply a situation of expansion, and construction of a completely new terminal was underway during the ILWU visit. There will be 10 berths available by the end of 2007. The brand new terminal headquarters building is immense and rivals the size of the Long Beach Port Building. Nansha Terminal is one of four terminals that are part of the Guangzhou Port Group.

For a whirlwind trip this was extremely productive for the ILWU. We made contacts with important labor leaders and maritime management officials that will be crucial to the long-term future of the union. It is still unclear of the exact relationship between labor and management in the Guangzhou Port Group, but only further contact will reveal an understanding of how best to manage the ILWU and support the ACFTU and Chinese management.

Chinese Ports—In TEUs for 2005, eight of the top 50 container ports are Chinese:

- Hong Kong #2 22.60 million TEUs
- Shanghai #3 18.08 million TEUs
- Shenzhen #4 16.20 million TEUs
- Qingdao #13 6.31 million TEUs
- Ningbo-Zhoushan #15 5.21 million TEUs
- Tianjin #16 4.80 million TEUs
- Guangzhou #18 4.68 million TEUs
- Xiamen #23 3.34 million TEUs

It is also important to note that of the top 20 container carriers ranked by operating capacity in July 2007, two are Chinese:

- COSCO Container Lines—Ranked #6 in the world—Headquartered in Beijing and a Pacific Maritime Association member company;
- China Shipping Container Lines—Ranked #7 in the world.

In Hong Kong and Guangzhou that much of the port traffic is transloading of containers from barges to ships or from ships to barges. Accurate measures of these phenomena are needed because it weights heavily on productivity measures.

Chengal Hingorani, Director International Liaison Department SMTC; Mr. Peng assembled a large group of leaders, including some members of the Chinese teachers’ Union to meet with the ILWU. The ranking member of the Guangdong Provincial Trade Union Council was Mr. Xiao Jian Kun, the chairman of the Auditing Committee (Financial Secretary-Treasurer). They also discussed the ILWU’s 70 kilometers down the Pearl River Delta to see the Nansha Terminals of the Port of Guangzhou. Mr. Wong arranged a meeting with Mr. Deng, the terminal manager, who also serves as the vice chairman of the Nansha Port Trade Union. He was aware of the lockout in 2002 and expressed an interest in knowing what would happen in 2008. CSCL ships call regularly in Oakland and Los Angeles from Nansha Terminals. These trade union leaders are very anxious to meet with a future delegation of ILWU leaders.

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Nansha Terminals was built in the last two years and is already handling over 1.3 million TEUs per year. The facility is simply a situation of expansion, and construction of a completely new terminal was underway during the ILWU visit. There will be 10 berths available by the end of 2007. The brand new terminal headquarters building is immense and rivals the size of the Long Beach Port Building. Nansha Terminal is one of four terminals that are part of the Guangzhou Port Group.

For a whirlwind trip this was extremely productive for the ILWU. We made contacts with important labor leaders and maritime management officials that will be crucial to the long-term future of the union. It is still unclear of the exact relationship between labor and management in the Guangzhou Port Group, but only further contact will reveal an understanding of how best to manage the ILWU and support the ACFTU and Chinese management.

Chinese Ports—In TEUs for 2005, eight of the top 50 container ports are Chinese:

- Hong Kong #2 22.60 million TEUs
- Shanghai #3 18.08 million TEUs
- Shenzhen #4 16.20 million TEUs
- Qingdao #13 6.31 million TEUs
- Ningbo-Zhoushan #15 5.21 million TEUs
- Tianjin #16 4.80 million TEUs
- Guangzhou #18 4.68 million TEUs
- Xiamen #23 3.34 million TEUs

It is also important to note that of the top 20 container carriers ranked by operating capacity in July 2007, two are Chinese:

- COSCO Container Lines—Ranked #6 in the world—Headquartered in Beijing and a Pacific Maritime Association member company;
- China Shipping Container Lines—Ranked #7 in the world.

In Hong Kong and Guangzhou that much of the port traffic is transloading of containers from barges to ships or from ships to barges. Accurate measures of these phenomena are needed because it weights heavily on productivity measures.
Kate Thornton retires from the Benefits Plan Office

by Tom Price

Kate Thornton began working for the ILWU-PMA Benefits Plan in the summer of 1965, on a temporary basis, while she was still a student. In 1987 she signed on full-time, back when the office was in the basement of 150 Golden Gate in San Francisco and Harry Bridges was president.

Now its forty years later Kate is retiring. In a very personal sense she has always worked for the ILWU family.

“My father Frederick ‘Blackie’ Myers and my husband Lonnie Thornton worked out of Local 34,” she said. “My son Matt Thornton is a Local 34 member, my daughter-in-law Eileen also worked out of Local 34 and her father, Tom Wallace, was a Local 34 member. And my Daughter Liz was in Local 34 for a while.”

Before working out of Local 34, Blackie Myers was a veteran activist among seafarers who were persecuted during the anti-Communist witch-hunts of the McCarthy era, and he was a leader of the National Maritime Union and the Maritime-Workers Industrial Union.

Kate spent most of her time administering the welfare benefits, making sure people got things like hearing aids, dental care and supplementary disability—making real the benefits the longshore contract provides ILWU families. Member service has always been the goal.

“We have had several systems over the years, from a hand operation to a modern, sophisticated system,” she said. “We work all of them and they have changed a lot, but the thing that hasn’t changed is attention to the members. We get back to them, when they call they get a person, that has always been something we have maintained.

“The best thing about the job is the people I work with, and the members I talk to,” she said. “The members are always happy to explain what benefits they have, and it’s good to know it means something to them. There’s something satisfying about working with these people, I work hard and I like it.”

Kate worked with many special women who contributed to the union. She mentioned quite a few for Women’s History Month, including Carol (Schwartz) Cuenod, who became ILWU Librarian, Elaine Black Yoneda, who organized legal defense for longshore workers during the Big Strike in 1934, and Linda Kuhn, who is now office manager for the International Union.

With 40 years of service behind her, Kate is ready to move on.

“What I’m going to do now is go to Boston in April and run the Boston Marathon,” she said. “I’ve been a runner for years and this is the pinnacle of my running. I’m about two-thirds done with the training.”

Kate also has a granddaughter and she hopes to spend a lot of time with her.

“This has been a very good job for me. I’ve been here a long time and it has been a very good place for me to work. I like it that I am retiring after 40 years, I like doing it when I’m feeling good, happy and healthy and I have energy for other things to come,” she said. “Forty years represents completion, it’s a good time to say goodbye.”

ILWU Canada’s Van McLean passes

Van McLean was born on the tenth day of the tenth month of 1920. He passed away Jan. 26, but his spirit, his drive for getting a task completed and his ability to disregard obstacles that hindered progress will be remembered by the many people who came in contact with Van during his 86 years of life.

These years include his five years in the Canadian army during the Second World War and his 35 years as an active longshoreman. After he retired on May 1, 1986 he spent 20 more years as an active supporter of his union by participating in the ILWU Pensioners Club.

He served six years as the club’s president, covering two Pacific Coast Pensioners Conventions held in Canada, 1999 and 2004, where Van and his wife Margaret (Bettey) proved their ability to get things organized to help make the conventions a success.

Prior to his retirement Van was active in the affairs of the union, attending many conventions and caucuses dealing with policy of the union, and he held executive positions in Local 500 and, prior to the amalgamation of the Vancouver locals, his home Local 501. He served as RA in Local 500 from Nov. 1969 to Nov. 1970.

The ILWU Pensioners Organization expresses our condolences to Van’s family.
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