



# THE DISPATCHER

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**Setting a new course:** Students from all of the country attend the Job Corps Tongue Point Seamanship Academy. The program currently enrolls approximately 120 students. Upon completion of the program, cadets will be qualified for the endorsement of the Able Bodied Seaman (AB), Qualified Member of the Engine Department (QMED) and Steward certifications. The program was started in 1980 and is sponsored by the Inlandboatmen's Union. **In the photo above:** Tongue Point cadets are seen on one of their training vessels, the Ironwood. It's a former Coast Guard 'C' class buoy tender vessel, 743 gross ton seagoing training ship. Students receive extensive sea time on this and other training vessels. They rotate between various duties and responsibilities on the ships during their time at the Academy.

## Job Corps' Tongue Point Seamanship Academy is training the next generation of maritime workers

**O**n January 28-29, a delegation of union officers from the Inland-boatmen's Union (IBU) and ILWU toured the Job Corps Seamanship Academy at Tongue Point in Astoria, Oregon.

ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams, IBU President Alan Coté, IBU Secretary-Treasurer Teri Mast and Columbia River IBU Regional Director Brian Dodge met with students and instructors at the Academy. They spent a day on the training vessel 'Ironwood,' observing the drills and other hands-on training that form the backbone of the school's curriculum. The Academy is administered and funded by the US Department of Labor's Office of Job Corps and is operated by the IBU and the Management & Training Corporation.

### Recipe for success

Captain Len R. Tumbarello, who retired from the US Coast Guard after 28 years of service, is the Director of Seamanship at Tongue Point. He talked about the values that the program teaches to produce quality, entry-level mariners for the industry.

"What we call for the Four P's is the recipe for success in this industry: **Proficiency** in craft, taking care of **people**, **professionalism** at all times, and **passion** for the job. Tumbarello said. "People is a key one," added Tumbarello, "because if you can't get along with people you are not going to be a very successful person."

The Academy's recipe for success is paying off. The program currently places 95.5% of its graduates in the maritime industry, a significantly higher placement rate than most Job Corps programs. And the average pay

for Seamanship Academy graduates is the second highest of the 1,200 Job Corps programs in the country. Because of the program's success, enrollment for the Seamanship Academy was recently doubled by Job Corps from 60 to 120 students.

Students graduate from the program with certifications and skills that are in high demand by employers including:

- Able Bodied Seaman (AB)
- Qualified Member of the Engine Department (QMED)
- Proficiency in Survival Craft/ Lifeboat
- Navigational Watch
- Shipboard safety training (fire fighting, first aid, personal safety, social responsibilities and personal survival skills)

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## LETTERS TO THE *DISPATCHER*

*Dear Editor,*

I'm a retired member of Local 514 who will be celebrating my 32nd year of retirement on May 1st, all thanks to the ILWU.

I've been watching the U.S. Presidential primary campaigns, and have some things to say. I'm 87 years old and have been socialist since I was 17 years old. I'm what we Canadians call an NDPer – which means I support the New Democratic Party – because it's a working class party.

I hope Bernie Sanders wins your presidential election. He's my kind of person who's looking after the working class person – everyday Americans, instead of Wall Street. If I could vote in your election, I'd be out there waving the banner for Bernie. He's speaking the truth and means what he says. Nobody comes close. I don't think much of Hillary Clinton. She's with the old Wall Street Boys – same as Bush.

People say that I eat, sleep and think ILWU. If I do, it's because everything I'm thankful for came from the union. When people complain about not getting what they deserve, I tell them to stop crying and get organized, because the boss won't give you a damn thing without a union.

**Beverley Mills, Local 514 (retired)**  
Colona, British Columbia

*Dear Editor,*

The old hall will never be forgotten. Especially for the past characters and personalities we had serving as dispatchers. Every morning most of us workers were always curious to see who would get up "on the mic." Here are a few of my favorites from over the years:

**Gardena Flores'** style was like an announcer at a horse race track—very smooth from beginning to end. **Steve Bebich** was a stabilizer who kept order in chaos like the character McHale from the television show "McHale 's Navy."

**Speedy Marshall Herrera, Jr.** told "The Truth." He knew where each preference of a job was before he/she walked to the window. Likable **Poppy Cornejo** always had a smile even on "Monday Morning Madness"—those overcrowded, full, standing outside the doors kind of days.

**John Tousseau's** charisma equaled the best Southern California radio disc jockeys. He was in peak form when he spontaneously got into "Thriller" during the ID dispatch.

Lastly, my father, **Donald Arthur Crew**, was "The Johnny Carson." He would say "We have 'automobubbles' at Long Beach 82. You were funny, Dad!"

As we are now deep into the computer era, it is important to maintain strong communication amongst the workforce and laughter. I hope the human element carries on. We were lucky because "The Dream Team" through the years made a difference.

**Donald Anthony Crew, Local 13/63 (retired)**  
Long Beach, CA

Send your letters to the editor to: *The Dispatcher*, 1188 Franklin St., San Francisco, CA 94109-6800 or email to [editor@ilwu.org](mailto:editor@ilwu.org)

## Local 21 members honored for Columbia River rescue

**T**hree Local 21 members were honored last month by the Port of Longview for rescuing a mariner who fell overboard into the Columbia River on December 31..

The incident happened at 11 o'clock in the morning on New Year's Eve day when it was still bitter cold at Berth 2 where the vessel "Sadlers Wells" was being loaded with soda ash.

Local 21 members Kelly Palmer and Laik Kell were about to check the choke feeder controlling the flow of soda ash filling the ship, when they noticed panic spreading among the vessel crewmembers who were frantically pointing down into the water.

The loud noise of the loading machinery made it difficult to hear, but a co-worker told Palmer that somebody had apparently fallen into the river. Palmer and Kell raced down a ramp to the river's edge where they met co-worker Mikel Ford.

The three began searching, but it was hard to see anyone floating among the mass of river debris that collected among the pilings in an area shaded by the ship. They spotted a hard hat, but still couldn't find anyone nearby. After more searching, they discovered a man who was soaking wet, shivering and clinging to one of the pilings. He wasn't wearing a lifejacket, spoke little English and declined to provide his name, but the three longshoremen maneuvered over obstacles that helped him reach the shore. They later learned that the man was the ship's first officer who had been working on the vessel deck when he slipped on some ice that sent him falling 20 feet into the frigid river.

The ceremony to thank the three longshore workers at the Port Commission meeting took place on January 26. Kelly Palmer and Mikel Ford were able to attend while Laik Kell had to remain on the job. Commissioners presented the men with certificates and thanked them for their efforts.



**Recognition:** Longshoremen Mikel Ford (L) and Kelly Palmer were formally recognized by the Port of Longview on January 26 for helping rescue a merchant mariner who fell into the freezing Columbia River on Dec 31. Not pictured is Local 21 member Laik Kell who also assisted.

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# Local 34's first woman and African American officer

The recent San Francisco Ship Clerks' union election has resulted in a new generation of Local 34 officers, including their first Mexican-American President, David Gonzales – and Vice President Jeanette Walker-Peoples – who is the first woman and first African American to hold a top slot in the local union. Together with longtime Secretary-Treasurer Allen Fung, the trio reflects the growing diversity in the ILWU's membership.

ILWU International President Bob McEllrath attended the ceremony to install Local 34's new officers on January 21. He administered the oath of office and congratulated the new team.

Jeanette Walker-Peoples has been a Ship Clerk member for 7 years. Last year she served on the Labor Relations Committee, but already knew some of the ropes from her father, Andrew Walker Sr., who became a Local 34 member back in 1966.

## Starting at Local 10

Mrs. Walker-Peoples arrived at Local 34 in 2009 after accumulating ten years of longshore experience at Local 10, which she joined in 1999.

"When I first came to Local 10, the job was such a blessing," she said. "That's where I learned the importance of listening, so I could see how things worked and learn from the other members." Mrs. Walker-Peoples said she received help and encouragement from the "old-timers," including pensioner Ralph Rooker who recently passed.



Local 34 Vice President Jeanette Walker-Peoples

After listening and learning during her first year at Local 10, Mrs. Walker-Peoples offered to step up and serve as a Relief Dispatcher. The following year she decided to take an even bigger step by running for a full-time Dispatcher position, which she won.

With encouragement and support from her co-workers at Local 10, Mrs. Walker-Peoples says she was "never afraid to speak up, voice opinions or ask questions. From day one in the ILWU, I felt obligated to speak up for myself and other union members."

## Arriving at Local 34

"When I came to Local 34 in 2009, I gained experience the same way by attending union meetings and listening," said Mrs. Walker-Peoples. After five years, she attended a meeting where she says then-President Sean Farley was trying to encourage members to run for the Vice-President position, "but nobody stepped up." The

following year, she decided to run for that position and was elected.

## Changing color of Clerk's membership

Mrs. Walker-Peoples said she is "proud to be Local 34's first African American and woman officer," and would like to see more African Americans play leadership roles in the local. The racial makeup of San Francisco's Ship Clerks union is now changing quickly after decades when the membership was predominantly white. The difference now, says Mrs. Walker-Peoples, is the "one door" policy – that supplies new Clerks solely from the ranks of nearby longshore locals, which in the case of San Francisco, means Local 10.

"In the most recent group of new Local 34 transfers, all came from Local 10 – and 19 out of 21 were African American," she noted. "We're still not the majority, but it's an important and welcome change to see the diversity within the rank and file of Local 34."



ILWU International President Bob McEllrath swears in Local 34 Vice President Jeanette Walker-Peoples and Local 34 President David Gonzales.

# Veteran Local 10 member: "I'm still here!"

Ninety-seven year-old Jorris J. Nedd, Sr. arrived at the ILWU-PMA benefits office on February 3 with an unusual request: "I need some documents to prove that I'm still alive!"

The Local 10 pensioner explained that the Social Security Administration thought he was dead and suspected someone else was cashing his monthly Social Security checks.

## Beating the odds

While the agency's inquiry seemed strange, it wasn't entirely unfounded. With Nedd approaching his 98th birthday, he is among only 2% of his peers who are still alive – an accom-

plishment made even more remarkable because the life expectancy for an African American man in America is at least five years less than a white man born on the same date. Public health experts say this life expectancy difference is attributable to institutional racism – because African Americans are more likely to get dangerous and dirty jobs, and experience higher levels of stress – all of which takes a toll on the body.

## Born on Juneteenth

Nedd was born on June 19, 1918, an auspicious birthdate that coincides with the day in 1865 when Texas slaves were declared to be emancipated, an event known as "Juneteenth"

that is still recognized and celebrated by some African Americans.

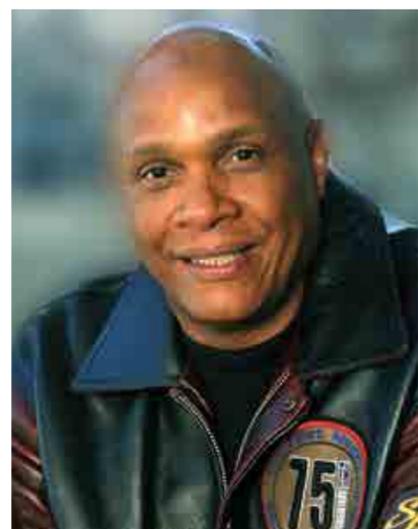
## Slavery then, poverty now

His birthplace was the tiny village of Chataignier in Louisiana's Evangeline Parish. "I bet you can't spell it!" he says, as he offers to help with the letters and pronounce it in French. The small community of several hundred families was mostly populated by African Americans, and in 1918, it probably included a few former slaves. "School for black kids was only three months long and there was no food, while the white kids went 9 months and got a hot lunch," Nedd recalls.

The local economy was agricultural, *continued on page 7*



# Adams elected SF Port Commission President



When ILWU International Secretary Treasurer Willie Adams was unanimously elected President of the San Francisco Port Commission on January 20 with Vice President Kim Brandon, it marked the first time in the Port's 152-year history that two African-Americans held both of the top positions.

Prior to Adams and Brandon, the only previous African American to serve on the Port Commission was the late Dr.

Arthur Coleman, a highly-respected physician who served from 1981 to 1992.

"I intend to work with the Commissioners, Port staff and Mayor Lee to carefully manage the Port so it benefits all the citizens of San Francisco," said Adams, who previously served two years as Vice President on the Commission. He was appointed to the Port body by Mayor Ed Lee in 2012 and previously served on San Francisco's Film Commission for three years.

San Francisco's Port Commission consists of five appointees, each selected by the Mayor, who are subject to confir-

mation by the Board of Supervisors for each four-year term. The Commission oversees 7.5 miles of prime waterfront property along San Francisco Bay, most of it leased for maritime, industrial, retail and commercial office uses – including the landmarks at Fisherman's Wharf, Pier 39, the Ferry Building and Giants Baseball stadium.

"My experience working on the docks gives me a good perspective for serving on the Port Commission," said Adams. "It's an incredibly valuable resource that needs to be carefully protected and managed for future generations."

# Job Corps' Tongue Point Seamanship Academy is training the next generation of maritime workers



**Fire drill:** Tongue Point cadets simulate a fire in one of the cabins aboard the training vessel, the Ironwood. This is part of the extensive hands-on training students receive during their sea time which also includes "man overboard" and other crisis response drills. Students also respond to simulated first-aid emergencies that include elaborate make-up and special effects so that students can identify potential injuries like compound fractures and severe burns and apply appropriate first-aid response to victims.

continued from page 1

- Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response
- Steward (Galley)

## From the Great Society to Tongue Point Job Corps

The Seamanship Program was started in 1980 by the IBU in conjunction with the Tongue Point Job Corp.

The Job Corps was a one of many federal programs founded during President Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty," and was seen as an important part of Johnson's domestic policy agenda known as the "Great Society." It created an array of important programs, including Medicare and Medicaid, financial aid for college, National Public Radio, food stamps for poor families, and Head Start.

Job Corps was modeled on the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which was a federal program established by President Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression as an emergency relief program to help unemployed workers. The CCC provided room, board, and jobs to millions of unemployed young people.

The Job Corps began with a similar idea—that the government can provide a "hand up" to working class youth by teaching them a trade to start them on their career. The program helps some get a second chance in life after starting down the wrong path. Job Corps provides vocational training that provides career opportunities for youth who are not able, or don't want to go to college.

## Looking out for everybody

Tumbarello applies that same principle—looking out for those who might take the wrong path—to his approach at the Seamanship academy. He explained that in any given class, there will be 10% of students who struggle at the bottom. They could be struggling academically or having trouble adjusting to the new lifestyle.

"On the first day of class, I always ask students what they think we should do with these bottom 10%. And without fail, I always hear a chorus of, 'Fire them, Captain.' That would be the easy thing to do. Just get rid of them," said Tumbarello. "But that's not what a leader does. We have an obligation to those students to help

them along, even if it means spending more time and more resources to help them succeed."

## The future of the industry

"I see before me the future of the maritime industry," said IBU President Alan Coté, speaking to an assembly of Seamanship students. Tongue Point Academy is the only Job Corps program that trains youth for careers in the maritime industry. There are private maritime academies that cost tens of thousands of dollars a year to attend, and students often graduate from those academies with a student loan debt well over \$100,000.

"This is a wonderful opportunity that cannot be duplicated," said Coté. "There is nothing like it. When you get done with this school, you will have a brand new life, no matter where you came from, no matter what your life was like."

Coté described his own experience working on a tugboat with without the benefit of attending a training academy like Tongue Point.

"You have a benefit I did not have when I got into this industry," Coté said. "I went to the school of hard knocks. When you sail with a 40-year veteran Norwegian Captain, and you get on his boat, and you are greener than green, do you think it's a pleasant experience?" He added that his ears are still ringing, and shoulder still hurts from the day when he got into the bite of a line. "In those days they taught you

how not to be killed by almost killing you," he joked.

Teri Mast also spoke at the assembly. She encouraged the students to take advantage of the many channels that exist for student feedback about the program including the shop steward system that was implemented several years ago.

## Life lessons

ILWU Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams told the students some of his own story about growing up in Kansas City where he was running with the wrong crowd before becoming a part of the ILWU and turning his life around.

"Sometimes it's hard to believe how far I've come. My life could have been very different. I just wish that my father could see where I am today," Adams said, encouraging students to take full advantage of the program, calling it "a gift."

The dangers of the industry were highlighted during a student assembly when Columbia River Regional IBU Director Brian Dodge introduced Curt Dawson, an IBU member who works as a deckhand for Foss Maritime. In December of 2005, Dawson jumped into the Columbia River to save Captain David Schmelzer from drowning. Dodge said the heroism was even more spectacular because Dawson isn't very a very strong swimmer. Dawson was awarded the US Coast Guard's Silver Lifesaving Medal, one of the highest awards for civilian valor.



**Always teaching:** Captain Len Tumbarello (pictured in the baseball cap) gathered a group of cadets in the wheelhouse of the Ironwood. Tumbarello talks to the students about the duties and protocols of the navigational watch. This interactive session included discussions and questions that complimented to students' classroom materials.



**In the engine room:** Upon completion of the program students receive the Qualified Member of the Engine Department (QMED) rating, an entry-level engine room certification. Engineering certs are some of the most sought after qualification in the maritime industry.



ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer (left) with student Haley Brady.



**Michael Albers, student:** *"I'm from a land locked state so I got interested in being a sailor in the romantic sense of sailors traveling the world—epic journeys and adventure. I've learned that the reality is a bit different from that. It's a big industry and the more I learn, the more interested I am.*

*I had come from a four-year school and I'm very excited to be here. I'm going to graduate from here with some job prospects as opposed to graduating with an art degree which isn't going to make me any money.*

*Starting out it was a bit of a hassle. But looking back on it, it was worth every sacrifice I've made to come here. I feel like I've actually bettered myself.*

*There was a learning curve for me—coming from no experience at all to the point where I am now. I feel like I can almost run the boat. The program is set up in a good time arc that you can learn everything or at least be knowledgeable about all aspects.*



**IBU Columbia River Regional Director Brian Dodge (left) introduces IBU member Curt Dawson at the Tongue Point student assembly. In 2005 Dawson risked his life to save tow boat captain David Schmelzer from drowning. Dawson said that he doesn't consider himself a hero and that he just reacted when he saw a shipmate in trouble.**

After the assembly Adams, Coté, Mast and Dodge stuck around to talk with students and get their feedback on the program.

"It was inspiring to hear the stories of these young men and women who have overcome so many obstacles in life just to get here," Adams said. "It's easy to take our opportunities in life for granted, but talking to these young people you can't help but be inspired by their dedication and perseverance

#### From strangers to shipmates

The students at Tongue Point come from a variety of backgrounds, from small towns to big cities, and they arrive with a variety of life experiences. Some have gone to community college or four-year universities while others haven't completed high school. Some have family in the maritime industry while others have never been on a boat their entire lives and grew up in a landlocked state in the Midwest. Some students come to Tongue Point with a longtime dream of pursuing work in the maritime industry, while other arrive unsure what they want to do with their lives.

The academy has to mold these students from diverse background and different life experience into shipmates. The close quarters on the ship and living together on campus can cause tensions, but it can also force students

to figure out how to work together as a team.

"We try very early on to break them up so that everybody can understand that it's not about where you are from," Tumbarello said. "We're not putting all the Hawaiians on the port side and all the Virginians on the starboard side. Be proud of being from Virginia, that's great, but you're part of Seamanship, and we are all one team."

Senior students also play a significant role by helping newer students enter the program; easing the transition to life at the academy and helping with an extra set of eyes as new students learn how to work on ships.

"We have people from all different backgrounds, and everyone understands that," said Matthew Bosnich, a student at the Academy, who is preparing to graduate.

"When I first got here, I learned a lot of things from the senior students. The instructors can't be there to work with everyone one-on-one, so the senior students help out the younger guys."

The camaraderie that develops among the students is a central feature of their experience. Coté described it as being very much like the solidarity of the union. Many students described their shipmates as being "like family" and many were initially anxious about attending the Academy because they

were worried about fitting in. Most quickly find themselves with a supportive network of new friends.

"On my way here I didn't know what to expect— if I was going to get along with anybody," said Aaron Stivason. "But I just stayed positive. As soon as I got here I made a gang of friends. We were all cool. The program is awesome. It's turned out a lot better than I thought."

"Everyone started off somewhere in their careers," Tumbarello said. "Apprehension and anxiety is good, but once you walk through the door and start something, go back to that good attitude, hard work and persistence. That is going to pay off. As long as you do that you'll be successful in this program."

Haley Brady said that being one of only three women in the program hasn't been a barrier to her success. She said that her shipmates have always been there when she has needed them.

"I look at it like this is our work, and there are things that we need to do. These guys are like my brothers. We are there to help each other and every time I've needed something, they've been there for me. I don't look at it like, 'I'm a girl.' I look at it like we are shipmates," Brady said.

"They call it the 'Brotherhood of the Sea' for a reason," said Alan Coté. "These students will form friendships here that they'll take with them through their entire careers."

"I love being a sailor," said cadet George Dick. "You really form a tight connection. I consider a lot of my co-workers family. It's a bad ass feeling. You cross the Columbia River bar and knowing it's one of the most dangerous bars in the world and you go through it every week. It's a sense of real pride. I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world."



**Cadet Moi Landon Masaniai from Honolulu, Hawaii practices for his knot tying exam.**



**Sebastian Barron, student:** *"I came here for the opportunity. I was working retail and getting paid minimum wage. I'm in debt for school loans so I thought I would take a different direction in life. I didn't know anything about boats before I came here but I've always been fascinated with them. Now my mind is focused on it.*

*"It's been challenging not knowing anything about the maritime industry and also being 3,000 miles from home. Coming here I was nervous, I was shy and I was wondering if I would fit in. I spoke to the Captain over the phone a few times and I asked him if I would be able to fit in. I've got so many things I was self-conscious about—I had long hair, I had to get rid of that. I've got a scar on the side of my head from surgery a few years ago and I was afraid I was going to get criticized. I had a lot of things that I thought would hold me back from succeeding here but the Captain told me, 'We're professional here. If you have any problems with anyone here bad mouthing you, criticizing you, speak to the instructors. If they can't help you, come to me and I will deal with it.' But I never had any problems."*

#### Hands on training

"The majority of the work we do in this program is hands-on," explained Matthew Bosnich. "We do classroom work, and take a lot of tests but the most of what we do here is working on and maintaining the vessels, so we have a lot of practical experience by the time we graduate."

That hands-on experience includes extensive time at sea on any one of the school's three training vessels. During their time on the water, students respond to simulated medical emergencies, fires, man-overboard and other drills during their time out on the water so they are prepared to respond during an actual emergency.

Students recently participated in a training drill with the US Coast Guard. The Ironwood was boarded by a Coast Guard teams repelling from helicopters and boarding from other vessels. The drill was a simulated response to a ship entering the Columbia River with an unusually high radiation signature.

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**For more information applying to the Job Corp visit <https://recruiting.jobcorps.gov>**

Applicants to the Seamanship Academy must be 18-24 years of age and meet the full Job Corps eligibility requirements and receive a referral to the program from the IBU. The program lasts a minimum of 18 months up to 24 months and includes free tuition, room, and board. For more information about the Tongue Point Job Corps visit <http://tonguepoint.jobcorps.gov/>

**Employers interested in setting up an internship opportunity for Tongue Point Seamanship students, please contact Len Tumbarello at 503-338-4977.**

## Ralph Rooker: mentor of new leaders



The strikingly tall, lanky figure of Ralph Rooker, who was a regular fixture at Local 10's dispatch hall and Longshore Caucus meetings for more than five decades, passed on December 19, 2015 in San Francisco, the city where he was born in 1940.

Rooker came to longshoring in 1969 after serving two tours in Vietnam as a "Sea-Bee," the Navy construction corps. During his first several years on the docks, Rooker and others endured sporadic longshore work under circumstances that he carefully documented each day. His detailed notes about work opportunities during those years provided invaluable evidence that helped many union members win back pension credit for work performed during the early 1970's in San Francisco, Stockton, Port Hueneme and Seattle.

"Ralph was a dispatcher at Local 10 when I was registered as a B-man back in the 1980's," said John Castanho, who now serves as the Coast Benefits Specialist. "Ralph always looked after us younger members, offering advice about the union and the industry. We developed a friendship that lasted almost 30 years. One of the things I am most proud of is the resolution that Ralph and I worked on in February of 2008 that was adopted by the Caucus to have the Longshore Division

provide financial support to the Pacific Coast Pensioners Association to hold their annual Conventions."

Rooker's co-workers at Local 10 chose him to serve as their Dispatcher for many terms, and in 1981 they elected him Chief Dispatcher. Castanho says Rooker had a reputation for being honest, hard-nosed and unafraid to speak his mind – especially when PMA representative made mistakes.

One way that Rooker truly distinguished himself was by mentoring new workers – especially women – and preparing them to take leadership roles in the union. He rarely missed union meetings and was a daily fixture in the dispatch hall where he counseled young members how to contribute their skills in a democratic, rank-and-file union.

Local 10's Vanetta Hamlin remembers Ralph's support and encouragement that helped her become the first woman to be elected Chief Dispatcher. "Ralph was incredibly supportive of me and others – which made him so special to many of us who were helped

as we came up through the ranks. He was a man of integrity and a man of his word."

A regular at Bay Area Pensioners Club meetings, Rooker was admired by fellow retirees for his willingness to help with all the little details that keep a union alive, such as making reminder calls before a meeting. "Ralph was like cement that helped us stick together – he would find a need and fill it," said Bay Area Pensioners President George Cobbs. "You could count on him to volunteer for a job and get it done – but he also saw the bigger picture and tackled projects that took years of persistence to finish. He helped a lot of people that way."

Rooker's life and union contributions were honored at a memorial held on February 13 at the Bay Area Longshoremen's Memorial Hall. Over one hundred union sisters and brothers came to pay their respects and praise Rooker's devotion to the union and mentorship of young union members. "Ralph called me with an idea just the night before he died," said Cobbs at the memorial. "With his passing, we've lost a real fighter."

## Honoring "Big John" Vlaic: gentle giant on the waterfront

John Vlaic was a respected veteran of the Southern California waterfront, resident of San Pedro and lifelong member of the ILWU who passed away at his home on December 31, 2015.

"Big John," as he was affectionately known on the waterfront, was born in Chicago in 1928 but came to San Pedro when he was seven years old. He attended Barton Hill Elementary School, Dana Junior High School, San Pedro High School and was enrolled at Compton College when he was drafted to serve in the Army.

After the Army, Vlaic began working longshore in May of 1949 by picking up extra work from the "meat locker" where jobs were sometimes available for non-members before the establishment of "casual" hiring halls.

In September of 1949, he became registered as a "Class B" member of the union and received "Class A" status in May of 1955.

Vlaic spent over thirteen years at Local 13; most of it working jobs assigned from the "hold board," doing the difficult and dangerous "break-bulk" work inside the holds of a vessel, with a groups of co-workers called "gangs." In August of 1965, Vlaic was promoted to foreman and joined Local 94 where he was eventually elected to every office from Trustee to President. He served on the local Executive Board from 1971 to 1980 and was then elected Vice President. Ten years later in 1990 he was elected Secretary-Treasurer, then President a year later. It was said that he always ran unopposed, as a sign of respect from his fellow rank-and-file members.

When Vlaic retired on June 1,

2000, he had logged 51 years on the waterfront – 29 of them in the foremen's local.

Local 94 President Danny Miranda recalls that Vlaic was deeply respected by the community, longshore members, clerks, and the employers, as well by his fellow foremen - both active and retired. "I think John won so much respect because he was fair and decent with everyone that he worked with."

Greg Mitre, President of the Pacific Coast Pensioners, noted Vlaic's many contributions to the union.

"John was a man of few words and a true gentle giant," said Mitre. "I remember once during a Pensioners executive board meeting when John was not happy with an idea being discussed. He raised his hand, and with carefully measured words, and declared: 'I'm sorry, but I don't agree with you, Greg.'"



"That was John's way of saying, 'your full of bull and you better rethink your idea!'"

In addition to many decades of union service, Vlaic was active in the local Pessimists Club, bowled in several leagues, and enjoyed travelling with Ann, his wife of 55 years.

"Losing John is a real loss to our waterfront community and the union," said Danny Miranda. "The Big John, 1928 model, was very rare and precious to us all."

## Richard Cavalli – Bay Area Clerks leader



Richard Cavalli (right) with former ILWU International President and Local 34 President James Herman.

Longtime Local 34 and ILWU leader Richard Cavalli passed on January 14, 2016 at the age of 75. A native of Oakland, Cavalli was born on June 7, 1940 to his mother, Marion who was a nurse and father, Bud, was a longshoreman.

After graduating from Castlemont High School in 1958, Cavalli got a Bachelor's degree in History from San Jose State University. He continued to study formally and informally throughout his life and was a voracious reader of history, politics and natural history.

In 1966, he married Ann Preuit,

had three children and remained together 49 years.

Cavalli began working with the Local 34 Marine Clerks as a "B-man" in the 1960's and became fully registered in 1971. He was increasingly active in union affairs, beginning as a Steward, then Local Executive Board member. By 1977 he was elected Vice President and Assistant Business Agent, a position he held through the 1980's while also serving as a Convention and Longshore Caucus delegate. In 1997, Cavalli was elected President of Local 34 and served initially for five years. In 2003, he ran and was elected to the International Executive Board where

he remained until 2009. Cavalli was re-elected to serve as Local President and completing his final term in 2008

before retiring in 2010.

In meetings, Cavalli usually listened to other views before speaking, but rarely hesitated to voice his own opinion, especially when he thought a matter of principle was involved – even if it was unpopular. He was a critical thinker who tried to offer constructive suggestions when raising a problem, and was frequently eloquent, if not always persuasive.

Longtime Local 10 member Lawrence Thibeaux served on the Inter-

*continued on page 8*

# Local 17 archives rescued

Last February, the Local 17 Pensioner's Club contacted the ILWU International office with a challenge. Pensioners had been told to immediately vacate the Local 17 union hall which they had used for many years.

The building also contained all of Local 17's records from its founding in 1937 until it disaffiliated from the ILWU in 2011 and was absorbed by Teamsters Local 150. The Pensioners Club felt responsible for finding a new safe home for these documents in order to prevent 75 years of their union history from being lost.

Local 17 Pensions Club President Willie Walker called ILWU International Secretary Treasurer Willie Adams for assistance. Adams then asked the ILWU library to help the pensioners find a home for these treasures. Although the ILWU library itself was too small to take the local's records, ILWU Librarian Robin Walker was able to provide guidance and support to help the pensioners preserve their past. Walker began by soliciting help from

the Labor Archives and Research Center (LARC) at San Francisco State University, which has a longtime relationship with the ILWU. LARC proved to be a huge benefit. Director Catherine Powell offered short term storage space in the SF State library and accompanied Walker to the Local 17 hall in West Sacramento where they identified records of value and transported them to San Francisco. LARC also provided a temporary workspace where Walker could carefully review the records to appraise and inventory them, which is an important step in determining their historical value. LARC also helped the ILWU identify libraries in the region that might be willing to provide a permanent home for the files – and make them available to pensioners and researchers with an interest in the ILWU and the labor history of the Sacramento Valley.

After consulting with the ILWU's Librarian, the Special Collections Department of the University of California at Davis, agreed to take the collection. Although Davis does not have its own labor archives, it has a rich collection of material documenting Califor-



Local 17 Pensioners with librarians from Labor Archives and Research Center (LARC) at San Francisco State University.

nia's agricultural history, and the library was eager to add the union's material to their archival holdings. The Local 17 records tell the story of how union members were able to organize for better working conditions at several food packing facilities and warehouses, adding depth to the university's agricultural archives. The ILWU International delivered dozens of boxes to the U.C. Davis library last summer – along with a \$2,500 donation to help the university librarians process and preserve the valuable collection.

Last October, a group of Local 17 pensioners had their first chance to tour the UC Davis library and meet with the library staff. Pensioners Club President Willie Walker assembled a group of former Local 17 members that included Lupe Martinez, Jack Wyatt, Jim Facio, and Frank Thompson, Jr., who was joined by his son Steve.

"All of us were glad to see that our history is now protected – and available for pensioners and others to see what Local 17 did to help workers in the Sacramento Valley," said Willie Walker.

## Veteran Local 10 member: "I'm still here!"

*continued from page 3*

based on farms and plantations that previously exploited slaves but continued operating into the 20th century with low-wage labor that included Nedd and his family. Today, half the residents of Chataignier still live below the poverty line – including two-thirds of the area's children. Poverty statistics weren't kept in Chataignier when Nedd was there, but living and working conditions were much worse a century ago.

### Immigrant father

Nedd's father came to Louisiana from the French Caribbean island of Martinique, but quickly discovered many French and Creole-speakers lived around Chataignier, conditions that still give his son a beautiful Creole accent.

### Dangerous work in Louisiana

The work around Chataignier was difficult, dangerous and low paid. Nedd and his father did backbreaking work in cotton farms, cane fields and sugar mills. "My first job on the farm paid me \$15 a month, then earned .75 cents a day at another job where I chopped cotton and plowed fields with a team of mules." He also worked in rice fields where one day he was bitten by a poisonous water moccasin snake. Pointing to his eye, Nedd recounts another horrible injury that happened when when a stalk of freshly-cut sugar cane was pushed deep into his eye socket, causing an injury that almost cost him the vision

in one eye, and could have ended his life. He points to the permanent scar above his eye that is still visible 80 years later.

### Back door domestic help

The work Nedd's mother's performed for a white family in town was difficult and low-paid, but not as dangerous as the rice fields or sugar mills. It also included the daily indignity of arriving each day through the back door because the front was reserved for white only. "She cleaned their entire house and went inside every room, but couldn't go through that front door," he recalls.

### Searching for a better life

The harsh conditions in Louisiana pushed Nedd and others in his generation to search for a better life beyond the South. His first step was to join the Army, which he did in 1940, more than a year before Pearl Harbor was attacked. He became a talented cook and rose to the rank of Staff Sergeant. "They didn't have any Black officers in those days," he says, recalling the rigid segregation in US armed forces that mirrored Louisiana's Jim Crow laws.

### Army segregation

"The Army had separate barracks, mess halls, trains and busses – and all the officers over us were white. One day some of those white officers came into our colored kitchen and said they wanted me to come and cook for them because they liked my food."

But when his cooking shift was finished each day, it was back to the segregated barracks. The lucky part, he says, was that his flat feet kept him stationed in Louisiana during the war, instead of being shipped to Europe or the Pacific where 400,000 U.S. soldiers were killed during the war.

### Joining the Great Migration

After two and a half years of Army service, Nedd left Louisiana for the West Coast – part of the epic "great migration" made by 6 million African Americans who fled the South during and after the Second World War. After settling in Oakland and getting a job at the Naval Supply Depot, he heard about the longshore union and found his way to the Local 10 hall which was integrated – a feature that greatly impressed Nedd. The hiring hall was also where he met President Harry Bridges, an encounter that made a strong impression that remains to this day: "He was some kind of man – the government kept coming after him for years and years but never got him!"

### Longshore union

Nedd put in 25 years at Local 10 before retiring in 1970 after a job injury. "I was a gang foreman, but it didn't start out that way." He recalled that his first assignments as a low-seniority longshoreman meant working as a "hold man" who hauled foul-smelling, maggot infested cow hides, lumped heavy burlap bags of coffee beans, and lifted

heavy stalks of bananas. "I've still got all my different hooks for those different jobs," he says proudly. The work eventually got better, including his favorite job at the C&H Sugar plant in Crockett, CA, that still operates today. "I worked at sugar mills in Louisiana when I was a boy, and it was miserable. This C&H plant was still hard – we had to haul big heavy sacks of sugar in the early days – but then used new bulk loading equipment to move the sugar, which was easier on the men."

### Pensions and recognition

The documents he got from the ILWU-PMA Benefits office in early February should help straighten out the Social Security inquiry, said Nedd, who happened to meet Coast Benefits Specialist John Castanho, International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams, and International President Bob McEllrath during his visit. The group sat down for a few minutes to exchange greetings and hear some stories.

"These are the guys who did all the hard work and heavy lifting that made it easier for everyone today," said McEllrath, who thanked Nedd for his decades of service to the union.

When the senior van arrived to take Nedd back to the East Bay, he said "thank you, because I'm one of the few guys who still gets a good pension and health benefits – and it's all because of the ILWU."

## Job Corp training the next generation of maritime workers

*continued from page 5*

### Marine oil spill response

In June of 2015, five Tongue Point Seamanship Academy students traveled to Santa Barbara, CA to assist with the clean-up of an oil pipeline that ruptured near Refugio State Beach. Oil response is one of the many skills taught at Tongue Point Academy.

"We are producing mariners that

help keep the navigable water ways of the United States safe, secure, and environmentally pristine – which is vital to keeping commerce going," Tumbarello said.

### Internships

"This program provides a valuable service to the industry," said IBU Secretary-Treasurer Terri Mast. "The average age of the current workforce is 55 years-old and employers need the qualified,

entry-level mariners that this program provides."

While the Academy provides extensive sea time to students on the school's training vessels, Tumbarello said he is committed to expanding their internship program so every student will have an opportunity for job-based learning.

"We are blessed with three vessels and people who come here with missions for us to do, but the way that our

students get the best exposure to the real world is through our internship program," Tumbarello said. "When I got here three years ago, I set a goal of providing an internship opportunity for every student before they graduate. Right now, we have ten internships for 128 students; which is a start, but we need more." He says the program is already exceptional, but they intend to keep making it better.

# Richard Cavalli

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national Executive Board with Cavalli, and recalled how they were assigned in the early 1990's to join Local 52 member James Dean on a committee that investigated allegations of gender and racial discrimination at ILWU Locals in the Pacific Northwest. "Richard was part of our committee that went to Seattle, Tacoma and Portland, where we documented problems with discrimination and reported our findings back to the International Executive Board," said Thibeaux. "Richard didn't flinch from those unpleasant facts and remained determined to help enact reforms that made our union stronger and more inclusive."

Cavalli also travelled with an important ILWU committee in 1989 to visit the Port of Rotterdam where new technology and automation were operating.

In addition to his devotion to union causes, which included marching with Cesar Chavez and protesting the invasion of Iraq, Cavalli was passionate about spending time in the wilderness, especially in Yosemite's high country and throughout the Sierra Nevada range. He also volunteered and supported many causes and community efforts including the Apostleship of The Sea, Sierra Club, Corpus Christi Men's Club, Colombo Club, and Castle-mont High School Alumni Association.

## TRANSITIONS

### NEW PENSIONERS:

**Local 13:** Ernie J. Soto; John Vargas, Jr.; James J. Ponce; Eugenio A. Fleta; Clarence L. Turner; Michael A. Ybarra, Jr.; Jane Phineas; Carlos E. Navarro; **Local 23:** Daryl E. Jefferson; Douglas R. Rollins; **Local 52:** John R. Yesberger; **Local 63:** Domenick L. Miretti; Patricia K. Monje; Melinda L. Ursich; **Local 94:** Salvador T. Lauro; **Local 98:** Gregory Black;

### DECEASED PENSIONERS:

**Local 8:** Don Delashmutt; Ronald A. Palmer; **Local 10:** Hector Zepeda; Ralph E. Rooker; **Local 13:** Carlos Rivera; Frank A. Di Meglio; Johnny E. Hayes; Harry R. Callas (Joann); **Local 19:** Peter P. Caso; **Local 26:** Partap Singh; **Local 34:** Richard A. Cavalli; **Local 40:** Victor

A. Voltz Local 50; John H. Lampa; **Local 51:** Charles W. Hansen; **Local 53:** Charles J. Klima; **Local 92:** Harold J. Schwarz; **Local 94:** John V. Vlaic;

### DECEASED SURVIVORS:

**Local 8:** MShirley M. Lugar; **Local 10:** Josie A. Garcia; Mildred L. Anderson; Dorothy Elder; Lubirdia Campbell; Luedonia Brown; Betty M. Whitlock; Lupe M. Aguirre; Ervie L. Patterson; Florence I. Miguel; **Local 13:** Naomi R. Peterson; Francesca Longin; Nela Smoljan; Kathleen L. Hagen; **Local 19:** Elma H. Pakka; Amy Williams; Marjorie L. Peralto; **Local 21:** Mildred C. Sold; Juanita M. Parvi; **Local 23:** Willadee M. Seitz; **Local 40:** Helene Etheredge; **Local 75:** Virginia C. Sisler;

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...when you need it most. That's what we're all about. We are the representatives of the ILWU-sponsored recovery programs. We provide professional and confidential assistance to you and your family for alcoholism, drug abuse and other problems—and we're just a phone call away.

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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).

**The Legacy of 1934: An historical exhibit by the ILWU.** Produced as a catalogue to accompany the new traveling historical art 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 Larrowe. 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

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