



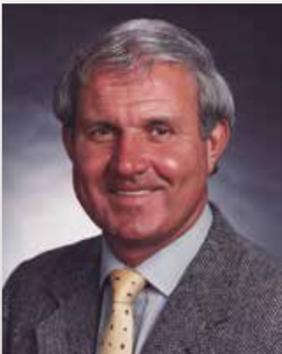
THE DISPATCHER

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Former ILWU Int'l Vice President Randy Vekich passes [page 7](#)

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Welcome to the ILWU:

Auto-processors at San Francisco's Pier 80 just won their first ILWU contract. This photo shows day-shift workers (L-R) Kee Sgengsourichanh, Jameca Kemp, Boris Garcia and Henry Ormeno. When the contract was signed on January 16th, the team was tracking and preparing 4,200 Tesla automobiles for export to Asia and beyond.

We Are the ILWU: Mainland Organizing Department

Organizing has been essential to the ILWU's success since the founding of our union. It began with the militancy of west coast longshoremen, then inspired a march inland to organize warehouse and industrial workers. Across the Pacific, in Hawaii, the spark of organizing struck a chord with plantation workers.

These and other efforts were part of a movement that allowed workers to rise through labor unions during the 20th Century. Unions made it possible for workers to improve working and living conditions, secure new rights and power on the job, and achieve greater political power for the entire working class. Our commitment to building a progressive, democratic, and inclusive union has been part of that organizing legacy.

This tradition has been reaffirmed by rank-and-file delegates at our International Conventions who frequently ask us to honor the motto: "An Injury to One is An Injury to All." These words apply to helping more than just those within our union. Living true to these words obligates us to extend our hands to fellow workers who are unorganized, because we are all members of the working class, and we can only make meaningful prog-

ress by working together. We must continue to organize – or this union and everything won by generations who sacrificed before us – will die.

We are the ILWU's Mainland Organizing Department. Our aim is to strengthen and expand the ILWU and advance a program that promotes working class solidarity.

Who we are

Our Mainland Organizing Department consists of four regions, each staffed with a Lead Organizer: Southern California (Carlos Cardon), Northern California (Agustin Ramirez), Oregon Area (Ryan Takas) Puget Sound/Alaska (Jon Brier). Researcher Bridget Wack works in the San Francisco headquarters.

The Organizing Department Director is Ryan Dowling, who reports directly to ILWU Vice President (Mainland) Bobby Olvera, Jr. Our efforts are further supported by other ILWU staff, including Communications (Craig Merrilees & Roy SanFilippo) and Education (Robin Walker and Russ Bargmann). Legal advice and support is provided by attorneys at the Leonard Carder law firm.

At the elected helm of the department is the ILWU's National Organizing Committee (NOC), made up of the Titled Officers, and the International Organizing Committee, a subcommittee of the International Executive Board.

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Night-shift: Pasha auto-processors on the night-shift include (L-R) Miguel Rivera, Paul Wesley Adams and Kieren Broussard. The new contract provides minimum raises of 38% plus good benefits for the Pier 80 workers who are now members of Local 6.



We Are the ILWU: Mainland Organizing Department

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Most importantly, the Organizing Department is financially supported by ILWU members and fueled by brave and selfless workers who give their time to organize.

What we do

The Organizing Department is responsible for bringing new workers into our union. Sometimes workers are already self-organized within their workplace and reach out to join the ILWU. Other times we are contacted by individuals, friends or family members. The Department investigates these leads, conducts targeted research, and meets with workers to gauge what kind of leverage may exist with an employer (often referred to as the “hammer”). We also assess the level of interest within the workforce (known as “heat”). Assessing both the “hammer” and “heat” are crucial, along with information provided in meetings with workers about the behavior of their employer and attitude of co-workers.

Sometimes those leads turn into organizing drives, while other leads lack sufficient interest within the workforce. Sometimes workers would be better served by affiliating with a different union that has clear jurisdiction. Cases that lead to an active organizing drive see the Organizing Department working hard to ensure that workers have the best chance of securing their first contract. After contract ratification, the new workers join an ILWU Local, and the Organizing Department returns to helping a new group of workers.

Besides helping new workers join the union, the Organizing Department also helps locals and Divisions when they come under attack or need assistance. Each local and Division is autonomous and decides when and how they interact with the Organizing Department. One common form of support is training for worker activists and leaders. Recently, the Inlandboatmen’s Union (IBU) requested training to help members understand how to identify potential groups of workers nearby who may be interested in organizing. A day-long training was organized to provide IBU officers and activists with the tools they needed for this purpose.

In some cases, the threat to a Local or Division is urgent, and requires

our full and immediate assistance. This was the case when Local 30 members in Boron, CA were locked-out by the global mining corporation, Rio Tinto in 2010. It became an all-hands-on-deck moment for the ILWU, with all Organizing Department and other staff assigned to help Local 30 by deploying boots on the ground, offering strategy and tactical advice, media outreach, research and training. The mobilization of these resources allowed Local 30 and the ILWU to emerge victorious after the 100-day lockout.

We are fighting

While organizing is critical to our union’s survival, it requires lots of time and resources. Labor laws are stacked against workers – even more so with the current anti-union Trump administration. Appointees to the U.S. Department of Labor and National Labor Relations Board are recruited from corporations and corporate law firms. Despite this hostile environment, the Organizing Department is successfully starting and sustaining campaigns that include:

1. Animal hospitals.
2. Logistics and supply chain.
3. Other campaigns involving hundreds of workers.

We are continuing to help these workers organize and fight for their first contracts. Along the way, we have achieved small but meaningful victories. The struggles here – along with resulting victories and failures – have become woven into the tapestry that is the ILWU’s legacy of collective struggle. For CRVS, a marker of that success has been my experience watching new leaders take more responsibility for negotiations. I was initially the lead negotiator and main spokesperson at the bargaining table, but the team has grown immensely, allowing me to sit on the side as workers speak in their own voices and as equals with the company officials and lawyers. It’s inspiring to see workers build confidence, find their voice, and speak truth to power. These workers have discovered the ILWU way.

At SFVS, workers achieved their first strike at a veterinary hospital, then doubled-down to do it again. Director Ryan Dowling recounts one of his favorite moments:

“Last year, I watched workers at SFVS go out on their second strike to protest Unfair Labor Practices.

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Organizing lessons from the Anchor Brewing campaign

Last month’s *Dispatcher* reported that Anchor workers voted overwhelmingly to ratify their first union contract on December 20. With their victory secure, workers at the first craft brewery in America can share some of the factors behind their organizing victory.

They were patient

Early union supporters took their time and resisted the urge to “go public” before securing support from a strong majority of their co-workers. The process was slow, systematic and effective.

They talked with every worker

Conversations were the key to building strong support. That meant listening to what people were thinking and concerned about – not lecturing or preaching about the union.

They built a strong committee

The strong union committee inside Anchor didn’t just happen, it was built on a foundation of conversations. Those talks resulted in identifying supporters and encouraging them to join the committee.

New leaders were encouraged

The conversations helped identify natural leaders who had followers. Finding and encouraging these respected workers made the organizing committee strong and representative.

Support was tested and verified

Supporters were asked to show their support in small but important ways – such as coming to a meeting, signing a petition, wearing a button or displaying a poster at a bar.

Public support was organized

Besides building support inside the plant, workers realized they also needed friends and leverage on the outside. They targeted customers and bartenders at local bars where Anchor products were served.

Political support was enlisted

Outreach to local elected officials began early in the campaign. County Supervisor Shamann Walton and other officials encouraged Anchor management to be respectful of workers and the union.

They got help from allies

The public outreach campaign required lots of volunteers who were invited to help from the ILWU, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, San Francisco Labor Council and Democratic Socialists of America which played an essential role before and during the campaign.

They contacted co-workers abroad

Anchor is owned by Sapporo, with union workers at plants in Japan and Canada. The Anchor committee communicated with leaders in those unions to secure support and solidarity.

DISPATCHER

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SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

The need for increased ILWU Political Action

It is no secret that working families have much at stake in the 2020 U.S. Federal elections. On November 3rd, our nation will elect a President, 35 Senators, and 435 members of the House Representatives. If there was ever a time for organized labor and the working class in this country to unite in purpose to change the balance of power in Washington, D.C., that time is now..

The GOP's war on the working class

It is clear to me that the GOP's continued war on labor and working families has only accelerated since President Trump was elected in 2016.

We have watched the promotion of national right to work legislation, the rollback of favorable labor NLRB precedent, a massive tax cut for corporations and the super-rich, anti-labor conservative cabinet appointments, repeal of longstanding environmental protections, flawed trade policies, flawed national security policies, climate change denial, and rigid opposition to health care for all.

The GOP did not gain their dominant position in the federal government by accident. Starting in the 1990's they concentrated their efforts at the state level, focusing on governorships and state legislatures. They have utilized right-wing dark-money donors like the Koch brothers to buy elections at every level of government. They especially targeted elections at the end of each decade when the winners of those elections draw lines for congressional and state legislative districts for the following decade. According to a *Politico* article from 2/10/18 entitled, "The Democrat's' secret weapon to take back statehouses," the results of this strategy of partisan gerrymandering has been that almost 1,000 state legislative seats have been lost by the Democratic party since 2008.

This fact illustrates the dramatic need for stronger political action by organized labor and the working class. We must not continue to allow the 1% and their GOP puppets to prosper by exploiting the majority of Americans. We may not have the financial resources of the Koch brothers, but we have something better-- we are the majority. If we increase voter registration among the working class and aggressively engage in this year's election, we can win the political changes that will let us collectively prosper and better our society.

Federal Judge appointments

Another major GOP strategy that must be stopped is the rightwing politicization of the appointment of federal judges. According to a *Washington Post* article dated 12/21/19:

After three years in office, President Trump has remade the federal judiciary, ensuring a conservative tilt for decades and cementing his legacy no matter the outcome of November's election.

Trump nominees make up 1 in 4 U.S. circuit court judges. Two of his picks sit on the Supreme Court. And this past week, as the House voted to impeach the president, the Republican-led Senate confirmed an additional 13 district court judges. In total, Trump has installed 187 judges to the federal bench.

Trump's appointments have flipped three circuit courts to majority GOP-appointed judges, including the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit in New York. The President has also selected younger conservatives for these lifetime appointments, ensuring his impact is felt for many years.

The executor of this aggressive push is Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), who is singularly focused on reshaping the federal judiciary, twice ramming through Senate rule changes to speed up confirmations over Democrat's objections.

McConnell's mantra is, 'leave no vacancy behind,' and with a 53-47 Senate majority, he has been able to fill openings at breakneck speed.

The future impact that these conservative federal judiciary appointments will have on our nation remains unclear, but in my opinion they are antithetical to significant future improvements for American workers. They have only occurred to protect the interests of the 1 percent, huge corporations, and the military industrial complex. As such, we must see it for what it is and collectively engage and dedicate significant time, energy, and resources to regain control of the United States Senate.

Statement of Policy on Political Action

The ILWU Political Action Fund (PAF) was established by delegates to the ILWU'S 24th Biennial International Convention in 1981. It was created for voluntary contributions by the membership to "be used for political education, voter registration, legislative activities, contributions to candidates for public office, and other such purposes consistent with the goals of the International."

The ILWU's Political Action Fund exists to support elected officials who support policies and legislation that advance the interests of the ILWU and the working class.

The International Executive Board unanimously adopted a Statement of Policy on Political Action at the December 11, 2019 IEB meeting. I have included it below for your review and consideration:

Political Action is the organized effort of working people to make our voices heard by elected officials. This is the pathway for winning government policies and programs which benefit organized labor and all working Americans. The ILWU Political Action Fund (PAF) exists to support elected officials who champion legislation and policies that advance the political aims of the working class and ILWU.

The ILWU engages in independent political action as part of our union's

aggressive struggle to win better conditions for members. ILWU political action educates members about political issues and mobilizes them to take action. We promote political solutions for the problems that union members face and utilize the political arena to defend ourselves against attacks launched by anti-labor politicians.

The ILWU's victories at the bargaining table can be easily undermined by hostile actions from local, state and federal governments. In addition, the ILWU and working people often face issues outside of bargaining. Labor laws, tax laws, laws promoting or impeding automation, and changes to our nation's health care and social security systems affect the lives of ILWU members. This is why it is absolutely essential that for the ILWU to engage in the political process so our voices are heard.

As we engage our employers in the workplace, they often attack us on a second front, using their massive financial resources to buy scores of lobbyists and give millions in political contributions to anti-labor politicians.

Employers seek laws that boost their profits, usually at our expense. We will never match corporations in dollar-for-dollar political spending. However, we can give our allies the support they need to win against waves of dark money. This is why we must raise as much money as we can to compete with employers in this fight at the ballot box, in every state capitol, and in Washington, DC. It is the only way we can protect the gains made at the bargaining table. We must be involved in the political process.

We are currently raising PAF money through the ILWU website, the Dispatcher, and via solicitation letters to members of the ILWU, and ILWU Credit Unions. These methods have worked to bring member contributions into the PAF, but now we must do more. The ILWU Executive Board believes a new program of member-to-member solicitations is necessary to raise more money for political action.

PAF Chair

The ILWU Executive Board encourages each local to appoint a PAF Chair who is responsible for soliciting voluntary PAF contributions from local union members.

The PAF Chair is authorized to receive updates from the ILWU Washington office on issues of importance to ILWU members, and help educate and mobilize ILWU members to participate in the ILWU political process. They are authorized to ask for voluntary contributions in one-on-one meetings with members of the ILWU.

The PAF Chair can appoint a Committee of no less than 3 members to assist with the responsibilities. In addition to raising funds for the PAF and distributing educational materials to members, the Chair is encouraged to develop a program to register members to vote and to recruit volunteers for Congressional, state and local races.



ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer Ed Ferris

The PAF Chair is also responsible for:

- Developing a plan for collecting member e-mail addresses to assist the International in soliciting PAF funds.
- Sending solicitation communications inexpensively and efficiently via e-mail.

For example, ILWU leadership could work with the Legislative and Communications Department to develop content and send mass/bulk e-mail campaigns to solicit donations from members. Very importantly, the email list could be used to ask members and their families to write to Congress for critical upcoming votes and to help working families.

Social Media

The International Executive Board authorizes the officers to explore the creation of an ILWU Political Action page on social media. The platform would be limited to ILWU members, families and pensioners to discuss political and legislative issues facing the union and all working people. The Social media page would also be used by the International to solicit contributions to the ILWU Political Action Fund.

It is absolutely imperative that we raise our Union's profile when it comes to Political Action. The stakes are just too high in 2020. Your support of the ILWU Political Action Fund is an investment in the protection of the ILWU and in your future. I strongly encourage every member of this Union – active and retired – to make voluntary contributions to the ILWU Political Action Fund in amounts that you can afford.

As Harry Bridges once said, "There is a weapon we can fight with. That is the weapon of political action." Let's collectively listen to these wise words and put them into practice.

We are the ILWU



Editor's note: The Dispatcher will be profiling ILWU Locals and Affiliates in the coming months. This profile of the IBU's Southern California Region was the first one in the series and was drawn at random.

ILWU Local 5, Portland, OR

ILWU Local 5 was chartered on August 10, 2000, after a two-year organizing and contract campaign by 400 workers at Powell's Books in Portland. The organizing effort began in 1998 when the company restructured jobs and significantly reduced raises for workers. Powell's workers filed for a union election on March 12, 1999. On April 22, they made history by voting to join the union and becoming the nation's largest union bookstore.

Contract negotiations between the workers and company were contentious. Between October 1999 and May 2000, the union filed 10 Unfair Labor Practices against Powell's for violating labor laws – including retaliation against union supporters. Workers responded by organizing eleven strikes.

After 53 bargaining sessions held over 11 months, workers announced they had reached a tentative agreement for a fair contract on August 1, 2000, winning significant improvements including an 18 percent raise over three years.

Local 5 members at Powell's perform a wide-range of tasks.

"Powell's is a pretty big company with multiple storefronts and every type of job from booksellers and people who do software programming to driving trucks and buying new and used books," said Local 5 President Ryan Van Winkle. There's a department that just builds fixtures and shelving. There's a whole woodshop at our warehouse, and all of these workers are members of Local 5," he said.

In recent years, Local 5 has expanded to help workers in other shops.

"In addition to workers at Powell's books, we represent food service workers at Evergreen State College and staff at the Oregon Historical Society," Van Winkle said. "We're also helping veterinary technicians organize to join the union and have several other campaigns in the works."

Participation is encouraged

Local 5 encourages members to actively participate. They do this with member-to-member, two-way conversations on the job, and providing a warm, welcoming space at a wide-range of social and political events. The Local 5 office becomes a site for social events that bring together members from different shops.

"The Local 5 office is located near the Powell's Burnside store, making it convenient for that large group of workers to easily meet. The office space is used for game nights, an annual craft bazaar where Local 5 members sell artwork, jewelry, and other craft projects, and a monthly display of artwork by Local 5 members.

"The monthly board-game night enables workers from different shops to meet and interact," said Van Winkle. "We organize other activities like taking members caving, holding regular beach clean-ups, and other events organized by members." Trips have included everything from hikes in the woods to visiting a local shooting range.

The Local also has an "open bargaining" policy that encourages members to observe negotiations whenever the union meets with employers. This policy dates from the first Powell's contract campaign, twenty years ago.

"We see ourselves as the antithesis of a service-model union," says Van Winkle, referring to unions that are run by professional staff who operate without control and participation of rank-and-file members.

"All the work done around here is member-driven," Van Winkle says. "Our decisions and how we operate begin and end with the membership." He says the structure behind their bottom-up ethic begins with a strong Stewards Council that's always been focused on membership involvement – an approach that has proven successful for the past two decades.

Beth Woodson, Veterinary Technician

"I've been at Columbia River Veterinary Specialists for six years. This is my 25th year in the veterinary industry and I've been a licensed technician for 19 years – ten of them as a veterinary technician specialist. Most of my career has been in emergency and critical care, plus some anesthesia as well. I'm currently the overnight lead for the emergency and critical care departments. Forming a union had been talked about on and off throughout the years. More so after we saw several of our favorite practices sold to large corporations. I didn't feel there was a place for it when we were privately owned, but when we went through our first acquisition, it was a topic of conversation. We thought we could survive the takeover because it seemed like there was strong internal support from our management and our benefits. While they weren't comparable to some private practice benefits, they weren't as bad as they are now. When PetVet acquired us, I watched people cry over their health care choices. They were sitting in front of their computer with their head in their hands crying because they were going to have to choose to go without health care. That motivated me to get in contact with people and get in touch with ILWU Organizer Ryan Takas. I called him on my way home from work and set up a time to meet with him.



"The patients will always be the top priority for workers like us. Corporate medicine has taken away from that focus, and I want to bring it back. My goal is to get back to the medicine, get back to the teaching, and making sure everyone is as well-trained as possible.

"Working conditions in our profession have seen a huge drop in recent years. At the last privately-owned practice where I worked, we had quarterly profit sharing. We had meaningful raises. I was able to buy a house, but now I'm struggling. I've had to refinance my house. I've had to take on roommates and pick up extra shifts and work a lot of overtime just to make ends meet. I feel like I'm a little too far into my career to be this desperate.

"The support from our team of doctors has been outstanding. They proudly wear our buttons and encourage us. They've written letters of support and gone above and beyond. Those things highlight the strength of our hospital and employees."

Annie Presler, Veterinary Technician



"I started working for Columbia River Veterinary Specialists in 2013 when we were owned by a private group of veterinarians. I've seen three different ownerships since I've been with the company. My background is in biology. I have my bachelor's through Portland State and worked with the Forest Service in the wildlife department. I've always really enjoyed animals and wildlife. I always had it in the back of my mind that if I had the opportunity to get involved in the veterinary industry, I would give it a chance. I

didn't know how I could fit-in until I found my current job as an instrument technician. I also do imaging with our Computed Tomography (CT). I'm responsible for maintaining the sterility of all of our equipment and instruments, managing the flow of our surgical suites, the cleaning process, the surgery and assisting the imaging of patients and training new hires in instruments and cross-training others who want to help out on that side of the hospital. We service the entire hospital, all specialties, the Emergency Room and Intensive Care Unit.

"Staffing is an issue. We consistently have turnover. We are open 24-7 and it's a challenge to get enough coverage so all the instruments and equipment are sterilized and ready to go. We've had several vacancies where people have come into the position, and go elsewhere after saying there's too much work for the pay. Just retaining good quality people is difficult because they aren't being paid what they deserve."

Lisa Zacks, Veterinary Technician, CRVS

"I've been in the industry for about 20 years and was always interested in veterinary medicine but thought the science was overwhelming. When I went to massage school, I realized that I was learning a lot of the sciences, so I went into veterinary medicine and worked at a shelter in San Francisco during my 2-years of school. After graduating I went into orthopedic veterinary medicine because my own dog needed veterinary care. I volunteered to work with the surgeon who did the surgery and he hired me. I have now done several specialties; orthopedics, internal medicine, oncology, ophthalmology, and I'm currently working as an ER technician.



I enjoy the mental and physical stimulation of the job and constant work. We can do so many different things. It's not like human medicine. We are everywhere. We do radiology. We do anesthesia. We are neonatal and geriatric. We're not confined to one department. Everything is open for us to do.

"Everything is not always as straightforward as it seems. The pets can't tell us what's happening, so sometimes they might present for one thing until we find an underlying problem.

"The harder part of the job can be the financial aspect—that clients can't afford the treatment or the medication. Sometimes there are really sad cases we see over and over again—meaning they aren't going to get better, and we are just maintaining them until the family can come to terms with what's going on with their pet. The time constraints we have for each patient, and the number of patients waiting for help can be overwhelming. Our wages have dropped at least five percent since this latest company took us over because our hours have been reduced. I don't have a savings account anymore. I used to be able to save money."

Brianna Bonham, Chief Steward, Powell's Books, Cedar Hill



"I'd never worked a union job before Powell's. When I get hired, there was a union orientation during our onboarding week. I thought it was really interesting. I paid attention to what was going on at Local 5 for the first year or so, but didn't get involved until we started bargaining in 2018. I started attending all of the negotiations and realized how important it is to show up for our voices to be heard. Not a lot of people from my specific location were going, so I wanted to make sure that our location had a voice.

"As a steward, I do a lot of different things. On the shop floor, a lot of it is answering questions. I answer a lot of time-keeping questions and benefits questions. I also represent workers during investigations to make sure their rights are protected. If the process ends with discipline or a termination, it sometimes means working on grievances.

"During our 2018 bargaining, the Powell's bargaining committee, co-led by Myka Dubay and Ryan Takas, pitched the idea of making the Powell's contract gender-neutral so that every worker would feel represented. The company took really well to it and went further by implementing it in their own policies and practices. It was an important step for the Local to take because every single worker, regardless of their gender identity, is welcomed at Local 5. Myka and Andy Anderson then led the effort to amend the Local 5 constitution to make it gender neutral and then at the ILWU Convention in Portland, delegates passed a resolution to amend International's constitution to be gender-neutral and at meetings, to include the greeting, 'fellow workers,' and not just 'brothers and sisters.'

"I recently did an orientation for some new workers who were hired for the holidays. One of the workers uses gender-neutral "they/them" pronouns, and they said they've never worked at a job where they feel so immediately welcomed and didn't have to worry about correcting managers or telling co-workers. Local 5 is great about making sure every worker feels welcomed and has a voice.

"There's nothing more powerful than advocating for yourself and I think unions give workers an opportunity to do that. Here at Local 5, we say all work is noble work. If you have a job and do it well, you deserve to make a living wage. You deserve to have your voice heard. You deserve to have health care and benefits. You deserve to have representation. Unions make that happen for us."

Joey Beach, Steward, Oregon Historical Society Steward

"I've been at the Oregon Historical Society (OHS) for about 12 years. I work at Visitor Services; we're the people who sell you tickets and memberships, answer your questions and give you directions. The OHS is a museum, a research library with librarians and archivists, a museum store, and we publish a scholarly quarterly publication. We also have an education department that does school tours. Some of the staff fabricate exhibits. We have curators and people in the collections department who manage artifacts. We have a large warehouse where most of the people in our bargaining unit work. We have union members in almost every department except finance.



"At the museum, we have a lot of permanent exhibits – including one called Experience Oregon that covers the chronological and thematic history of different regions in the state, which our main exhibit. We also have one called Oregon Voices, which picks up with more contemporary Oregon history, and we have one called History Hub, which is geared towards children and families.

We had our own little union since 1990, called the Oregon Historical Society Employee Association. It was just about 30 of us in the bargaining unit. I was the President at the time, and in 2017 we decided it was time to affiliate with a larger union so we could have some support for better organization and better negotiations. Not that it had been going badly, but it felt like it was time. I reached out to Local 5 and a couple of other unions at the time. Local 5 was the most responsive and the most excited about talking to us. The other unions didn't seem interested. Maybe they thought we weren't big enough, and we weren't going to do anything to benefit them. Local 5 didn't see it that way.

Jeffrey Hayes, Oregon Historical Society and Local 5 Trustee



"I've worked at the Oregon Historical Society in some capacity for almost seven years, and my job as an archivist started in 2014. Anytime people donate materials to the Research Library – family papers, photographs, and things like that – I'm in charge of logging that donation. I do some work in organizing those materials because sometimes people just fill a box with stuff and bring it in, which isn't that useful to researchers. I have to put it in an acid-free folder, give the collection and title with a catalog entry so people can find it online.

"The research library has a lot of materials; papers, letters, people's diaries, and organizational records. We have a lot photographs and films, although not as well represented, but we are trying to work on that. We have oral histories – which are interviews with people. It's important because history is made from these primary documents – it doesn't start as a textbook – it starts by looking at what was created at the time by people. We offer access to that. We mostly have materials related to Oregon, of course, but to some extent, the Pacific Northwest in general.

"I was the first person to get a Local 5 Affiliate Card in October or November of 2017. Local 5 assisted us with negotiations in 2018, which was a huge help. In August of 2018, we voted to become full members of Local 5. We managed to get the improvements we did because of Local 5."

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We Are the ILWU: Mainland Organizing Department

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This happened after the County Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a resolution calling out MARS - yes, the candy bar company who also owns VCA - as a poor employer. The strike also received some of our most favorable earned-media coverage, on ABC news."

In addition to these public campaigns, there are also several other organizing drives underway where workers have not yet declared their decision to join the union - known as "walking on the boss," but they will do so soon. We look forward to sharing more updates on these campaigns in future editions of *The Dispatcher*.

We are winning

Because of these collective efforts, we have seen several amazing victories for the newest members of the ILWU. Recently, workers at Pasha and Anchor Steam ratified their first contracts. They now enjoy the rights and benefits that were achieved through organizing and the collective bargaining process. Both groups will join the ranks of Local 6, part of our effort to rebuild the Warehouse Division after decades of decline.

Lead Organizer Agustin Ramirez, shepherded both groups throughout their organizing campaigns.

"It was incredible to see the amazing growth of the Anchor workers' bargaining committee as negotiations progressed," said Ramirez. "They held together, built solidarity inside and out, and made some smart moves that helped obtain their first contract."

He feels the same way about progress made by Pasha workers.

"Pasha workers at Pier 80 in San Francisco recently won their first contract and it was a game-changer that improved people's lives with better wages, benefits and rights on the job. The Employer was between a rock and a hard place. The workers were the rock and the Longshore Division was the hard place. The contract resulted from worker solidarity and Longshore power. That's what can happen when we work together."

Resisting political attacks

We've also been organizing internally to beat back employer and political attacks. The IBU has been under attack on multiple fronts - the most recent being the Janus decision by the Supreme Court that allows public employees to avoid paying dues while still benefiting from union representation. The Janus case was planned and funded for several decades by anti-union legal and political groups.

The IBU tackled the Janus challenge with help from their officers, ILWU organizers, rank-and-file members, staff, and union-friendly elected representatives. The strategy called for conducting personal conversations

with hundreds of members in which we did a lot of listening, and explained about how Janus was intended to weaken the union. As a result of this work, IBU members and other ILWU members in the public sector resoundingly rejected the temptation of "free riders," choosing instead to continue supporting their union.

We also supported IBU efforts that prevented Alaska's Governor from dismantling the state's public ferry system. Failure in either campaign could have potentially decimated the IBU membership.

Lead Organizer Jon Brier worked tirelessly with local activists and leaders on both campaigns, building a coalition of members, community activists, and politicians to ensure that the IBU would remain strong.

"It was inspiring to work with members who jumped into action against these political attacks," said Brier. "When the US Supreme Court declared open season on public sector unions, IBU and ILWU leaders and activists secured membership renewals from well over one thousand members in Puget Sound, Alaska and other regions."

Brier said the challenges were equally daunting when Governor Dunleavy slashed funding for Alaska's public ferry service and other critical state programs. The IBU launched a broad movement to save the Alaska Marine Highway System by holding rallies, providing testimony in the legislature, and mobilizing supporters across the state from Ketchikan to Anchorage to Dutch Harbor. They also helped organize what was reported to be the single largest public testimony turnout in state history.

"While both fights continue," said Brier, "our internal organizing has strengthened the union to the point that they've built a stronger foundation for future campaigns."

Conclusion

"Organize or Die" is not just a catch-phrase within the ILWU. It acknowledges that the only hope and future we have in this world is to join together so we can protect and improve conditions for ourselves and the working class. If we become complacent and content to rest on our past accomplishments, the future will slip away.

The Organizing Department looks forward to publishing updates in future issues of *The Dispatcher* that provide you with information about new and ongoing campaigns.

Finally, I'd like to take this moment to express my appreciation to the ILWU membership. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to serve as a Lead Organizer of the Oregon Area. It is such an incredible honor to help fellow workers raise their living and working standards by joining the ILWU. On a

Newest ILWU members secure a first contract



Signing the first contract took place on January 16 at ILWU International headquarters by (L-R) ILWU (Mainland) Vice President Bobby Olvera, Jr., Local 6 Secretary-Treasurer Jose Nunez and Pasha senior Vice President Michael Caswell

A team of auto-processors at San Francisco's Pier 80 finally got their ILWU contract in January with Pasha Automotive after a lengthy three-year effort.

Good contract with big raises

Their contract that was signed on January 16th included significant raises, good health benefits and an excellent savings plan. The Pasha Terminal Services employees at Pier 80 will receive raises with back pay from June 2019. Wages for Auto-processors are now \$20.25 and will be \$28.00 at the end of the contract, with Leads now making \$21.25 and ending at \$34.50. Workers are also guaranteed 40 hours of work each week, reimbursement for tuition and books needed for a GED or college classes. There's also a good severance package in case the facility closes.

"These workers were determined to get the best possible agreement and they succeeded," said ILWU Vice President (Mainland) Bobby Olvera, Jr., who negotiated the contract and signed it with Local 6 Secretary-Treasurer Jose Nuñez. ILWU Lead Organizer Agustin Ramirez provided key support.

"We look forward to welcoming these new members into the Local 6 family," said Nuñez.

Handling valuable Teslas

The auto-processors are responsible for handling thousands of new Tesla automobiles being manufactured at the company's plant in Fremont, CA. The vehicles are transported to Pier 80 on car-hauling trucks, where the new ILWU members inspect, prepare and stage the hi-tech vehicles. Workers use hand-held computers to document and track the new autos - including 4,200 that were processed in mid-January. After being inspected, the cars are staged for loading onto vessels by Local 10 longshore workers, Local 34 Clerks and Local 91 Walking Bosses. The high-value vehicles are shipped to distant markets in Asia and beyond.

Long and winding road

The effort to secure a good contract began back in 2016, when Pasha approached the ILWU about the company's interest in using Pier 80 to export autos on the company's "ro-ro's" vessels - which allow cars to roll-on and roll-off.

Despite numerous early inquiries from the ILWU about union representation for the auto-processors, Pasha went ahead and made a side deal with Teamster union officials that violated the rights of workers who are entitled by law to choose which union they prefer. Workers finally got that chance in May of 2019, when they voted for ILWU representation.

Jameca Kemp, the highest seniority auto processor at Pier 80, has been employed by Pasha for over 3 years, and has seen the process slowly wind its way toward a positive outcome in January.

"We're happy with the contract and look forward to being part of the ILWU," she said.

more personal note, I was one of those workers that this union welcomed into it's ranks and provided an opportunity for me to improve my life with solidarity and collective bargaining. At the beginning, we were minimum-wage retail workers. But with the support of ILWU members and the Organizing Department, we succeeded in organizing Powell's Books in the year 2000. We secured our first contract and took that first step towards a fair

and just workplace. Twenty years later, I remain grateful for that very tangible improvement in my life and the lives of my co-workers. Thank you.

In Solidarity,
Ryan Takas
Oregon Area Lead Organizer
ILWU Organizing Department

Randy Vekich: from small port to top post

Randy Clark Vekich, the longtime ILWU leader who rose from humble beginnings at the small Port of Aberdeen, Washington, served in many top union leadership positions, and narrowly lost a race for International President, passed away quietly December 8, 2019, at the age of 81 after a long illness.

“Randy Vekich was a great leader with a distinguished career that included decades of service on the International Executive Board, Coast Committee, as Vice President, a candidate for International President, and Arbitrator for the Northwest Region,” said International President Willie Adams. “He exemplified the best of the ILWU.”

Deep roots in a small port

Vekich’s grandfather came to America from Croatia after the First World War. He and his brothers entered the country at Ellis Island in New York, then travelled west. They ran out of money and stopped to work in the copper mines of Butte, Montana before arriving at the small port of Aberdeen, Washington. The year was 1922 and there was plenty of dangerous, low-paid work to harvest, process and ship the old-growth timber that once surrounded Grays Harbor on the southern reach of the Olympic Peninsula. Aberdeen was small, but would soon play an important role in ILWU history by hosting the new union’s first convention in 1938.

Weak unions in 1920’s

Labor unions were weak in the 1920’s – with vicious attacks against the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and other unions by employers, the American Legion and conservative politicians who called unions “radical” and “un-American.” Randy’s father worked for decades in dangerous lumber mills before finally getting a better job on the docks and becoming a member of ILWU Local 24 after the Second World War.

Saw attacks on Harry Bridges

Randy recalled that his father wasn’t active in union politics until 1950 when ILWU President Harry Bridges visited Aberdeen to talk with union members throughout the region about the government’s attempt to deport him – based on claims that Bridges had once been a member of the Communist Party. When the Eagles Hall in Aberdeen refused to let Bridges speak, Randy’s father and others secured the Croatian Fraternal Union hall. At the age of 11, Randy recalled it was his father’s first chance to meet Bridges and it made a big impression.

“I don’t know about [Bridges being a communist],” said his father, “but he’s one of the most honest men I’ve ever met. His whole goal in life is to better the working class people.”

Excelling in school, attending college

In 1951, the Vekich family moved to Everett, just south of Seattle, where their father joined a worker-owned plywood cooperative. Randy became an excellent student and athlete at Everett High School and won a scholarship to the University of Washington.

The family returned to Aberdeen in 1959 when Vekich was a 20-year old college student. He worked on the docks for the two years. Vekich accrued hours but couldn’t join the union because of a coastwise registration freeze caused by the introduction of shipping containers – new technology that reduced the need for labor. That’s when he joined the Army, went to Japan, took classes to finish his college degree, then returned to Aberdeen in 1964 where he tried to resume work on the waterfront. This time, his father and uncle objected and urged him to leave the docks and get an advanced college degree instead. Randy resisted, eventually secured his Class B registration in 1965 and was Class A in 1967.

Record-setting raw log exports

These were years when the docks around Aberdeen and other Northwest ports were booming with raw log exports.

“There were twenty gangs working log shifts all the time and ships lined-up one after the other,” said Vekich in his 2007 interview with historian Harvey Schwartz. “It pretty much continued that way until 1994 when the industry began to decline rapidly. Still, for those years, Aberdeen was the largest log-exporting port in the world.”

Quick rise to President

The same year that Vekich became a full-registered member of Local 24, he was encouraged to run for Local president. Although initially reluctant, he decided to run and managed to defeat an incumbent. Vekich then presided at Local 24 for a total of 8 terms. That office became the first of many elected leadership positions he would hold in the decades that followed.

Elected to Negotiating Committee

In 1968, Vekich became a Longshore Caucus Delegate and attended a meeting in San Francisco that was expected to last a week but continued for a month as the union struggled for a way to maintain jurisdiction over the stuffing and un-stuffing of containers at off-dock “container freight stations.” Two other important things happened during Vekich’s extended stay in San Francisco.

“Some of the old-timers introduced me to Harry Bridges,” he said. “That was the first time I personally met him.” Vekich was also elected to the 22-member Longshore Negotiating Committee, and would continue serving on subsequent Longshore Negotiating Committees from 1968 to 1991, under both President Harry Bridges and Jimmy Herman.

“I had strong beliefs.”

As the U.S. and many nations were undergoing social and political upheaval during the 1960’s and ‘70’s, the ILWU was not immune from a new generation of members who were asking hard questions and didn’t hesitate to challenge the status quo.

“By 1969, I had two real strong beliefs,” said Vekich. “First, I thought we needed a federation of all transport workers.” That goal had to wait 16 years until he was Chair of the Longshore Caucus and made a motion for the ILWU to join the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), which passed.

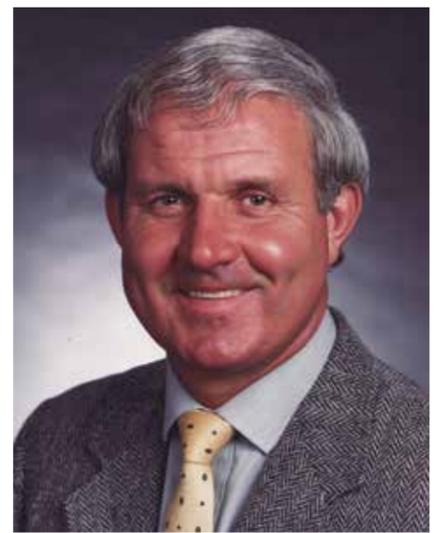
“We should organize more”

“Second, I believed we should organize more,” said Vekich, who got his chance when Jack Hall became an ILWU Vice President after decades of groundbreaking organizing campaigns with Hawaiian workers,

“Hall generated a lot of enthusiasm for organizing,” said Vekich. Together they helped organize a 1969 organizing workshop in Aberdeen that led to new outreach efforts in the area.

Prep for the 1971 longshore strike

“For eight months before the 1971-72 coast-wide longshore strike, our local officers thought a confrontation was inevitable,” said Vekich. “We recommended to our members that they save their income tax refunds and vacation checks and prepare to be off for three months.” The actual strike lasted 134 days.



New roles & responsibilities

“In 1974, not long after the strike, I became a member of the International Executive Board, where I served for several terms,” said Vekich. About the same time, he decided to stop running for President of Local 24, where members had elected him each year since 1968 without term limits. Vekich said he would devote more time to affairs of the ILWU International Union, and he did.

“In 1985, I moved to San Francisco as a Coast Committeeman,” arriving to the City with his wife Jacque and daughter Shelene. He worked three years with the Coast Committee at the ILWU headquarters, led by President Jimmy Herman. One of his projects during this time included helping ILWU members in Alaska. In 1988, he ran for International Vice President, was elected, and served for three years.

Running for President

The year 1991 marked a decisive turning point for the ILWU. The union’s top post, International President, had been held by only two men during the previous 57 years – Harry Bridges and Jimmy Herman – both who grew up during the Great Depression, saw the union movement explode before and after WWII, and led the union to become a small but powerful institution.

Vekich and his opponent, Local 13 President Dave Arian, were both relatively young at 52 and 45 years old, but real differences existed between the two men in their temperament, political views and bases of support. Vekich enjoyed backing from the outgoing administration of Jimmy Herman, who viewed Vekich as a steady-hand for the future. Arian was a self-styled radical and socialist who promised to upset the status quo, “clean house” at the International headquarters and take a more confrontational stance with employers. Arian started with a significant base of support in Southern California where he enjoyed a 2-to-1 advantage, but both candidates campaigned hard. Vekich lost the first count in August 1991 by only 100 votes out of 21,000 cast. He challenged voting procedures at one Southern California Local, but a re-vote at 11 units there resulted in him losing by 248 votes.

Securing a new Grain Agreement

As Vekich was coming to terms with the defeat, he received word that one of his important projects – a new Pacific Northwest Grainhandlers

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Steady presence: Randy Vekich, seated to the left of International President Jimmy Herman, at a meeting with longshore members.



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Ryan Van Winkle, President

"I started working for Powell's Books at the Burnside location in the parking garage in July of 1999. That was about a month after workers voted to form a union. Because Local 5 has open bargaining, with members allowed to observe the bargaining process, I started going to these bargaining sessions. Heads of the company were there – the people who run the company – with their lawyer, so I was able to see how they treated us and our relatively meager requests for more than minimum wage. That experience galvanized me, and I became very involved – what I would now call a participatory member.



"As Local 5's elected President, I continue to work in the warehouse and process books. We have a very large warehouse that ships out books to all the various locations.

"In high school, I worked at a grocery store that was represented by a large union in this area, and I think it affected the way I see the labor movement and the direction it needs to go. During my time there, I never talked to anyone who represented the union. Every nine-months, I would get a bill from the union saying that I hadn't paid all my dues, but that was the only interaction I had with them. Or one time I got a notice telling me that we would be on strike, something I didn't know anything about. It was a feeling disengagement. My voice was unimportant and didn't matter. I don't want anyone to feel that way who's a part of Local 5. I think we go out of our way to try to help people become a part of the process and get engaged.

"We also bargain all of our contracts with members. Every single one of our bargaining teams is made up of members. They're the ones who sit across the table from the company. They're the ones who craft the proposals. We don't do it with lawyers. We don't have our union rep do it. We have someone there to help, guide and advise, but the contract is negotiated by the members who are going to be working under it."

TRANSITIONS

NEW PENSIONERS:

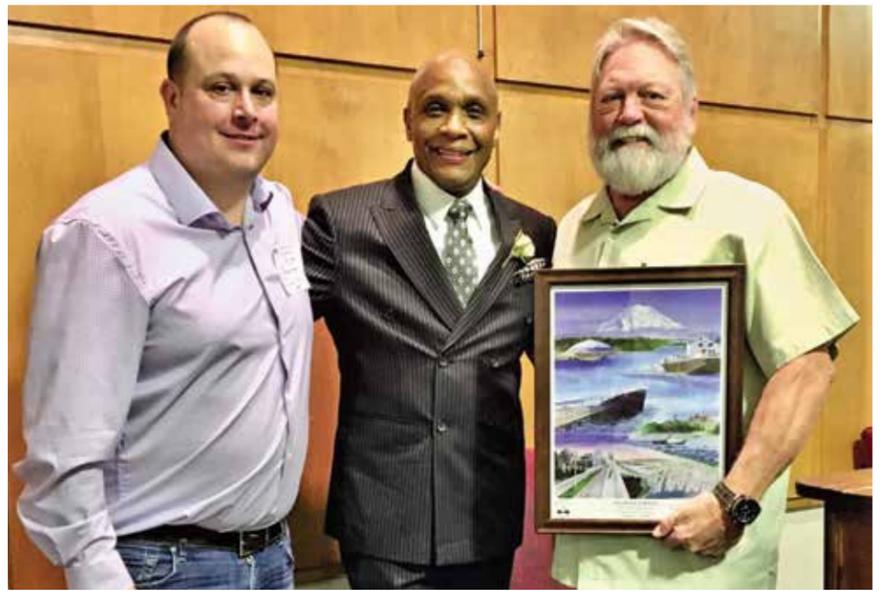
Local 4: John J. Spady; **Local 8:** Martin W. Nelson; Victoria B. Seeley; **Local 10:** Thomas J. Stoichich; Joe Lewis; Donald J. Anzilotti; Frank J. Micheaux, Jr.; **Local 12:** Jeffrey N. Claiborne; Jill S. Jacobson; **Local 13:** John M. Nizetich; Ruben Leyva; Alfred F. Armijo; Anthony F. Hernandez; Edward A. Gillan; James M. Isaac; Carolyn Bautista; Patricia J. Prince; John F. Gregg; Venceslav Bozajic; Matthew D. Wilson; Juanita V. Lujan-Corral; Veronica Paolucci; David F. Buono; Michael L. Grasso; Lorie E. Garcia; Asberry Robinson III; Randy W. Raulston; Frank A. Mattered; Sheryl R. Noble; Sandra F. Slater; Kimberly A. Keller; Johnnie Garcia; John P. Aproda; Dragan F. Fistonich; **Local 18:** Joseph M. Schaffer; **Local 19:** Emmet P. Walsh; Brice E. Lenz; Zecarias G. Emaha; **Local 21:** Craig L. Smith; **Local 23:** Douglas R. Johnson; David E. Hermansen; Mark R. Welfringer; **Local 32:** Ronald S. Johnson; **Local 40:** Louis A. Bosso; **Local 54:** Elmer A. Richardson; **Local 63:** Wayne M. Shimokochi; Juan F. Terrazas; Lynn M. De Luca; Elaine Todd; David L. Andrews; **Local 75:** Michael Daly; **Local 94:** Robert R. Brooks; Michael Deluca; Rudy D. Alba Sr; Wayne D. Thompson;

DECEASED PENSIONERS:

Local 8: Donald M. Raisanen; **Local 10:** Elmo E. Mackie (Hattie B. Jones); David L. Ruiz; Elmo L. Jones; Alfred E. Cruz Jr; Solomona S. Malae; **Local 12:** Harold R. Sibon; Roland J. Frederickson; George E. Endicott; **Local 13:** Andrew N. Cesareo; Crispin R. Reyes; Dragutin Matulic; Ivan Spanjol; Ramona J. Pack; Alberto A. Brown; Nicholas V. Vitalich; **Local 19:** Jack E. Fairbanks; Elliott M. Ali; **Local 21:** Donald E. Dockstader; **Local 27:** Jack L. La Forge; **Local 46:** Eligio C. Ballesteros; **Local 52:** Randy C. Vekich; **Local 63:** Frank Onorato; Ralph L. Gonzales; Albert M. Jelenic; David Zepeda; Joseph F. Jacobelly; **Local 94:** Raymond J. Lomeli; Fred K. Salem;

DECEASED SURVIVOR:

Local 4: Lois A. Thorson; Katherine L. Lattig; Peggy L. Martin; **Local 8:** Wanda Broadwell; Joan Brown; Carol R. Kent; **Local 10:** Mary Davis; **Local 12:** Lillian T. Casias; **Local 13:** Dion B. Evdokimoff; **Local 19:** Blanche Cooper; **Local 21:** Margie R. Johnson; **Local 29:** Mary Celaya; **Local 32:** Irene M. Haufle; **Local 34:** Carolene Ross Mattox; Mildred K. Yui; Lynn Mahoney; **Local 63:** Charlene Langer;



Tacoma Propeller Club: ILWU International President Willie Adams was the keynote speaker at the Tacoma Propeller Club's 31st Annual Spaghetti Extravaganza on January 21. Adams is shown here flanked on the left by Local 23 President Jared Faker, and on the right by Tacoma Propeller Club President Dave Rink. The legacy artwork in Rink's hand was created by a local maritime artist for the 2001 International Propeller Club Convention in Tacoma. This year, Local 23 hosted the popular spaghetti feed and packed the union hall with a wide-range of maritime leaders. The delicious dinner was prepared by Local 23 Pensioners and Local 23 Auxiliary members who made the hall look like a 5-star restaurant. Adams has also accepted an invitation from the Bay Area Propeller Club to speak at their Oakland lunch meeting on February 4.

A Helping Hand...

...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.

ILWU LONGSHORE DIVISION

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ADRP—Northern California
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ADRP—Oregon
Brian Harvey
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Portland, OR 97221
(503) 231-4882

ADRP—Washington
Donnie Schwendeman
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Tacoma, WA 98424
(253) 922-8913

ILWU CANADA

EAP—British Columbia
John Felicella
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Vancouver, BC V5R 5WR
(604) 254-7911

ILWU WAREHOUSE DIVISION

DARE—Northern California
Teamsters Assistance Program
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Oakland, CA 94621
(510) 562-3600

Randy Vekich: from small port to top post

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Agreement – had just been ratified by members in Columbia River and Puget Sound locals. He had devoted much of his precious time during the Presidential campaign to help these ILWU workers, serving as Chair of their Negotiating Committee and successfully resisting employer demands for concessions. Workers ratified the new contract by 739-225.

Returning to the Northwest docks

After losing the 1991 election, Vekich left San Francisco and returned to the Puget Sound where he joined Local 52 and worked on the docks as a Marine Clerk. In 1995, he was appointed to serve as Northwest Arbi-

trator, a position that he held until retiring in 2010.

"Randy was an outstanding Washington Area Arbitrator. His knowledge of the contract and how he applied it in his rulings helped shape the waterfront, not only in the Northwest, but the entire Coast," said Herald Ugles, Local 19 and Washington Area Arbitrator from 2010-2015.

Vekich is survived by his wife of 54 years, Jacque; daughters Shelene Conen who is a Local 52 member and Lynnae Rodeffer; son and Local 23 member Shawn Vekich. His ashes will be scattered on San Francisco Bay by family members.