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By Robert McElrath
ILWU International President

I would like to begin by thanking everyone for all the support in my election to become President. I know that change is difficult sometimes, but with the returning officials, and newly elected ones, this administration brings both continuity and freshness.

Wesley Furtado is returning as International Vice President, Hawaii, with his experience representing the state of Hawaii in our Political and Organizing departments, and assisting Local 142 as it continues to grow.

Donna Adams remains as International Secretary-Treasurer, keeping a watch on the financial condition of the union as well as assisting our Warehouse and Marine Divisions. Filling the International Vice President, Mainland spot, Joe Radioti brings along some new ideas and energy, and will be heading up the Organizing Dept. on the mainland.

Coming back as Coast Committeeman for California is Ray Ortiz Jr. I have worked with Ray since 1997, and he brings his insight from the Longshore Division, coming from Local 13 that today has more than 7,000 registered longshore workers.

Rounding out the Coast Committee from the Northwest is newly elected Joe Sundt, with a knowledge of contract administration and arbitration skills that will make this administration particularly effective.

Looking ahead, we have to focus on short-term goals as well as long-term ones. First, the new TWIC (Transportation Worker Identification Credential) card is being legislated right now. We are going to continue to work with our political allies in Washington, D.C. to make sure the government focuses on real security for our ports and doesn’t tear apart our civil liberties.

We are going to continue to work with our political allies in Washington, D.C. to make sure the government focuses on real security for our ports and doesn’t tear apart our civil liberties. The Port Security Committee is working to stay on top of the situation. This affects not just the ILWU longshore workers and our port-based security guards and warehouse workers, but everyone who works in and around the ports. In the ILWU tradition, we will be protecting the civil liberties of all workers, whether they are represented or not.

This brings us to another one of our problems on the docks—crossing jurisdictions on the job site. The employers are trying to use new technology to blur the distinctions between the duties of longshore workers, clerks and foremen. We must remain united and not allow the employers to pit us against each other, one category against the other.

The industry on the docks is changing again. Thirty-eight years ago I worked ships with “wooden” hatch covers. Today we drive million-dollar pieces of equipment and use Star Wars-type technology. We will negotiate how technology is implemented and ride it into the future because if we fight it, we’ll be left behind. But we will not do so at the expense of our Section One jurisdiction.

We will also continue to strengthen and grow our union through our commitment to organizing. The Organizing Dept. is solid, its finances are solvent and the personnel are going in the right direction under the supervision of Peter Olney. Our organizing program is focused on building the warehouse locals in a way that backs up and supports our crucial Longshore Division. It’s a tough job, fighting the employers and the government, but we believe that are designed to hinder our success. But with solidarity within our union and with other unions, both domestic and international, we will be successful.

In my first couple of months in office I have been traveling around the world reinforcing those international ties for both our warehouse organizing and our upcoming longshore negotiations. The Longshore Division’s contract will expire in the summer of 2008. It is only months away and we will be prepared.

It is essential that our welfare and pensions be maintained in this contract. Coast Benefits Specialist George Romero and the Coast Pension and Welfare Committee are already preparing for this bargaining.

The Officers will do their job, but as always in the ILWU, the rank and file will make the difference.

Protect your job and protect your jurisdiction. The best way to do that is to do your job.

What can you do now as a member of the ILWU? First, attend your local membership meetings. Have you a quorum at your last meeting? Did you attend or leave it to someone else? Think about what you have. You are the keepers of the ILWU. And we must leave a better union to those who follow.

Second, protect your hiring hall. It is always the first thing the employers go after when they try to weaken and defeat the union. They have already started a new campaign denouncing our halls as obsolete and inefficient. I’ve seen this happen around the world, men and women losing their dispatch halls and their jobs, and employers tearing down working conditions, They will try it here too if we are not constantly vigilant.

Third, everyone must look at their contracts under Section One jurisdiction definition and do your job. Protect your job and protect your jurisdiction. The best way to do that is to do your job. Don’t let someone else do it. Your local officers can’t do it, the Titled Officers can’t do it. Only you can because the docks are yours.

Keen up the good work.

"An injury to one is an injury to all.”
Alcatraz ferry workers fight to keep jobs

by Steve Stallone

A hole was blown in San Francisco's formerly solid union waterfront when the federal government recently awarded the contract for the ferry run to Alcatraz Island to a non-union company.

River-A, the former high-security prison was turned into a popular tourist destination in 1973, the ferry began to transport tourists out of the bay have been operated by members of the Inlandboatmen's Union, the Marine Division of the ILWU, and the Masters, Mates and Pilots. Last year the Bush administration's National Park Service, which runs Alcatraz as part of its system, took bids for the ferry run. On Sept. 27, 2005 NPS announced it was giving a new, 10-year contract for the ferry run to Hornblower Yachts, an organization that runs dinner cruises on the San Francisco Bay out of Oakland.

With that move some 15 IBU ferry dockhands and 33 MMP captains, deckhands and ticket agents lost their jobs and the health care coverage for them and their families. Payments toward their pensions ceased.

"It's definitely a hardship on all of them," said Marina Secchitano, San Francisco Regional Director of the IBU. "I'm surprised they have their jobs been hanging over their heads for a year now and it makes it difficult for their families." He also called the smallest things they know they may be unemployed." 

During the couple of months, Blue and Gold Fleet, the union ferry operator that has been taking tourists to the island, was ordered to pay a protest in the Federal Court of Claims on the grounds that NPS had improperly evaluated the B&G bid. The protest alleges that the contract should be subject to the Service Contract Act, a longstanding labor law that requires a federal contract to pay the same level of wages and benefits as the current contractor.

B&G asked for an injunction to stop the transfer of the contract.

The two unions, the IBU and MMP also filed suit in U.S. District Court in Oakland in March 2006 seeking to block the transfer. The suit was the contract to Hornblower on the basis that the bid violated the SCA. The San Francisco Labor Rep. Nancy Pelosi from San Francisco wrote a letter to the Dept. of Labor asking it to expedite its investigation into whether the SCA applied to the Alcatraz contract. Pelosi also wrote a letter to the NPS asking for an explanation on why it allowed Hornblower to win the contract without a protest from the IBU.

The Dept. of Labor eventually determined the law did apply 10 days before Hornblower started the run.

The unions also mobilized to use their political and community support. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed a resolution supporting the union ferry workers retaining their jobs and urging the San Francisco Port Commission to consider the impact on public safety of not having the experienced union crews on board and the impact to Fisherman’s Wharf tourism business to relocate the Alcatraz ferry service elsewhere on the waterfront.

S.F. Supervisor Aaron Peskin hold a public hearing to address the environmental, business and traffic impacts of moving the ferry service from B&G’s Pier 41 to Hornblower's Pier 31½ that both Hornblower and the NPS declined to attend.

The Port of San Francisco has also complained to Hornblower that it hasn’t responded to repeated requests from the port for information on changes it is making to its pier facilities that may require environmental review.

Neighborhood groups Citizens to Save the Waterfront and the Telegraph Hill Dwellers filed a law-suit in San Francisco Superior Court against Hornblower to stop the service from Pier 31½ starting without an environmental review of the impact of the transfer of 1.3 million passengers per year from Pier 41.

In the face of all this opposition Hornblower and NPS proceeded ahead and started the ferry run on Sept. 25.

"They’ve displayed tremendous arrogance, acting as if the law doesn’t apply to them," said MMP California Branch Agent Captain Ray Shipway. "They’ve just gone ahead without the review for the intensification of use that the port requires.

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom and Pelosi’s office intervened in negotiations between unions and Hornblower trying to get an agreement that would result in the hiring of the majority of the union workforce and voluntary recognition of the IBU and MMP as the collective bargaining agent of the workers. But the company would not budge on its position.

When Hornblower advertised for the new jobs on its ferry run, most all the B&G workers applied. But only a handful were called in for interviews and even fewer were hired. The unions filed an Unfair Labor Practices charge with the National Labor Relations Board alleging discrimination on the basis of union affiliation.

"We feel this charge will hold up," Shipway said. "They passed over the most qualified people for job.

Hornblower filed its own charges with the NLRB on the unions, alleging the unions were picketing its operation to coerce it into recognizing the union. The company also alleged the unions are engaging in an illegal secondary boycott since the Alcatraz ferry is operated by one of the company’s subsidiaries, and is seeking an injunction to keep the unions from picketing.

The unions have been picketing the Hornblower dock every Sunday, trying to get tourists to pass on the boat ride. They have been getting widespread support from labor leaders and even Miami, the Teamsters, postal workers, teachers, machinists, the Sailors Union of the Pacific and the California Longshore and Warehouse Unionists picket the Hornblower Alcatraz ferry pier.

Local 8 longshoreman hurt in accident

by Steve Stallone

Longshore Local 8 in Portland is reeling in the aftermath of a December accident that sent one of its members to the hospital fighting for his life.

The Russian freighter Fermita called on the port to deliver a load of steel in late December. The job started working that morning, another shift worked that night and a third shift took over the next day, Tuesday, Oct. 24. Down in one of the ship’s mid-hatches that day a couple of veterans, including dock workers Bob Sadler and Dave Porter, and one casual, Wes La Riviere, were hooking up the ship’s slings.

The stow was uneven, the slabs checkered and feathered, making the work dangerous. Porter, who was standing just a foot or two away from Sadler at that moment, said: "I yelled out ‘Call 9-1-1, call an ambulance’ it seemed like even before he hit the ground because I could see as hit it obvious he was hurt.” La Riviere said.

Sadler landed on his back, eyes fixed open and not breathing. La Riviere checked and didn’t have a pulse. Then La Riviere saw Sadler’s body twitch. He turned him on his side and blood poured out of his nose and mouth. That must have opened his airway because then he started breathing. He took his head to make sure the airway remained clear and he kept breathing. He and Porter kept talking to him and trying to comfort him.

"I didn’t leave his side after that till the paramedics got there," La Riviere said. "That seemed to take an eternity."

The paramedics arrived they placed Sadler on a stretcher, hoisted him out of the hold and took him to the hospital where he underwent reconstructive surgery. As of press time Sadler’s condition was improving. He is still in a coma, but is sometimes breathing on his own. There is hope he will pull through.

"It happened so fast. You can never be prepared for what you’re going through and what you see, especially to see another guy you work with everyday," Porter said. "I was right next to him. Could have been anyone of us. That’s the hardest part to deal with. I have six-year-old twin daughters and I’d hate to not be able to be around.”

Sadler’s local members have been standing by Sadler, who is 45 years old and has been a registered longshore worker since 1986.

"We’ve been up at the hospital day and night and making sure the family is taken care of," Local 8 Secretary-Treasurer Bruce Holte said.

If credit to La Riviere, whose wife is a nurse and has had some first aid training, with keeping a cool head and acting quickly. The local is going to recognize him with an award.

"Wes is the real hero here," Holte said. "If he hadn’t known what to do, Chuck would be dead.”
San Francisco cruise industry growing

by Tom Price

The massive, 72,000 ton cruise ship Dawn Princess dwarfs all around her, and when she ties up in San Francisco it looks like an 80-story skyscraper has sailed into port and laid on its side. That’s what some locals express more than just a big ship when she arrives every 11 days—the work she brings in means jobs for ILWU members. Now the union must expand to fill the orders and fight to protect the jurisdiction.

“Historically, in 2001 we had 36 cruise ships show up in the year. In 2003, we had 90 ships calling, two-and-a-half times as many,” watchmen’s Local 75 Secretary-Treasurer BA Michael Terry said. This port will see nearly 100 big ships in 2006 and about the same in 2007.

Local 75 provides as many as 90 members per shift for each vessel call and a call can last from one shift to several days. Longshore Local 10 members, clerks’ Local 34 and forestmen’s Local 91 members have also gained work.

The ILWU worked hard politically, Terry said, starting in 2000 to get enough for cruise ships, and next February the giant ocean liner RMS Queen Elizabeth is due to call. At 1,132 feet long, the QM2 is just a few feet shorter than the Empire State Building in New York City. It’s gas turbine engines drive the 151,400-ton ship at 30 knots, which makes her the world’s fastest, like the liners of old. The QM2, under British registry, will bring 3,000 passengers and maybe the world’s tallest crane to San Francisco. The other 90 to 100 vessels next year will each bring nearly as many.

Tying up the vessels and stowing or delivering baggage, they’ll pick up from three to 300 pallets and use a Local 10 crew to load the containers. The recently retired Frank Flores, who has worked many cruise ships, said, “Baggage handling is also Local 10 work. Usually, maybe 38 to 40 people. Four to five walking bosses would be attached to longshore personnel.”

Manning cruise ship work varies a lot, depending on the issue of contention at most of them. The Longshore Division’s Cruise Ship Jurisdiction Coordinator Jim Spinosa is working to standardize it for the Coast.

In San Francisco clerks organize the layout of the operation. Baggage is color coded with tags and laid out on the dock in order so it can be stored or delivered to the passenger. “The employers tried to use company freight to assist passengers and handle baggage, but the clerks are of the opinion that is ILWU work,” said Local 34 Convention and Caucus Delegate Eddie Gutierrez, who represents Northern California on the Cruise Ship Committee.

Clerks keep accounts on the operation from the time the ship arrives to the time it leaves. The information enables the agents and the stevedoring company to do their billing. They also account for the time it takes to tie up, how long it took to load certain stores and handle baggage. Their records can become a legal document if there are any disputes. The clerks also perform valuable inspection duties on sealed cargo.

“The first thing the clerk does is check the smell,” Flores said. “I carry my cell phone with a camera on it and I take pictures of the container, what it looks like from the time we open the doors to the time we complete the operation. I attach that to the log.”

Local 10 provides support, which includes baggage handling, living and clerical work on containers sent by the shipping company to assist passengers and workers with their bags and you get to talk to them. It’s had a very good impact on our Local.”

Some of the biggest changes have come for Local 75 workers.

“In the old days, before Sept. 11, the maximum number ordered per ship was about 14 watchmen and they kept the trucks and taxis from running over people,” Terry said. “Now we have twice as many people called out and two-and-a-half times as many ships.”

Local 75 members didn’t do such an intense security screening before Sept. 11. Now they use much the same equipment as in airports, and they have to do pat downs, increasing their responsibilities.

“They have a lot more to do pat downs, but they decided that was too expensive,” Terry said. “They actually tried to get rid of us by saying they were going to bring in special people, until about two years ago when, with [then ILWU International President] Jim Spinosa’s help we stopped that move.”

The employer, Metropolitan Stevedore Co., has provided more security training for Local 75 members who have an advantage because they are used to being around ships and are familiar with maritime procedures. The workers have also learned better social skills, Terry said.

“Some of the things that different from the container terminals is that this is more service oriented. In Finland we’re dealing with homes. In San Francisco we’re dealing with people, people who complain or have special needs,” Terry said. “Now we also do more social interaction on the cargo docks, so this helps everybody.”

The increased work has come with some growing pains.

“We had a situation in September of last year when we had eight cruise ships in three days! This obviously created a lot of problems filling the orders,” Terry said. “We are clearly becoming a larger local, at this point we have 91 members, the most we’ve ever had, and I see nothing but a movement in the future because the cruise industry is strong, and people forget that these are really big ships.”

ILWU Canada stalks container service work

by Tom Price

Over the last few decades shipping and stevedoring companies have moved container servicing off the docks and, they hope, away from ILWU jurisdiction. But ILWU Canada and the workers at Canadian International Services on Mitchell Island, off Richmond, British Columbia, think otherwise, and on Sept. 27 provincial labor board officials held a hearing on the matter. A recent retiree, Frank Flores, who has worked many cruise ships, said, “Baggage handling is also Local 10 work. Usually, maybe 38 to 40 people. Four to five walking bosses would be attached to longshore personnel.”

The union and the workers’ organizing team spent some months discussing forming a union with the workers and asked them to sign cards authorizing union representation. They turned out to vote, and 70 percent of them voted “yes,” said Karleen, who co-chairs the facility’s safety committee.

“Apprentices mechanics aren’t getting training and don’t have journeymen to supervise them. New hires are getting paid more than more senior workers,” Karleen said. “A couple people quit over that,” Karleen said. “They were training people who were making more money than they were.”

Karleen was one of the workers signed cards, the union could ask the province for a representation election.

“We were only looking to get 42 people signed up,” ILWU Canada First Vice President Bob Ashton said. Since we originally applied for [certification] we had over 65 percent signed, but the employers added 23 names on and that dropped us down below the required 45 percent.”

Meanwhile more workers had signed up, so the union withdrew its first application and resubmitted the same day.

“We asked the company who the new people were, they told us they had put in the clerks, apparently hoping those people would vote no,” Ashton said. “But the majority of them voted yes, so it worked against them. They gambled and lost.”

One hundred percent of the workers turned out to vote, and 70 percent of them voted “yes” to forming a union.

The workers include mechanics, welders and clerks—the union managed to secure the whole operation except for administration staff. They work on containers sent by the shipping companies to Mitchell Island. They handle repairs, making between $13 to $25 an hour, with no pension.

As the union and the rank and file worked hard to organize, they also had help from provincial labor laws that ensure union rights. These include a timeline that requires the boss to sit down with the workers and bargain in good faith. Workers in Canada have fought hard to get these rights. However, the Conservative provincial government gave the employers a break by abolishing the automatic recognition that used to follow a 100 percent card signing, giving the employers time to intimidate workers before the required election.

“Now you need a vote even if you sign up 100 percent, that’s a lot easier on the employer,” Ashton said. “They’re cutting back, trying to lay people off, trying to put the fear into them so they’ll apply for a decertification vote. They have the ability to do those things under the provincial code.”

There were rumors the company would close down the repair facility and convert the yard to a self-storage facility. But when Ashton and the committee sat down with the employer Nov. 7, they changed their tune.

“With your question I asked was ‘I understand you’re closing down your operation, opening up a storage rental place?’ They said no, they have a hired a new financial officer and will stay in business. We have started bringing in the ILWU and believe they will bargain in good faith.”

The two sides will meet again Nov. 27.

“They have to give a little, they have to make sure they’re looking after their employees,” Karleen said. “The owners should realize that we’re spending the best parts of our lives making them rich.”
LANCASTER, CA—All summer the warehouse workers at Rite Aid's distribution center on March 26 in Lancaster, Calif., and filed for a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election June 2. Rite Aid faced back with a nasty anti-union campaign. It fired and disciplined union supporters and talked tricked workers into uniform plants to buy the Brooks and Eckerd stores go through. It braggs on its web site that it sank $90 million into the state-of-the-art Lancaster facility, which opened in 2000. And it operates with a "we don't care, we don't have to" arrogance.

"There's nothing out here in the Antelope Valley that won't be consider a good wage," organizing committee member Christine Martinez said in August. "You'll feel like a popsicle."

The officers at the center have had poor heat and cooling. So has the cafeteria. Only the warehouse area was.

"One of the managers said to us, 'You work and live in the desert and you should be used to it.'" Ortiz reported. "I said to myself, 'Do they think we are rats and we deserve to live in those worse weather conditions?"

Management showed this lack of respect in its union-busting campaign. It started by retaliating against the three workers who testified at the Board hearing on whether leads were supervisors. It suspended one and wrote up the two others. It continued by firing four union supporters and disciplining seven others for the least of reasons; threats, harassment and intimidation...damage to property...any violent acts or acts of insubordination.

"As we rounded the gate and I spoke out at a meeting. A group of people about their union activities and sympathies, and trying to union the supporter members." Mike Frescas got fired after he spoke out at a meeting. A group of management guards wearing red shirts marched him through the warehouse and out the door—but they never gave him a reason for his firing.

Christine Martinez suffers from arthritis in her spine. She got fired for not making her rate, after manager twice refused her request for light duty. Reemployment lead Jerry Doyle, a known jokester and union sympathizer, got fired after a manager overheard him singing "Three Blind Mice." Debbie Fontaine got written up for "misconduct contrary to law." When you're in the boss' office and he's calling you an 'agitator' and a "pot-stirrer" and asking you like a thug are building or a wrecker, as they respect is that?" Fontaine said. "My manager signed on his desk and said, 'My father once told me something when I was young and he used to knock me around, and that is, 'Never pass up an opportunity to shut up.'"

Rite Aid routinely referred to union workers as "union pushers" and painted them as thugs and thieves. After filing the election petition, the ILWU gave Rite Aid a list of organizing committee members and told management to respect their rights under Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act. Rite Aid posted a memo all over the plant listing the committee members and advising them that it would do anything necessary to protect against threats, harassment and intimidation...damage to property...any violent acts or acts of insubordination. The NLRB upheld the union's claim that the leads are not supervisors in an Oct. 11 decision. Rite Aid told the workers it plans to appeal. The ILWU filed 11 unfair labor practice charges on 38 separate violations of labor law Oct. 20. The NLRB now has to hear testimony from workers and managers to decide whether it has enough evidence to issue complaints and hold hearings. It also must decide whether to set an immediate election date. It won't do if it thinks Rite Aid's unfair labor practices have destroyed any chance of a fair vote.

Since they learned about the complaint, the organizing committee members have been pounding the difference between simply having a vote on the union and having a fair vote. They've been carefully preparing to testify to the NLRB so they can try to make the labor law work for them. They've also been looking at strategies other Rite Aid workers have used to win union representation.

In New York, for example, National Health and Human Service Employees Union 1199 got a card-check neutrality agreement covering workers at about 100 Rite Aid stores in New York and New Jersey. Rite Aid agreed to recognize 1199 if a majority of workers signed union cards. The union made Rite Aid a preferred provider for its prescription plan. The 1998 agreement gave thousands of workers a fair shot at unionizing.

"Workers have a right to self-organization and a contract," local 26 President Luisa Gratz said. "They have a right to sit across the table from management as equals...to make that real, they have to act like a union even before they officially form one. They need to believe in themselves and their rights."

"The Rite Aid workers got a taste of what it will mean to act like a union even before they officially form one. They need to believe in themselves and their rights."

A delegation of about 15 workers went in with the petition signed by 165 co-workers. Five minutes later they strode out grinning.

"We went in and asked if we could see [General Manager] Renee DeMello because she was fired by the company. She wasfired by the company. She was fired the first time we came to see her..." Patrick refused.

"They said she was in a meeting, even though it was lunch time, so the head of security said he'd take it in."

The delegation had clapped and chanted while the security manager looked over the petition. The facilit estigator single Tim Patrick out of the group, demanding he give his badge back because he was creating a disturbance. "Patrick refused. The delegation had clapped and chanted while the security manager looked over the petition. The facilitator single Tim Patrick out of the group, demanding he give his badge back because he was creating a disturbance. "Patrick refused. They've been carefully preparing to testify to the NLRB so they can try to make the labor law work for them. They've also been looking at strategies other Rite Aid workers have used to win union representation. In New York, for example, National Health and Human Service Employees Union 1199 got a card-check neutrality agreement covering workers at about 100 Rite Aid stores in New York and New Jersey. Rite Aid agreed to recognize 1199 if a majority of workers signed union cards. The union made Rite Aid a preferred provider for its prescription plan. The 1998 agreement gave thousands of workers a fair shot at unionizing. Workers have a right to self-organization and a contract." Local 26 President Luisa Gratz said. "They have a right to sit across the table from management as equals...to make that real, they have to act like a union even before they officially form one. They need to believe in themselves and their rights."

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"When they set the rates they watch people for a couple minutes, but we work a 10-hour day," committee member Gene Jones said. "So many things happen. You see people all of a sudden doing 97 percent of their rate when they were at 153. The company changes the standard at will."

Working under ProRep often puts people who would be covered by an "occurrence," which is like a demerit on their record. If they get an "occurrence," they can "make rate," but many feel like a popsicle." They have a right to sit across the table from management as equals...to make that real, they have to act like a union even before they officially form one. They need to believe in themselves and their rights.

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The Rite Aid workers got a taste of what it will mean to act like a union even before they officially form one. They need to believe in themselves and their rights.
Introduction by Harvey Schwartz

This is the third of a three-part series focusing on the recollections of ILWU leaders who made important contributions to the building of the union in Hawaii. It features Carl Damaso, a Filipino immigrant sugar worker whose struggles against the employers in the cane fields culminated with his becoming president of Hawaii Local 142 in 1964. His stories here center on the pre-ILWU days of the 1930s.

Carl Damaso went to Hawaii from the Philippines as a teenage contract laborer in 1930. His experiences differed significantly from those of the two Thompsons, who came to the Islands from the U.S. mainland. Frank Thompson arrived for the ILWU: Dave Thompson, an Oregon native, was a university student in Honolulu before World War II. He returned to the Islands after the war as an ILWU activist and labor educator.

Damaso, on the other hand, toiled for years as a sugar worker. Although he suspected that only multi-ethnic unionization could succeed, he supported attempts at single-nationality organization as they emerged between 1934 and 1937. But in those years, Hawaii's plantation managers ran a closed, essentially feudal or colonial system. Thus the managers would throw you out. It was not really "piecework," because that is based on how much you can produce. Instead, the wages were limited, regardless of how strong or fast a worker you were. The plantation management just set the price. You could say nothing. If you raised a question about what was supposed to get a bonus. But on Sundays, or one day a week off. After working hours and on Sundays I'd devoted time to Manlapit. But I just told the managers I was interested in listening to what he had to say. They wanted to know if I was also interested in becoming a "liberator" some day. I told them, "That's not my plan."

In 1934 I was one of the fastest cane cutters in Olaa. The field boss said that if you were fast enough you would be out of a job. So I was paid an incentive. I observed what he said and I figured that I was going to the right man to be and to organize it. So I paid day at the end of the month it didn't come to me. That went on and on. So I worked on Sundays, and I went to Olaa Sugar Company on the Big Island of Hawaii. I was amazed that there was this big segregation. The Filipinos were concentrated in one camp, the Japanese in another camp. The Portuguese were the first-class citizens. Despite this segregation and other bad conditions, you couldn't fight back much. People were scared. You had to obey what the company said or be out of a job.

My first dream was to be organized under one strong union, but there was no unified labor organization for plantation workers in 1930 in what was then the Territory of Hawaii. But by 1932 Pablo Manlapit was trying to organize the Filipinos. Manlapit started meeting with the sugar workers. You could tell that his organization wasn't too liberal of a union. I felt at the time that if we were just organizing Filipino workers, it didn't make sense, because the Filipino group alone could not succeed in a strike in the sugar industry.}

Carl Damaso

Editor and Harvey Schwartz

Curator, ILWU Oral History Collection

I was born in the Philippines, but I came to Hawaii when I was 14 years old in 1930. My first destination was as a plantation worker at Olaa Sugar Company on the Big Island of Hawaii. There was no union there. It was really hard for the workers.

Most of the Filipinos in Hawaii then were concentrated in field work. A few were employed in the mills. But most were sugar cane cutters or cane loaders. The plantations still had those old-fashioned railroads in the early 1930s. The workers loaded the rail cars for just so much money. But it was not really "piecework," because that is based on how much you can produce. Instead, the wages were limited, regardless of how strong or fast a worker you were. The plantation management just set the price. You could say nothing. If you raised a question about what was supposed to get a bonus. But on Sundays, or one day a week off. After working hours and on Sundays I'd devoted time to Manlapit. But I just told the managers I was interested in listening to what he had to say. They wanted to know if I was also interested in becoming a "liberator" some day. I told them, "That's not my plan."

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Manlapit did not have too much success organizing just Filipinos. Around 1933 some of the Filipinos who had been organized by Manlapit began fighting separately. The plantations managers against him. Most important, though, he was beginning to realize that labor organization would be all right, but not entirely. In the history of Hawaii, as had been the case in Hawaii before. They believed that there should be some kind of an organization among the races. That was my feeling also. You cannot succeed by fighting separately.

In 1934 the managers began asking me what I did after my day's work, and especially on Sundays, our one day a week off. After working hours and on Sundays I'd devoted time to Manlapit. But I just told the managers I was interested in listening to what he had to say. They wanted to know if I was also interested in becoming a "liberator" some day. I told them, "That's not my plan."

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We had a meeting in management and tried to resolve the dispute. Finally the Olaa managers agreed to reinstate the strikers and pay them without any charge except for me. So I was fired.

I went to a secluded place, but one afternoon I had to go to the camp where I had belonged because my wife was there — I had to sneak in to eat with them. About six o'clock I started having dinner. Then somebody knocked at the door. My brother opened it up. It was the head of the plantation camp police for two government cops. I couldn't even finish my meal. They just said, "You need permission to come in here." They grabbed me and locked me in jail for 48 hours.

Now I had to get out of the Big Island. I had no money, but my friends and my brother raised 40 bucks for the $22 boat fare to Maui plus $18 extra for me and my wife. We'd just been married. At Maui I didn't get a job for five months. Since I was desperate, tryed to come in and then I'd write to my two brothers for money.

In early 1935 I got a job at Waiaku Sugar Company. I worked as a cane cutter. It was the same old story, hard work for a dollar a day. You'd start work at six in the morning and go to six in the evening. They pushed the incentive idea again: "Cut a little bit faster, you'll get some kind of an incentive." But by then I knew that it was the same old story.

Then the workers began to realize that this was the same pattern as before. The camp police was knocking at my door. I happened to sit down in the front of the clubhouse at one of the meetings one evening. Two to four hundred workers used to meet together to discuss what we could do to improve our working conditions.

I sat down there like an innocent guy and didn't say a word. But one of the guys at the meeting found out I was from Olaa. He started calling my name and asking me questions. I told him, "You see, the only way we can improve our working conditions is to stay together and appoint someone to bring grievances to management." I never knew then that during the meeting the Filipino camp police was smocking in the back of the clubhouse. They heard what I'd said. The next day, at 5:30 in the morning, the camp police came knocking at my door. They said, "Pack your clothes and go to the manager's office at six o'clock." It seemed like I'd have to leave the camp, but I said to the man, "If you thinking of evicting me, I'm not going to be a pig for you people." I said, "Give us our demands. That's all I'm asking for."

The third day of the strike they drove me from the camp. The camp police came and I was strong-armed out. In the following days all my leaders were evicted from camp, too. Finally they forced many strikers away. We were thrown onto Kahului Beach at the Maui Dry Goods Store. The strike became a major confrontation that lasted for three months. We tried to mobilize all the surrounding plantation guys to back us. We said, "Our struggles is yours. Whatever we come out with, you guys will benefit also."

We did sign a contract, but after the strike some in our leadership betrayed us and the agreement we'd reached went to the dogs. One got entered Maui management. He got a gold car and joined the camp police. Finally I was the only guy of my group who was unable to go back to work. I was blacklisted again. I looked all over Maui, but there was no job for me.

Next I took a ship to Molokai to look for a job there. I went to the pineapple camp at Hololehua where I had friends. At 2:30 in the morning a camp manager knocked on my friends' door. The manager asked, "Is Calixto Damaso here?" Calixto was my name before I came to Hawaii. I changed it when I became a naturalized citizen. I told the manager, "I am, sir." He said, "How many of you people came from Maui?" The answer was, "All of us." Well, he said, "Pack your clothes, get out, this plantation is not a hotel. Move or I'm going to call the government police to lock you guys up." We moved on to Kaunakakai. We had no jobs. I labored there fishing for three months during late 1937. But I had no clothing, no food, no nothing. Then in 1938 I went to Honolulu. I told my friends, "As soon as I leave, try to find jobs. Don't say I was with you." They got jobs then. I think the managers decided, "As long as Damaso is not with you, we'll give you guys a job."

I applied for a job at Waimanalo Sugar Company. The manager opened a drawer. There was my picture taken during the '37 strike. The manager said, "We're not hiring." When I heard that they hired about 35 people the following day, I went back to see the manager again. He said, "Not you, fella. You were the ringleader in '37. You think I'm going to hire you?"

I tried at California and Hawaiian Sugar Company, but it was no dice. I couldn't find a job, basically, in late '37, '38, and '39. This went on until 1940, when I got employed as a truck helper at the Ready Mix Concrete Company. After that I got a job for a year with American Stevedoring Company. During the war, 1942 to 1945, I worked for the navy supply depot.

In 1946 I applied to Castle and Cooke Terminal as a stevedore and got hired. I was now an ILWU longshoreman. At Castle and Cooke I attended ILWU meetings, but because of my past record I just sat and listened until we took a strike vote in 1949. Then I got active again. Right after the strike I was acting business agent. In 1950 I ran for Oahu longshore EA, got elected, and served for eight years.

When I was in the ILWU I began to realize that my dream had come true. I started from the hard nuts of the laboring group, but now the workers we're respected. And they realized that the only way for them to do better was through unity and understanding more about everyone.
In the hotels, is there?

Story and photos by David Bacon

A new balance of power in hotels has the employees, the housekeepers and the longshoremen in a good defensive battle. It changed the rules. It altered the relationship between hospitality workers and the management. It made it easier for them to negotiate. It was expensive justice nonetheless, but it made them more willing to bargain.

The hotels learned anything in the last two years, it was that the union in San Francisco was better prepared for war than they were. Two years ago, Local 2 asked for a contract that would terminate this year, enabling them to negotiate at the same time the sister locals around the country were also at the bargaining table with the same hospitality chains.

In 2004 the hotels agreed to a 2006 agreement with the San Francisco hotel operators of the Westin St. Francis, the largest, reached agreement in May. It was a sixty-six deal, meaning that the median was a quarter of the round of negotiations three years from now. But New York won substantial improvements, and Local 2 put its old demands back on the table.

So in San Francisco the companies balked. Choosing this city and this union was a bad mistake. While hotel operators were able to get 2006 off the table in Washington, D.C., and weaken the momentum elsewhere, San Francisco hotel workers held to their guns. They struck four of the 14 Class A hotels (the city’s most expensive) in the Multi-Employer Group, announcing they’d stay out for two weeks. The other ten implemented the last-minute agreement, and promptly locked out their own workers. Once the two week strike was over, Local 2 was ready to fight again. The hotels naturally had no choice but to agree.

“Local 2’s members understood the company’s agreement to lock arms in an anti-union alliance and their opposition to local unions showing the lockout at support. Workers did, though. To them it seemed of hypocrisy, and made them more willing to stay on the picket lines.”

As it ground on, the lockout did more damage to the hotels than to their employees. After nine weeks, workers were clearly not frightened, and continued to mount noisy picket lines and drive away guests. When the hotels cut off payments to the union health plan, other unions stepped in to make up for them. Management's own tactics pushed people together, and made broader class solidarity possible.

At the same time, the hotels had a hard time with their own business allies. The city’s mayor, a photogenic, TV-savvy restauranteur, here-tofore viewed as business-friendly, tried to broker a settlement. The corporations’ rebuff carried a resentful tone, as though he was betraying those who’d propelled him into office.

Mayor Gavin Newsom then went to a picketline at Union Square, in the heart of the tourist district. In front of the Westin St. Francis he declared the lockout was only days from a conclusion, and that he would honor the union boycott of the 14 hotels until they settle their new contract.

The hotel corporations finally caved and reopened their doors to their own workers. And room occupancy rates rose nationally, with the industry recovering from its disastrous decline in the wake of Sept. 11, 2001, an active boycott cut deeply into San Francisco’s expected share of rising profits.

Hotel housekeepers, bellmen, cooks and laundry workers returned to their jobs, but without a contract. To pressure them further, the companies refused to dedicate dues and turn the money over to the union. Rather than watch its income plummet in the middle of this battle, however, the union set up a system to collect dues by hand from more than 5,000 workers.

“We fought the whole way, but we gained a voice in the decision making that affected our lives for the last two decades have become a growing indictment of worker abuse, and the right to bargain.”

In San Francisco, it took Local 2 over four years to organize the Parc 55, and at Marriott Corporation’s downtown flagship, the campaign lasted at least 10 years. Ironically, Hilton Hotels broke the logjam in New York. In the 2004 lockout, Hilton led the other MEG employers in San Francisco in demanding Local 2. In UNITE HERE’s pre-2006 planning, Hilton had even been chosen as the national target. Workers were interviewed around the country, and their testimony supported a growing indictment of Hilton, especially in non-union Hilton hotels.

Following the coroners’ long bingefor buying out smaller chains, a majority of Hilton workers are in a non-union hotels run by the same company can sign cards asking for union recognition. A majority has signed, the hotel corporation that would have had them recognize the union and bargain.

This process avoids National Labor Relations Board elections, which over the years have given employers the upper hand. And the company’s failure to recognize the union and bargain.

In UNITE HERES, this was anathema to the hospitality chains. Under a card-check arrangement, workers at non-union hotels run by the same company can sign cards asking for union recognition. When a majority has signed, the hotel corporations that would have had them recognize the union and bargain.

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Hotel housekeepers, and other workers, together with supporters from other unions, marched through downtown San Francisco in a demonstration in the entrance of the Palace Hotel, where 68 people were arrested in an act of civil disobedience. Demonstrators blocked the street and hotel entrances.
include a better process for bringing unorganized workers into the union. Local 2’s housekeepers and kitchen workers knew that they knew the advantage they would have if they could force the hotels to negotiate. This time the hoteliers knew why they needed card check. They could have given up these two demands anytime during the nine locked-out weeks, or the two years without a contract that followed. The hotels would have gladly given them raises in exchange. But in a convincing demonstration of the union’s ability to educate its own members, the workers wouldn’t take the deal.

A new York’s new contract was ratified this past May, the union and Hilton also announced that the chain was willing to sign a card check agreement in a limited number of hotels. Those agreements would have to be included in new contracts in each of those cities, though, and in San Francisco those negotiations were not going well.

Finally, Local 2 took another strike vote Aug. 24. A week later, at the end of a noisy march through the tourist district, more than 60 members walked out of the Palace Hotel. They knew why the labor war of two years before. In the shifting alliances inside the Multi Employer Group, Hilton and its allies lived with card check in San Francisco, and reached a deal.

Workers held out for a third strategy, however, which may eventually have as profound an effect on the union’s strength as card check and common expiration dates. They negotiated an unprecedented civil rights section of the new agreement, which combines protection for immigrant workers with a requirement that hotels make concerted efforts to hire African American workers and residents of other communities underrepresented in the industry’s workforce.

The proposal stems from an effort by the union to address changing demographics. In the city’s hotels, the percentage of African American workers is falling, as employment continues to grow. African Americans now make up only 6% of the San Francisco hotel workforce, a number that has declined in each of the past five years but one.

In San Francisco, this issue has a lot of history. The Palace Hotel was the scene of the city’s most famous civil rights demonstrations. In 1963, hundreds of civil rights activists sat in at the hotel lobby. They demanded that management hire Blacks into jobs in the visible front-of-the-house locations, where the color line had kept them out. The day after the arrests thousand rings the entire block in the largest picket line San Francisco has ever seen.

Richard Lee Mason, an African American banquet waiter at the St. Francis, remembers, “African Americans had been kept in the back of the house for far too long. People wanted to be in the front of the house, and rightly so.”

Employment prospects improved for Black workers for some years after the demonstrations, but the situation changed again in the 1980s.

“I suspect that because the industry had a great struggle with African Americans, they thought we were too aggressive.” Mason speculated. “A lot of us had come out of the civil rights movement, and we were willing to fight for higher wages and to make sure we were treated fairly.”

Steven Pitts, an economist at the Center for Labor Research and Education at the University of California in Berkeley, suggested this perception by employers of African American workers is true nationwide.

“Blacks aren’t perceived as compliant, and therefore when many employers make hiring decisions, they simply don’t hire them,” Pitts said.

Hotels hired increasing percent age of immigrants, in a move they hoped would create a less demanding and less expensive workforce. In kitchens and among the laundry carts, voices now speak in accents from Mexico and Central America, the Caribbean, China, the Philippines and a host of other countries. But if the hotel industry hoped this new workforce would be more compliant, they were disappointed.

Immigrants proved a key element of the 1990 citywide hotel strike, and smaller conflicts over the following two decades. But Black employment fell nonetheless.

To restart movement in the other direction, in 2004 Local 2 asked companies to agree to a diversity taskforce, to reach out to African American communities and eliminate hiring barriers. While demanding progress towards ending the de facto color line, the union also proposed new protections for the jobs of rights of immigrants. The union won strong language allowing workers to keep their jobs for up to a year if they have to leave to adjust their immigration status. Management is prohibited from hiring workers named in “no match” letters from the Social Security Administration, because their numbers don’t match the SSA database (a common cause for termination by employers who assume those workers are undocumented).

The union proposal strengthened an important ruling won six years ago in San Francisco, when an arbitrator held that management couldn’t use a “no-match” letter to fire immigrant workers if they had a union contract. Then in 2003 the union organized the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride, a national demonstration for immigration reform joining immigrants with Black veterans of the original 1960s freedom rides. The mobilization brought people to Washington, D.C. to push for immigration reform to make it easier for immigrant workers to join unions, go on strike and advocate for their labor rights.

The union’s civil rights proposal is an important first step, according to Pitts.

“But in the civil rights movement we learned we need structural change, that can bring community residents into the hotels, and make sure they progress,” he added.

The new outreach requirement may have limited impact, but it is a first step. It puts immigrants and African Americans on the same side. It makes the union part of a new civil rights movement, geared to a changed world of globalization. The key is prohibiting discrimination against immigrants because of their status, while moving towards affirmative action to gain more jobs for underrepresented communities.

Winning structural reform in hiring will take a lot of bargaining power—an important argument for card check and coordinated negotiations in cities around the country. But possibly more important in the long term, the agreement renews the basis for a civil rights alliance that can lead to greater political power, as well as increasing union strength.

In the 1934 San Francisco General Strike, longshore leader Harry Bridges promised African Americans in the city that if they made common cause with the strikers rather than the ship owners, the union would force employers to take down the color line that barred them from most waterfront jobs. As president of the ILWU, Bridges kept his word. African Americans became a majority of San Francisco Bay Area longshore workers in later years, and the union and minority and working class communities formed an alliance that gave them decades of political power.

Local 2 may become the nucleus of a similar political alliance that reflects the new realities of the city’s changing demographics. That could give it a political influence, not just in raising the standard of living of its members, but over the lives of working class San Franciscans far beyond its own ranks.

Local 2 President Mike Casey announced Sept. 13 that the union reached agreement on a new contract with the San Francisco’s leading hotels.


Hotel workers and supporters demonstrated July 27 against the 13 San Francisco Class A hotels with which their union, UNITEHERE Local 2, has been negotiating for over two years.
Local 19 moves on member education

This past year the Education Committee in longshore Local 19 in Seattle has been taking first steps toward educating its growing rank and file and casuals to prepare them for the responsibilities of membership in a democratic union. In May, the committee hosted a small event with a labor history movement author. At this year’s Bloody Thursday picnic the committee put on an ILWU history trivia game and gave away prizes. During the summer, educational bulletin boards were created for the "B" members and casuals. For the past two months the committee has been creating an educational packet to give to each "B" member that includes ILWU information, a safety information card and the book, “The ILWU Story: Six Decades of Militant Unionism.”

Last month, the faculty and staff at the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies at the University of Washington invited Harvey Schwartz, Curator of the ILWU Oral History Collection, to speak to one of their academic classes. They contacted the Local 19 Education Committee and asked if the committee wanted Schwartz to speak at the hiring hall as well. This gave the Education Committee an opportunity to host its first big event of the year.

Schwartz, a longshore member and casuals union member in the Seattle Local 19 hiring hall for a presentation by Schwartz sponsored by the Education Committee on the birth of the ILWU and the history and tactics of Harry Bridges.

Schwartz has spent 38 years studying and writing about labor in the U.S. He is the author of "The Life of Harry Bridges." He is also editor of the Oral History excerpts in “The ILWU Story: Six Decades of Militant Unionism” and the oral history stories which have appeared in The Dispatcher for more than ten years.

Schwartz spoke of how Bridges came to San Francisco as a sailor and ended up staying and working as a longshoreman at a time when there was no union and the men worked long hours for little pay under dangerous conditions. He told stories about how Bridges and other longshoremen organized a coastwide maritime strike in 1934, winning union recognition and a contract with higher pay and a union-run hiring hall.

Schwartz told more stories about how the ILWU organized agricultural workers in Hawaii in the 1940s, how Bridges fought government attempts during the McCarthy period to deport him to Australia for allegedly being a member of the Communist Party, and how Bridges led the union to adjust to the containerization and mechanization of the waterfront.

Behind the history and the anecdotes, Schwartz’s theme rang clearly and loudly: "Don’t take the union’s benefits for granted. As we prepare for the future, and most importantly, for the future of the ILWU, we must all inhale the past, the lives that were lost for our benefit, and the successes we have gained. As we prepare for the future, and most importantly, for the future of the ILWU, we must all inhale the past, the ideals of Harry Bridges, stand together and breathe out, "An Injury to One is An Injury to All.""

—Sarah Eshc, Local 19 casual

Union Privilege is happy to announce that the 2007 Union Plus Scholarship application is now available.

The Union Plus Scholarship offers $150,000 in scholarships annually to members, their spouses and dependents. Students who are beginning or continuing their secondary education are eligible. Awards are based on academic achievement, character, leadership, social awareness, career goals and financial need.

You can learn more about the scholarship and download a PDF application by visiting http://www.unionplus.org/benefits/education/scholarships/up.cfm. The deadline to return completed applications is January 31, 2007. Application packets with a postmark later than January 31 will not be eligible for review. Only winners will be sent notification on May 3, 2007.

In addition to the Union Plus Scholarship:
2. Search other Union Scholarships at www.unionplus.org.
3. Apply for an Education Loan to help pay for education-related expenses by visiting http://unionplus.educationplanner.com/education_planner/ and select Private Loans.
5. Speak with a Union Plus financial aid counselor by calling 1-877-881-1022 (8 am-9 pm EST, Monday-Friday).
6. Finally, to determine all of the money-saving Union Plus benefits you’re eligible to receive, visit our home page at www.unionplus.org.
Local 9 retirees seek pension justice

The workers claim the benefits are a public entity’s obligation. The port’s tenant, Hasbro Toys, moved to those who qualify. In most cases they can back out if payments into the employer plan—a form of deferred compensation that may not be unilaterally cancelled by the employer.”

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Meanwhile, as the court deliberates the form of deferred retiree health care, the Seattle Port Commission voted 3-2 to give its Chief Executive Mike Dinmore a six percent raise, to $350,840 per year. He is already the highest paid port official in the country, and this increase raises his annual pension to $107,256. He will also get deferred compensation of $50,000 per year in retirement, according to the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

Here he was caught between two laws, one saying a union officer can not receive payments from the company, the other being the port’s claim that the terms of the Washington State Supreme Court.

The court should decide the case in the next few months. Hutter sees the decision as a victory.

“but we say that if the port can make a plan and get out of the hat, then it violates the state constitution. Every state employer could do that, and destroy the ability to make contracts,” said Hutter.

Local 9 retirees hopped in their cars and drove to Olympia Sept. 14 to see if they could change the ruling handed down by the Washington State Supreme Court.

The court heard oral arguments that the 15 retirees started in 2003 to compel their former employer, the Port of Seattle, to honor its obligation to pay retiree health care benefits.

The 15 retirees watched the nine-justice panel ask questions that were aimed at a large oval desk and listened to each side present 20 minutes of arguments. The panel heard that the port had agreed to pay lifetime medicals to retiree workers. The port claimed that the deal was struck while the tenant’s port, Hasbro Toys, moved out of the area, ending the jobs of 15 Local 9 members and ceasing payments into the benefit fund.

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ILWU Book & Video Sale

Books and videos about the ILWU are available from the union's library at discounted prices!

**BOOKS:**
- Harry Bridges: The Rise and Fall of Radical Labor in the United States by Charles Larrowe: $16.50
- The Union Makes Us Strong: Radical Unionism on the San Francisco Waterfront by David Selvin: $9.00
- A Terrible Anger: The 1934 Waterfront and General Strike in San Francisco by David Wellman: $16.50
- The Big Strike By Mike Cun: the classic partisan account of the 1934 strike. $6.50
- The ILWU Story: unrolls the history of the union from its origins to the present, complete with recollections from the men and women who built the union, in their own words, and dozens of rare photos of the union in action. $15.00
- Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s By Bruce Wellman: the important new study of longshoring in the ILWU. $20.00 (paperback)
- Sons of the Strike: The Northwest Workers' Crusade of 1934-1942 By Howard Kimledorf: A provocative comparative analysis of the politics and ideology of the ILWU and the International Longshoremen's Association. $10.00
- The March Inland: Origins of the ILWU Warehouse Division 1934-1938 By Harvey Schwartz: the new edition of the only comprehensive account of the union's organizing campaign in the northern California warehouse and distribution industry. $9.00
- Video materials:
  - We Are the ILWU DVD @ $5 ea.
  - The March Inland @ $5 ea.
  - The Big Strike @ $5 ea.
  - The ILWU Story @ $5 ea.
  - A Life on the Beam DVD @ $5 ea.
  - A Life on the Beam VHS @ $5 ea.

**VIDEO:**
- We Are the ILWU A 30-minute color video introducing the principles and traditions of the ILWU. Features active and retired members talking about what the union meant in their lives and what it needs to survive and thrive, along with film clips, historical photos and an original musical score. DVD or VHS version $5.00
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