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News briefs

Shouting "The Incheon electrician's strike is just," 48-year old Jung Hae Jin set himself on fire on Oct. 27 in front of Youngjin Electrical Company in South Korea to protest the employer's refusal to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement with the union. The union's demands included union recognition, 44-hour work week (many electricians had to work 12 to 13 hours a day), and an end to illegal subcontracting. Jung Hae Jin died of his injuries. Story was reported by the Building and Woodworkers Union International.

Pensions are declining in the US. The total number of defined benefit plans has fallen from 128,041 in 1978 to 26,000 this year, Labor Notes reported. Only 55% of private sector workers in 2005 worked at companies that offered either a defined benefit or defined contribution plan.

Missed Meal Payments for PG&E groups one and two were scheduled to be made in late November or early December. Lawsuits have been filed against Mirant and Duke seeking back payments for missed meals.

Reorganizing Gas T&D and analyzing staffing levels is the focus of a new "Lean Six Sigma" group at PG&E.

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RON WEAKLEY
UNION BROTHER

1915-2007



Brother Weakley

UNION FOUNDER

by Eric Wolfe

Guys like Ronald T. Weakley don't come along every day.

Weakley's passion and ingenuity fired one of the great union organizing drives of the 20th century, a 12-year campaign of relentless and often bitter struggle to gain a voice for workers at Pacific Gas & Electric. When the union emerged triumphant, Weakley transformed himself from agitator to architect, constructing and negotiating innovative labor agreements that directed a steadily increasing flow of wealth from corporate coffers into workers' pockets.

The material legacy of Ron Weakley can be measured in the dollars gained for workers in the form of wages and benefits that eventually set the standard for the entire utility industry. But the man leaves another legacy, one that transcends these material accomplishments. Weakley believed in the power of the people to govern themselves, and structured Local 1245 to assure that the members would always have the ultimate say.

When Weakley died on Oct. 11 at the age of 92, we lost more than our union founder and leader. We lost one of the true heroes of the 20th century, an ordinary man with an extraordinary ability to inspire others to believe in themselves and what they can accomplish together. We lost our union brother.

Ronald T. Weakley's first encounter with workplace injustice came on the day of his birth.

His father, a hardrock miner and member of the militant Industrial Workers of the World, had been blackballed for union activism. The only way Earl Lloyd McDoolin could work was under a phony name. When baby Ron came into the world on Jan. 24, 1915, the name entered on his birth certificate was the one his father had made up in order to hold a job: Robinson.

A stepfather, William Weakley, later replaced McDoolin as the center of Ron's family life, but unionism remained central to Weakley's childhood experience. William Weakley, initiated into the IBEW in 1905, worked as a lineman as well as a construction electrician.

"He was very active in the union, particularly in strikes," Weakley once recalled. "The St. Louis car strike was a big one in which he participated."

When his stepfather went broke during the depression, Weakley left home and wound up in the Sacramento Valley working on farms and orchards. There he witnessed firsthand the hardships faced by farm workers and developed a life-long sense of solidarity with the farmworker cause.

Next came a short stint at sea in the merchant marines. A short stint that made a lasting impression.

"They didn't have any rights or anything else in those days," Weakley said. "And the food was full of weevils. You washed with salt water. Bed bugs. Looked like hell. No air conditioning, hardly any decent potable water to drink, nowhere to wash your clothes except salt water. It was like Captain Bly."

Weakley said he learned the hard way about discrimination against union members.

"I got fired off a ship because I was a member of the Marine Fireman's union," he said. "They didn't give me a nickel. They kicked me off in Baltimore." He caught a freight to Mobile, Alabama and eventually found his way back to San Francisco, where he took a job as an oiler for Atlas Imperial Diesel Engine Co. in Oakland.

Weakley worked the graveyard shift, at straight time. His memories of the job were not fond ones.

"The wages were lousy, the company was lousy. I was getting \$12 a week. I gave my mother \$8 and I kept \$4. It was hard work."

But shortly after his 19th birthday, in 1934, Weakley found himself swept up

in one of the epic labor struggles of the 20th century. Harry Bridges, the charismatic longshoreman leader, launched the San Francisco maritime strike, which was about to become the great San Francisco General Strike.

"We all went out on strike," recalled Weakley. "We didn't have a union, but we went out on strike anyway. The whole works just shut down and walked out. Everybody was fed up."

The strike was serious business and would eventually culminate in the police shooting deaths of two strikers on "Bloody Thursday." But for a 19-year-old kid full of working class moxie, it was the chance to fight on the side of the angels.

In one of many actions, strikers encircled the Howard Terminal in Oakland,

charged, he landed a job with the Bay Area Key Transit System, working the 1939 Treasure Island World's Fair.

Twelve years later Weakley would be leading a new union representing those Key System employees as well as thousands of workers at Pacific Gas & Electric and many other California employers.

Those 12 years were epic ones in the history of American labor. The journey began in 1940, when 25-year-old Ron Weakley walked into PG&E offices in San Francisco and got hired on as a laborer at \$4 a day.

Formidable Challenge

PG&E was a formidable challenge to labor organizers seven decades ago, but it didn't take Weakley long to find people willing to take the company on.

In early 1941 he met with a small group of men in the bar of a run-down hotel in Concord. Many of them, Weakley included, were watch engineers at PG&E steam plants in the East Bay. They were proud men who believed they got little respect on the job and that their wages and working conditions were obnoxious. They also agreed that to get the strength they needed to deal with PG&E, they would have to organize the entire company—top to bottom, north to south, east to west, men and women, physical and

clerical. One big union on the system.

Weakley stood out.

"He acted like he had the experience and the background to know what to do and what to expect. And we just followed," recalled Ray Michaels, one of the men attending the meeting.

"We were united in a single purpose to get a union," Weakley explained in 1962. "We weren't yakking about how unions had too much power and how we didn't need one, like some poor misguided souls today. We sought a union to regain our dignity first and then to improve our wages and conditions."

On April 17, 1941 Weakley and his fellow organizers obtained a charter from the Utility Workers Organizing Committee (UWOC), affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). A year later, they petitioned the National La-



Ron Weakley in Concord, CA in 1941. Twenty-six years old and ready to cause trouble

holding the scabs inside. The police, in turn, encircled the strikers, cutting off their supplies.

Weakley and some of his cohorts "borrowed" an unattended tug boat in San Francisco, loaded it up with supplies, and took the tug across the bay under cover of night, with Weakley serving as diesel mechanic. They pulled up to the dock in Oakland, where men awaited to unload sandwiches, cigarettes and other supplies for the strikers.

"Then we beached the damn thing on the mudflats at low tide and just disappeared," Weakley recalled in 1990, relishing the memory. "The paper said *Pirates!*"

Allied Imperial gave a nickel-an-hour raise as the strike was being settled, but Weakley decided to join the Navy instead. Four years later, after he was dis-

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bor Relations Board to represent PG&E physical employees in the East Bay. The NLRB certified the UWOC on June 20, 1942.

But PG&E wasn't about to roll over. The company simply refused to bargain.

And PG&E wasn't the only problem.

A second union, the IBEW, had a following among some PG&E linemen that dated back to the early 1900s. IBEW was an old-style craft union affiliated with the American Federation of Labor and not interested in organizing "unskilled" workers. But feeling threatened by the industrial campaign brewing at PG&E, the IBEW launched its own company-wide organizing drive and chartered Local 1245 in 1941 to carry it out.

From the beginning there was a raw edge to this contest. L.L. Mitchell, who sided with the IBEW, remembered fist-fights on the docks in the late 1930s between linemen loyal to the IBEW and those inspired by the CIO. When the two organizing drives began in earnest in 1941, feelings only intensified.

PG&E, able to play the unions against each other, seemed to have the strongest hand.

But PG&E was trumped by World War II. The National War Labor Board did not

tolerate PG&E's stalling tactics and in late 1942 began imposing settlements.

An Audacious Move

Over the next couple of years, Weakley and the UWOC gained contracts at PG&E locations throughout the Bay Area, while IBEW organized the outlying areas. In 1944 both unions succeeded in getting master agreements for all of the territory they controlled. The contracts weren't great, but they were a beginning.

After the war, though, Weakley's dream of one big union seemed to be slipping away. The two unions had fought each other to a standstill. And there was trouble brewing within the UWOC, which in 1946 gained recognition by the CIO as a national union—the Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA).

America after the war was in the grip of anti-communist hysteria, and the labor movement was not immune. At the UWUA's founding convention in 1946, Weakley and other California utility workers came under attack.

"They depicted us on the West Coast as 'Red Hots' (communists) and so forth,"

said Weakley. "They created enemies in order to get control of the union."

The abuse was even worse at the 1947 convention.

Longshoremen leader Harry Bridges, under attack himself by "anti-red" forces within the CIO, sympathized with Weakley's position. He told Weakley that his union of utility workers could headquarter at the Longshoreman's hall if they got kicked out of the UWUA.

Weakley, the former merchant marine and Navy veteran, began to think about jumping ship.

Accompanied by one of his close associates, Don Hardie, Weakley met secretly with IBEW officials in Oakland. They proposed a deal, which in essence was this: we'll try to convince our members to come over to the IBEW and help you organize PG&E if you let us run our local how we want it run.

"We decided to dump (the UWUA) and join the IBEW, with a view toward achieving what the company feared most of all, which was building one system-wide industrial union on these properties," Weakley said.

In late 1948, IBEW headquarters in Washington DC established a new local to accommodate Weakley's forces: IBEW Local 1324.

It was an audacious move on Weakley's part, and full of risk.

PG&E fought him every step of the way, red-baiting him mercilessly during NLRB hearings to establish the scope of the proposed bargaining unit. The national leadership of the UWUA, outraged at the prospect of losing its foothold at PG&E, put up ferocious resistance. The leaders of IBEW Local 1245, which had been fighting Weakley tooth and nail since 1941, didn't want to have anything to do with him.

But Weakley had support where it counted: from the rank and file leaders who shared his vision and recognized his leadership. Those stalwarts of the Utility Workers Organizing Committee included Don Hardie, Tom Riley, Ray Michaels, Mert Walters, Stan Dahlin, Les Glasson, Ed White, William Haars, Ed Hanlon, Bill Kennedy, Milt Ingraham, Gene Hastings, and many others whose names were never captured in print.

Their job was to convince their fellow workers to follow them into the IBEW.

"Many people got hurt in this process and much bitterness prevailed. We (faced) company finks, commies, imported industrial agents, and a hostile business community," Weakley said in 1962. "While we were at it we had a ball fighting among ourselves and I can assure you that at more than one meeting somebody called the cops."

It took three years for the IBEW to completely defeat the UWUA in system-wide elections at PG&E, and to consolidate the old Local 1245 with the new Local 1324 (as well as some other IBEW jurisdictions). The name of the newly consolidated union would be Local 1245. A

continued on next page

Frank Quadros remembers

Weakley had "tough job"



Frank Quadros started with PG&E in 1946, in the Gas Department in San Francisco, but was soon recalled to the reserves. When he returned to PG&E in 1952, Ron

Weakley had just succeeded in uniting the workforce in a single union, the IBEW. But the union had no systemwide contract, and not much power over PG&E.

"Things were getting pretty raunchy. It was like there was no union at all, the company was doing whatever they wanted to do," says Quadros. He spoke with the Utility Reporter from his home in Scottsdale, AZ after Weakley's death in October.

Quadros quickly was appointed as a steward, and then to the grievance committee. Then Business Rep. Dan McPeak invited him to sit in on the 1953 general bargaining with PG&E.

"That's when I was introduced to Ron Weakley. I (told him) it was like there was no union, 'The guys want to see some action.' Ron had quite a job on his hands trying to keep those people together."

Weakley's reception at unit meetings in San Francisco on a couple of occasions "was not that good," Quadros recalls.

"I have to hand it to him, he handled himself very well. He took a lot of crap, but he didn't respond to it. He answered questions but he didn't let it get to him."

In 1955 Weakley hired Quadros as a business representative for the North Bay. Meetings there could get just as rowdy as the ones in San Francisco, he recalls.

At one meeting Quadros spoke up in Weakley's defense. He recalls Weakley taking him aside afterward and telling him, "Quadros, you don't have to jump in like that. That's what I'm here for."

"He had a tough job at the beginning there. As soon as we got more organized it got more difficult for him. You had newer people coming on and they didn't understand a lot of the things that were going on. They said, 'This is what I want and you can't get it. You're a sell-out artist.'"

But Weakley had a knack for navigating his way through troubled waters.

"Ron was a very intelligent person. He knew how to read people."

Weakley expected his representatives to stand up to management.

"He said, 'One thing I want you to understand—you are equal to that division manager. The first thing you do is go to the division manager's office, tell him who you are and what you expect. Don't let him put you off to someone else.'"

Toward the end of Weakley's 20 years as business manager, many of the older employees were gone, replaced by new people. In many cases, Quadros recalls, "They didn't understand the working functions of the union and didn't care."

Their attitude seemed to be, "I have my

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The amalgamated staff of IBEW Local 1324 and 1245 consisted of, standing from left: Jerry Moran, Charley Massie, Mert Walters, Scott Wadsworth, Al Hanson, Gene Hastings, Ed White, Harry Bollard, Weakley, and Cy Yochem. Kneeling from left: Fred Lucas, Delbert Petty, Al Kaznowski, Elmer Bushby, Lee Andrews, Jim Cribbs, Howard Sevey, and L.L. Mitchell (who is not shown because he was taking the picture.)



With L. L. "Mitch" Mitchell (seated right) as his chief negotiator, Weakley (standing left) laid the foundation for the labor agreement with PG&E, now recognized as setting the standard for wages and benefits in the utility industry.

reborn Local 1245.

Weakley was the obvious choice for Business Manager of this mammoth new union, but a representative from the old Local 1245 contested for the position.

“My people wanted me, and some of his wanted him,” Weakley recalled many years later. “So finally they said you two go out and talk it over and come back and tell us which it’s going to be. They gave us a bottle of liquor and said go up to your room and talk about it.”

Weakley emerged as business manager. The bottle was still mostly full.

Taking on the World

In 1952 Weakley beat back a last challenge from the UWUA. Finally unified, the new IBEW Local 1245 was ready to march.

“We cancelled all our contracts, took strike votes and took on the PG&E and all other employers in our jurisdiction and the world in general,” Weakley said.

The IBEW, which had subsidized the long organizing drive, said it was now time for the local union to fly on its own.

“So we had to get a dues increase the same time we were trying to get our first system-wide contract,” Weakley recalled in 1990. “And I was faced with running

“We cancelled all our contracts (in 1953), took strike votes and took on the PG&E and all other employers in our jurisdiction and the world in general.”

—Ron Weakley

for election in the middle of all this.”

Having a unified membership gave the union new clout with PG&E. L.L. Mitchell became Weakley’s lead negotiator.

Wages began to climb. An ambitious program to improve “fringe benefits” was launched. The union gained the power to take grievances to arbitration.

Weakley never wavered from his early belief that workers everywhere had an inalienable right to be in a union. In the 1960s, under Weakley’s leadership, Local 1245 organized Pacific Gas Transmission, the United States Bureau of Reclamation, Merced Irrigation District, Nevada Irrigation District, Richvale Irrigation District, the City of Healdsburg, the City of Redding, the City of Santa Clara, Truckee-Donner Public Utility District, the Tri-Dam project, and Plumas-Sierra Rural Electric.

Line clearance tree trimmers working on PG&E property were also organized: Davey Tree and Pacific Tree (later known as Asplundh).

In 1964 Local 1245 gained jurisdiction for Outside Line Construction work.

“If they wanted to be organized, we

organized them,” Weakley said.

Under Weakley, Local 1245 also organized attendants, porters and food service workers at a Navy hospital. The union organized part of the Naval air station in Alameda, a group of x-ray workers, the Citizens Utilities phone company, and BART technicians.

In some cases the International office took away these new units and reassigned them to other IBEW locals. Weakley was outraged by this interference. But he was the consummate practical politician, never so concerned about saving face that he would shoot himself in the foot. He saved his energy for serving the members who elected him.

At PG&E, the union bargained a percentage contribution toward employee health premiums. It also bargained a stock savings plan—the first in the gas and electric utility industry.

Vacation allowance was increased. Sick leave was expanded. Time-and-a-half for overtime was negotiated. A new Master Apprenticeship Agreement formalized the training for 12 different classifications at PG&E. Safety conditions were improved.

Paid meals was a big issue. “It used to be they just worked you and dumped you and that’s it,” said Weakley in 1990. “Now they have to provide a meal, or money in lieu of” after a certain amount of time worked.

The union won larger pensions, now fully paid by the company. The union also negotiated a new fully-paid long-term disability plan—the first in the industry.

And after decades of disputes over hours, the union negotiated an historic Hours Clarification Agreement.

Mixing It Up with Members

As leader of the union, Weakley didn’t seal himself off in the castle tower. He attended unit meetings when he could, and he wasn’t shy about mixing it up with disgruntled members.

At a unit meeting in San Francisco, with 300 members in attendance, Weakley was confronted by a member upset by something he had written in the Utility Reporter.

“I had written a column wherein I had pointed out that our people were not only skilled utility workers but also skilled musicians, photographers, artists and had all other types of attributes.”

As Weakley recalled it, a member stood up and said, “Hey Weakley, what’s all this intellectual stuff I’ve been reading in your column in the Utility Reporter? As far as I’m concerned you’re an intellectual asshole.”

People applauded. Weakley knew he had to respond. “So I said, ‘Well, I’m better off than you because you’re just a plain asshole,’ and people applauded that, too.”

Weakley and the member were able later to patch things up.

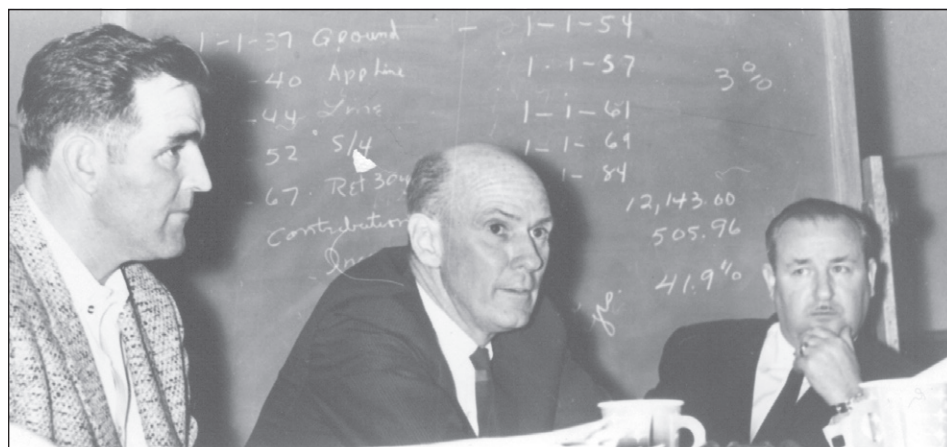
On another occasion Weakley was publicizing the death benefit the union had just established. He was proud of it, figured it would help solidify members’ support for the union.

“I trumpeted that at a meeting once down south, I think in Fresno, and a guy got up and said, ‘Big deal, you gotta die to get it.’”

Weakley learned, as all business managers do, that members sometimes ignore everything the union has accomplished for them—all the wages and benefits—in order to focus on a single complaint.

Weakley attended a unit meeting in San Jose to discuss a change in the way wages were determined—a change that ended up benefitting troublemen.

“This guy got up—he was half gassed—and he said, ‘It costs me just as much to get a bottle of milk as it does the



Ron Weakley, right, meeting in the 1960s with US Senator Alan Cranston, middle, and IBEW Local 1245 President Leland Thomas.



Local 1245 staff, in 1960 or 1961. Front row, from left: Howard Sevey, office manager; Mark Cook, business rep; Larry Foss, business rep; Jack Wilson, business rep; John Wilder, business rep; and Mert Walters assistant business manager. Back row: Norm Amundson, business rep and Utility Reporter editor; Roy Murray, business rep; Jim McMullin, business rep; Gene Hastings, business rep; L.L. Mitchell, assistant business manager; Ron Weakley, business manager; Ed James, business rep; Al Kaznowski, business rep; Scott Wadsworth, business rep; Dan McPeak, business rep; Al Hansen, assistant business manager; Frank Quadros, business rep; and Spike Ensley, business rep.



Ron Weakley, left, greets Vice President Hubert Humphrey in Tracy, CA in 1968. Humphrey, a strong labor supporter, was campaigning for President.

Troubleshooter so why should they get a wage settlement?”

“If you didn’t buy so much wine,” Weakley responded, “you might be able to afford more milk.”

The member, Weakley said, “stormed out and drove away—in a Mercedes.”

Members were always full of surprises. When the phone rang, there was no telling what might be in store.

“Once we got a call from a woman in Salinas wanting a thousand dollar check. She said she was the wife of a guy who just died,” Weakley recalled. She wanted the death benefit. Weakley told the woman that the union required a death certificate as proof.

“She said, ‘I don’t need any proof because I shot the guy last night.’” The woman was calling from jail.

The union eventually paid her the benefit “because she was the guy’s wife and he was dead.” Weakley said he believed the union later amended the plan.

Democracy for Members

Weakley was a personable man, comfortable among the members. But he was also a man with an eye on the big picture. When Local 1245 was being established under his leadership, he thought long and hard about how the union should be structured.

“The old 1245 was a centralized thing, the executive board had all the power and that was it,” he once said. The CIO locals that he helped organize in the early 1940s, on the other hand, “were very democratic, but so democratic that we could hardly ever get a majority to agree on anything.”

Weakley decided to borrow elements from both traditions.

Like the old Local 1245, the new union had a strong business manager, someone with the exclusive authority to hire and fire staff and to represent the union



Members of Weakley’s staff in the 1950s and 1960s reunited at the union’s 50th anniversary celebration in Concord in 1991. From left: Ron Weakley, Spike Ensley, Ed James, Orv Owen, Larry Foss, L.L. Mitchell, Dan McPeak and Mert Walters.

in dealings with the employers.

From the CIO, he learned a strong commitment to democracy that he wasn’t prepared to surrender under any circumstances. He believed that a union must be “based on the fundamental policy of control that begins and ends with the membership of the local.”

More than 50 years later Local 1245’s structure still embodies this principle, with a democratically elected business manager, officers and executive board. Local units based throughout the union’s jurisdiction give members an opportunity to participate on a regular basis and to elect their own unit officers.

But the crown jewel in this democratic structure, and Weakley’s pride and joy, was the creation of an Advisory Council of rank and file members who are elected by region and who have the power to challenge Executive Board decisions.

By a majority vote, members of the Council “have the authority to order a referendum—it goes out to the entire membership to vote on it,” Weakley explained. “So that’s a pretty heavy hammer on centralized dictatorship.”

The Advisory Council rarely exercises this authority, but did so earlier this year when it challenged the Executive Board over two decisions concerning qualifications for serving on the Executive Board. The members, voting at over 100 unit meetings, sided with the Advisory Council on one decision, and with the Executive Board on the other.

While Weakley clearly loved the challenges of leading a progressive union, the job also took its toll. Once in the early 1950s, before the dues structure was fully worked out, Weakley had to cut staff.

“One of the members I had to lay off committed suicide,” he recalled. “That wasn’t very easy for me to take.”

Another committed suicide after leaving the staff. “I always felt a sort of personal responsibility for some of these things that happened to some of the guys. There’s been a lot of tragedy along the road,” said Weakley.

The stresses of union work probably contributed to several

divorces. Weakley’s own first marriage fell apart in the 1950s.

But Weakley, always resilient, married again in 1955, to Ethel Loesch. It was easy to see why they might end up together. Like her husband, Ethel Loesch Weakley came from fighting stock. Her mother, a Russian immigrant living in Connecticut, once sheltered a group of West Virginia union miners who were hiding from Pinkerton goons.

Ethel was still with Ron 52 years later, when he died on Oct. 11 at their home in Molokai, HI.

Weakley remained keenly interested in union and world affairs to his last days. In 2003, Local 1245 named its new headquarters in Weakley’s honor. At the grand opening, invited to make a few remarks, Weakley showed he hadn’t lost his combative edge.

“I note that another Ronald—Ronald Reagan—has his name on a federal building, and an airport, and now an aircraft carrier. That’s quite a distinction, very impressive. But there’s one thing that I have over him: he’ll never have his name on a union office building!”

But Weakley’s true legacy is not contained in a building. His legacy is the union itself, and the strength it continues to give working people to act together for the betterment of all.



Ron Weakley at the grand opening of Local 1245’s new headquarters in Vacaville, Ronald T. Weakley Hall, on Oct. 18, 2003.

For more on Local 1245 history, go to:
www.ibew1245.com/history-pages/historyPGEintro.html

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car and my boat and my house and you need to get me a raise so I can make my financial commitments,” Quadros says. “That used to bug the hell out of me.”

It bugged Quadros that newer employees didn’t understand the hard work that went into creating their contractual wages and benefits. And Weakley, he believes, was instrumental to it all.

“He knew how to handle himself, knew how to handle a big employer, knew how to handle his staff and his membership. He knew what was going on. He was real smart. To me that union would not have survived without him.”

Orv Owen remembers

A great man

As a young Sierra Pacific Power employee in 1952, Orville Owen hadn’t joined the union yet but thought he’d attend a meeting in Reno to check it out. That’s the day he met Ron Weakley, the day his life took a new direction.

“Ron came up from the Bay Area to talk about negotiations they were going

to start at Sierra Pacific Power. There were a few guys who were disgruntled,



but when Weakley and Owen in the 1990s

Ron got up to speak you could hear a pin drop,” Owen recalls.

“And I thought right then, ‘I want to meet this man and get with his program.’ I was really impressed with what he had to say about working people and the principles of the union. He always spoke right from the heart.”

Owen was appointed shop steward by Business Rep. Al Kaznowski and progressed from there to the grievance committee and then the negotiating committee.

Weakley’s top assistant, L. L. Mitchell, also made a big impression on Owen.

“Ron and Mitch were like left hand and right hand. They were the leaders. I was so impressed with the way Ron and Mitch handled the company at the bargaining table. They were unbeatable,” says Owen.

Owen, who describes his own family background as “mixed up”, says Weakley “became more of a father figure to me than anybody.” So high was his esteem for Weakley and Mitchell, Owen in 1962 named his newborn son Ronald Mitchell Owen.

News of Weakley’s death hit Owen hard.

“I loved the man,” he says.

“He was a great man. He and I hung out together. I listened to his stories about the labor movement. I just soaked it right up, and I’ve been that way ever since.”



Ron Weakley is received at the White House by President Lyndon B. Johnson, May 23, 1966.

SMUD member Jonathan Bik tests himself in triathlon

Across the finish line

By Eric Wolfe

Condemned by fate? Not Jonathan Bik. Bik lost his right leg above the knee in a fall while attending climbing school at the Sacramento Municipal Utility District in early 2005. It was a tough break for an aspiring lineman and the father of two young children.

But Bik clearly doesn't know the meaning of the term "tough break." Even before leaving the hospital, he decided he wanted to run. Bik wrestled fate to the ground and quickly sprinted on with his life.

In early September of this year, Bik was standing on the winners' podium at the world triathlon competition in Hamburg, Germany. On Oct. 27 he was greeted by the Local 1245 Advisory Council with a standing ovation for a returning hero.



Losing a leg is serious business. Bik makes no excuses for his accident.

After climbing a few years for a local telephone company, he was ready for a new challenge and found it at SMUD. He liked the idea of "being a lineman and doing something that people would be scared to do."

During climbing school, he had to build a double crossarm. On the way down the pole, his right foot cut out. He fell about 35 feet, dislocating his right leg and breaking the femoral artery.

Doctors' efforts to save the leg were taxing and ultimately futile. The amputation "was almost a relief," Bik says.

Three months later he was fitted for a prosthetic leg. Two months after that he was back at SMUD—on light duty in the meter shop. By September, after passing the electrical test, he landed the job on a permanent basis.

Bik credits Local 1245 Business Rep. Sam Glero and SMUD Director Phil West for the smooth transition back to the workplace.

"They were steering me toward this job because they knew it would be a good fit for me physically," says Bik, who is invariably generous in his praise for the people who have helped him along the way. "The shop is a very cool environment to work in."

But resting on his laurels isn't what makes Jonathan Bik tick. In the hospital he had dreamed of running. Now he was determined to test himself against challenges beyond securing his new job and a measure of stability for his young family.

Bik discovered you don't walk into the neighborhood pharmacy and pick up a prosthetic limb built for speed. You contact Hanger Prosthetics and Orthotics, which designs "comfort flex" systems for people who aim high.

"The socket fits over the residual limb," says Bik. "They built that socket from scratch. It's a pretty cool process. They fit me with a knee mechanism and foot that attaches to that."

The new limb put Bik on the starting line for his next challenge: becoming a triathlete.

Feature yourself doing this: swimming for nearly a mile, hopping on a bike and pedaling nearly 25 miles, then tossing aside your bike and running 6.2 miles. That's the challenge of the triathlon.

Bik trained hard.

"I had to do four bikes a week, three runs, and two swims a week."

In all, Bik worked out six days out of every seven.

"That's a lot to cram into a week with work and kids and everything else," he readily confesses.

Competing with other physically-challenged triathletes in the national championship in New York in July, Bik placed fourth among six athletes in the "above knee" class. His time, 3 hours and 17 minutes, qualified him for the national team representing the United States in world competition in Hamburg, Germany.

SMUD had already helped pay for his comfort-flex prosthesis. Now SMUD employees rallied to the cause. A hat started going around.

"People would give \$10 here, \$20 there. Hundreds of people gave money to help me—90% of them I've probably not even met before," says Bik. But he knows the volunteer campaign to send him to Germany wouldn't have been possible without SMUD's Ken Habel, Mike Paulsen, and Sue Colaw.

Local 1245 pitched in with a donation of \$500, and on-going encourage-



When Bik thanked the Executive Board for the union's contribution to his trip to the Hamburg Olympics, the appreciation seemed to be flowing both ways.

ment from Business Rep. Sam Glero.

The whole enterprise nearly crashed at the airport, Bik recalls.

"I was dragging a bike, a suitcase, another bag I checked, and a carry-on. It was too much, carrying all that weight."

He ended up with blisters on his leg—just three days before the event.

But he used crutches for a day, the blisters abated, and the race ended up being "pain free."

As many as 100,000 people watched him run in New York. He believes it was triple that number in Germany.

Bik crossed the finish line at a personal-best time of 3 hours and 5 minutes. The Americans swept the top three spots in their class.

Bik doesn't disguise his pride in representing his country well. But he also identifies with his rivals from France, Canada and Mexico.

"I think we all respect each other because we know how much work goes into it, and we know how many times we've fallen and had to go back and get surgeries, but still get out there."

"At times I feel too old to be doing this stuff. I feel like I'm away from my family doing things that maybe a 22-year-old should be doing," says Bik, who is 33. His girls are now 6 and 4.

"But I didn't get to choose when this happened in my life. If I was 45 when this happened, I've got to think that I would still be challenging myself."

He doesn't see the athletic competition as his only challenge. Maybe not even the main one.

"I'm challenging myself as a husband, as a dad, and as an employee, and I think I'm doing better than I was before I was hurt."

On October 27, Bik appeared before the Local 1245 Advisory Council to share his story and offer his gratitude for the union's support.

"I wasn't even in the union yet—I was a pre-apprentice. But (Sam Glero) took me on like I was a dues-paying member."

Following his remarks, Advisory Council members crowded around to have their photo taken with Bik—the man who would accept no fate other than one of his own choosing. And Jonathan Bik has chosen to perform to the maximum of his ability in every sphere of his life.

By the end of his appearance at IBEW's Weakley Hall, it was clear that this union member had more than repaid the Council's cash contribution with a currency far more precious: a contagious spirit for living life to the fullest.



Bik credits Sam Glero, left, for supporting his Olympic ambition. Bik describes union activist Katharine Reeves, right, as a "special friend." Reeves said her daughter, also a runner, has been inspired by Bik's accomplishments.



The Advisory Council honors Bik with a victory salute.



BARGAINING

Paradise ID agency shop

Members of Local 1245 at Paradise Irrigation District voted 21-1 for an agency shop provision in the labor agreement. Agency shop assures that all employees covered by the collective bargaining agreement pay their fair share for union representation.

First agreement at Shingletown/Colusa

Members of Local 1245 employed by Frontier Communications in Shingletown and Colusa, Ca. ratified a first agreement on Oct. 1.

This first agreement provides these

members with union work rules, grievance procedure and binding arbitration.

Employees will receive an average of \$2600 each, partly as a general wage increase retroactive to March 1, 2007 and partly to settle an Unfair Labor Practice filed by the union.

Representing the union in negotiations were Glenn Thompson from Shingletown and Don Carmen from Colusa, along with Senior Business Rep. Ray Thomas.

Retirement improved at City of Willits

Local 1245 members at the City of Willits ratified a new three-year agreement that improves retirement and increases wages.

The agreement provides a retirement formula of 2.7% at age 55 effective as soon as practicable under regulations of the Public Employee Retirement Systems (PERS). If the City's employer PERS contribution increases following establishment of the new employer rate at the 2.7%-at-55 formula, employees will "pay" up to 1% of the increased employer PERS rates.

Effective July 1, 2008 the City and



Rich Cowart

employees will share the cost of increases to medical premiums, with the city paying 75% of the increase and employees paying 25%.

Wage increases of 3% will apply on July 1, 2008 and on the same date in 2009.

Serving on the union's negotiating committee were J.C. England, Joe Mondo, Business Rep Rich Cowart and Assistant Business Manager Dennis Seyfer.

Mt. Wheeler medical plan

Members of Local 1245 at Mount Wheeler voted 22-2 to support adoption of an HRA medical plan.

Employees will pay 25% of medical premiums, with an out-of-pocket annual maximum of \$1500 for an individual and \$3000 for family coverage.

The employer will put \$1500/\$3000 in the HRA account at the beginning of each year. Any money not used by the employee for medical expenses can be used the following year.

After a five-year vesting period, the employee can use all remaining money at retirement or termination for medical expenses.

Unit Changes

Unit 3513, Grass Valley, now meets at Miner Moe's, 716 Freeman Lane, Suite C, Grass Valley, CA. The new start time for the meeting is 5:00 pm.

Phil Carter, Business Rep.

Unit 1115, Los Banos, now meets at Me-N-Ed's Pizza, 2160 E. Pacheco, Suite "A", in Los Banos, Ca.

Mike Grill, Business Rep.

APPOINTMENTS

TURLOCK IRRIGATION DISTRICT

Negotiating Committee

Richard Lane
Ken Gross
Aaron Baker
Rick Brenes

CITY OF LODI

Negotiating Committee

Richard Willett
John Vander Jack
Rod Brown

SIERRA PACIFIC POWER CO.

Negotiating Committee

Rick Davis
Roger Kelly

ASPLUNDH TREE

Negotiating Committee

Dale Evenson
Sergio Munoz

DAVEY TREE

Negotiating Committee

Jose Torres
Ray Hayes
Peter Ely

TREES, INC.

Negotiating Committee

Octavio Perez
Juan Amezcual

UTILITY TREE

Negotiating Committee

Robert "Casey" Burtch

CONFERENCES AND CONVENTIONS

Coalition of Labor Union Women

Biennial Convention

Dorothy Fortier
Chris Habecker
Anna Bayless-Martinez

IBEW Safety Caucus & Fall Labor Division Meeting

Al White
Michael Gomes
Larry Pierce

IBEW Nuclear Conference

Dan Lockwood
Patrick Duffy
Gary Petersen
John Holloway

International Labor Communication Association Convention

Eric Wolfe

California Alliance for Retired Americans Annual Convention

Bill Wallace

CALENDAR

- Nov. 14:** Retirees Club, Vacaville, CA
- Dec. 3:** Retirees Club, Santa Rosa, CA
- Dec. 3:** Retirees Club, Merced, CA
- Dec. 5:** Retirees Club, San Jose, CA
- Dec. 12:** Retirees Club, Vacaville, CA
- Dec. 13:** Retirees Club, Dublin, CA
- Jan. TBA:** Retirees Club, Merced, CA
- Jan. 8:** Retirees Club, Santa Rosa, CA
- Jan. 3:** Retirees Club, San Jose, CA
- Jan. 9:** Retirees Club, Vacaville, CA
- Jan. 10:** Retirees Club, Dublin, CA
- Feb. 1-Mar. 1:** Retirement Planning Seminars (See schedule, Page 8)



Letters to the Editor

Got something to share with your fellow union members? Send signed letters to: Utility Reporter Letters, IBEW 1245, POB 2547, Vacaville, CA 95696. Please note that we cannot print personal attacks or letters dealing with union politics. Opinions expressed in "Letters" are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IBEW Local 1245.

High regard for Weakley

Editor's note: This letter was received just prior to the death of union founder Ron Weakley.

To the editor:

As a daughter of the late Tom Riley, member of Local 1245, I read your conversation with Ron Weakley in the September-October issue of Utility Reporter with a great deal of interest and considerable nostalgia.

My father was a dear friend of many years standing of Mr. Weakley and of Don Hardie, who was also mentioned in

the article. It brought back memories of my father's loyalty to Local 1245 and the many hours he devoted to it. You may be pleased to know that he taught his daughters to never cross a picket line, and we never have!

My father had such a high regard for Mr. Weakley and considered him one of the smartest men he had ever met. He was honored to call him a friend.

Thank you for a great article. I always read the Reporter in honor of my father.

Barbara Riley, Concord, CA



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Our Web Site can be viewed at www.IBEW1245.com.

Our phone number is (707) 452-2700.



Seminars will be available to I.B.E.W. / P.G.&E. employees age 40 and older and those on LTD. Your spouse or significant other is also welcome to attend. These seminars are provided to you free of charge. Please call Merrill Lynch in Walnut Creek, CA at 800-234-3858 and ask for Yi Seeman if you have any questions.



I.B.E.W. Local 1245 and Merrill Lynch Present:

Retirement Planning Seminars

Bakersfield

Friday, February 1st
6:30 PM to 8:00 PM
Presenter: Dave Brantley
Doubletree Hotel
3100 Camino Del Rio Ct.
Bakersfield, CA

Fresno

Saturday, February 2nd
9:00 AM to 10:30 AM
Presenter: Dave Brantley
Piccadilly Inn
2305 W. Shaw Ave.
Fresno, CA

Concord

Saturday, February 2nd
9:30 AM to 11:00 AM
Presenter: Bob Gallo
Concord Hilton
1970 Diamond Blvd.
Concord, CA

Oakland

Tuesday, February 5th
6:30 PM to 8:00 PM
Presenter: Dave Brantley
Hilton Oakland Airport
One Hegenberger Rd.
Oakland, CA

San Jose

Saturday, February 9th
9:00 AM to 10:30 AM
Presenter: Dave Brantley
Hilton San Jose
300 Almaden Blvd.
San Jose, CA

Sacramento

Saturday, February 9th
9:30 AM to 11:00 AM
Presenter: Bob Gallo
Holiday Inn
300 J. Street
Sacramento, CA

Foster City

Tuesday, February 12th
6:30 PM to 8:00 PM
Presenter: Dave Brantley
Crowne Plaza
1221 Chess Drive
Foster City, CA

Monterey

Thursday, February 21st
6:30 PM to 8:00 PM
Presenter: Dave Brantley
Hyatt Regency
One Golf Course Dr.
Monterey, CA

Redding

Saturday, February 23rd
9:00 AM to 10:30 AM
Presenter: Bob Gallo
Best Western
2300 Hilltop Dr.
Redding, CA

Chico

Saturday, February 23rd
1:00 PM to 2:30 PM
Presenter: Bob Gallo
Holiday Inn
685 Manzanita Ct.
Chico, CA

San Luis Obispo

Saturday, February 23rd
9:00 AM to 10:30 AM
Presenter: Dave Brantley
Madonna Inn
100 Madonna Road
San Luis Obispo, CA

Stockton

Tuesday, February 26th
7:00 PM to 8:30 PM
Presenter: Bob Gallo
Stockton Grand Hotel
2323 Grand Canal Blvd.
Stockton, CA

Ukiah

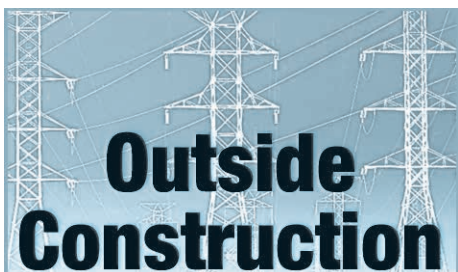
Friday, February 29th
7:00 PM to 8:30 PM
Presenter: Bob Gallo
Holiday Inn - Ukiah
1720 N. State Street
Ukiah, CA

Santa Rosa

Saturday, March 1st
9:30 AM to 11:00 AM
Presenter: Bob Gallo
Hilton - Santa Rosa
3555 Round Barn Blvd.
Santa Rosa, CA

Eureka

Saturday, March 1st
9:00 AM to 10:30 AM
Presenter: Dave Brantley
Red Lion Inn
1919 Fourth Street
Eureka, CA



Work outlook good for 2007, 2008

By Ron Cochran



Ron Cochran

Work outlook is good for the rest of 2007 and all of 2008. Currently we have three small transmission projects started on three different utilities' properties. Several substations projects are in progress and several more starting soon.

Par Electric is asking for about 50 members in the next three weeks. Black and Vetch is asking for about 100 members starting mid January. The SMUD work is holding steady for now. SPP contract work seems to be slow at this time. We have not seen any PG&E pole replacement packages yet.

Down south in Local 47 there are four large transmission projects planned. Two of the projects should be starting immediately. We are getting calls from New York and British Columbia looking for Line workers.

The Books as of October 15, 2007

Lineman 1: 10
 Lineman 2: 13
 Lineman 3: 0
 Lineman 4: 6
 Groundman 1: 19
 Groundman 2: 7
 Groundman 3: 17
 Groundman 4: 37
 Equipment Specialist 1: 5
 Equipment Specialist 2: 5
 Equipment Specialist 3: 4
 Cable Splicer 1: 1
 Cable Splicer 2: 2
 Cable Splicer 3: 1

Calls from October 1, to October 15, 2007

Journeyman. Linemen: 18
 Apprentice Linemen: 16
 Cable Splicer: 0
 Equipment Specialist: 5
 Groundman: 3
 Underground: 0
 Total calls for August: 35
 Total calls for September: 57
 Total calls to October 15: 42

Classes

The JATC held a crane certification class Oct. 8-12 at Weakley Hall in Vacaville. There were 26 students at the class.

Written tests were on the 12th and the practical tests will be scheduled at a later date.

A Personal Protective Grounding Class was held Oct. 24 at the Northern Satellite Training Facility, Sacramento, CA. The class was presented by California-Nevada J.A.T.C. Power Lineman Apprenticeship.

The November Unit Meeting has been moved to Saturday, Nov. 3. Meeting starts at 9:00 a.m. followed by Construction Organizing Members Education Training Class 10:30. Lunch provided at noon. We will finish COMET training after lunch.

Outside Line members and staff are invited to attend a First Aid/CPR training session hosted by the California-Nevada JATC. The eight-hour class will be held at Weakley Hall in Vacaville beginning at 9:00 a.m.

Injured Workers Fund Update

A summary of the basic provisions of the IBEW Local 1245 Injured Workers Plan can be viewed on the Local 1245 website through November at www.ibew1245.com/news-items/OL_

Report_10-31-07.htm The plan is designed to provide basic disability and death benefits in the event you are injured (and are unable to work) or die due to a work-related injury. Plan provisions mentioned in the on-line summary are subject to change. The Outside Line Unit made a motion at the Oct. 10 unit meeting to donate the unit's 2007 social fund of \$100 to the Injured Workers Fund. This was the first deposit into the Injured Workers Trust Fund.

Cal-Nev JATC Report

We currently have 326 outside line apprentices registered in our JATC program: 1 apprentice traveling out of our jurisdiction for work; 72 apprentices are working out of Local 1245; 220 are working out of Local 47; 7 are working out of Local 396; 28 are off of work (5 are due to leave of absence, 3 are due to disability).

We have graduated 40 apprentices this year to journeyman lineman. We have indentured 37 apprentices into the program.

We have 32 traffic signal maintenance apprentices registered—7 are working for Republic Electric in Local 1245's

jurisdiction; 25 are working for Republic Electric in Local 47's jurisdiction.

Hiring Hall

We are working to fix a glitch in the data base used to dispatch PG&E hiring hall employees to their chosen locations.

We are working on ideas to modify the sign-up list and the way we re-sign members after their job is complete. We are also working on a way to have a re-sign month to month to keep the list updated to only members that want to work.

There are still open Lineman positions at various locations available.

Policy 22 Update; Unit Examining Committee

Twenty linemen have applied for and been tested through Policy 22 so far in 2007. Two Linemen have yet to complete their pole top rescue. Applicants can be granted Journeyman Status by time & experience or through testing. All applicants will complete a pole top rescue as part of the entire practical testing portion of the test.

Ron Cochran is Assistant Business Manager, Local 1245

Line Clearance Tree Trimmers

Negotiations set for eight tree contracts

Negotiations for new IBEW labor agreements with line clearance tree trimming and vegetation control contractors will begin in November.

Eight signatory contractors have labor agreements that expire at the end of the year: Davey Tree Surgery Company, Davey Tree at Turlock Irrigation District, Utility Tree Service, Inc., Asplundh Tree Expert Co., Trees, Inc., Mountain Firewood Enterprises, Inc., UPE Resources, Inc. and Windy Tree Service, Inc.

The eight labor agreements expiring at the end of the year cover approximately 1000 line clearance tree trimmer and vegetation control employees.

Davey Tree Surgery, Asplundh and Utility have decided to commence negotiations as a single negotiating committee, according to Local 1245 Senior Business Rep. Ray Thomas, who will lead the union's negotiating effort. Local 1245 offered 21 dates for conducting negotiations, but these companies have only offered four so far: Nov. 20 and 30, and Dec. 4 and 5.

Negotiations will begin on Nov. 20 in San Francisco. The talks will then move

to Weakley Hall in Vacaville.

Representing the unionized workforce at the bargaining table will be: Peter Ely, Roy Hayes and Jose Torres of Davey Tree Surgery Co.; Sergio Munoz and Dale Evenson of Asplundh Tree Expert Co.; Octavio Perez and Juan Amezcua of Trees, Inc.; and Robert "Casey" Burtch of Utility Tree Service, Inc.

"Our committee has met and prioritized membership proposals," said Thomas.

Negociaciones programadas para ocho contratos de poda de árboles.

Las negociaciones para los nuevos contratos de IBEW con los contratistas de limpieza de líneas eléctricas y control de la vegetación comenzarán en noviembre.

Ocho contratistas firmantes tienen convenios laborales que expiran al final del año: Davey Tree Surgery Company, Davey Tree en el distrito de riego de Turlock, Utility Tree Service, Inc., Asplundh Tree Expert Co., Trees, Inc., Mountain Firewood Enterprises, Inc., UPE Resources, Inc. y Windy Tree Service, Inc.

Los ocho convenios laborales que expiran al final del año cubren aproximadamente 1000 empleados de poda de árboles y de control de la vegetación.

Davey Tree Surgery, Asplundh y Utility han decidido comenzar negociaciones como un solo comité negociador, según el Representante General de Negocios del Local 1245, Sr. Ray Thomas, que dirigirá el esfuerzo de negociaciones del Sindicato. El Local 1245 ha ofrecido un total de 21 fechas para llevar a cabo las negociaciones, pero estas compañías han ofrecido sólo cuatro fechas hasta ahora: Nov. 20 y 30 y Dic. 4 y 5.

Las negociaciones comenzarán el 20 de noviembre en San Francisco. Las reuniones se moverán entonces a Weakley Hall en Vacaville.

Representando las fuerzas del Sindicato en la mesa de negociaciones estarán: Peter Ely, Roy Hayes y José Torres de Davey Tree Surgery Co., Sergio Muñoz y Dale Evenson de Asplundh Tree Expert Co.; Octavio Pérez y Juan Amezcua de Trees, Inc.; y Robert "Casey" Burtch de Utility Tree Service, Inc.

"Nuestro comité se ha reunido y ha priorizado las propuestas de nuestros miembros", dijo el Sr. Thomas.

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HEAVY LIFT



IRH/ABN crew moves a transformer that is about to be cut up for salvage.

Renovations at PG&E's East Shore Substation in Hayward took some heavy lifting on the part of contractor IRH/ABN.

The Salt Lake City-based contractor, working under a project agreement with Local 1245, dismantled a tower structure, dismantled two transformers and relocated a third.

"This kind of demolition only takes about three days. It used to take a lot longer," says Local 1245 Assistant Business Manager Ron Cochran. The whole job was completed within a week.

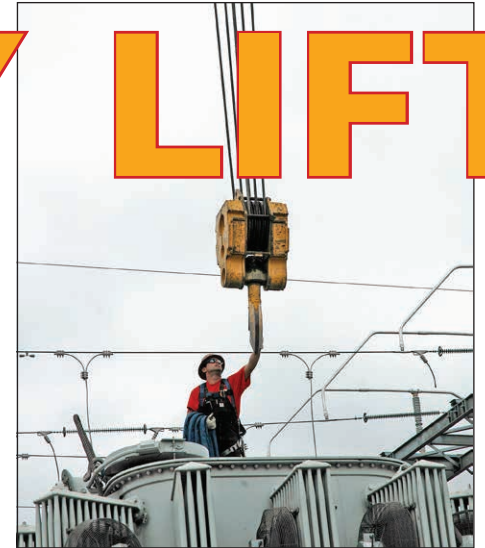
The muscle is provided in part by 100-ton hydraulic crane, but the demolition and salvage operation requires more than brute force. The steel laminated transformer core is high-dollar material, probably worth more as salvage than the transformer's original cost.

Dismantling the tower structure is a precision operation.

"They have to disassemble the nut-bolt system, with a wrench on one end and an impact gun on the other," says Jimmy Love of IRH/ABN.

Removing a beam is always a two-man job, with one on controls to position the lift and one to perform the extraction. Both men are responsible for rigging—hooking up the piece to be removed.

The crane operator, watching from below, locates the cable ends in close proximity to the bucket so that the crew in the air can hook up the beam to be extracted. Keeping the right amount of



Glen Thompson, IRH/ABN foreman, rigging a transformer so that it can be lifted.

tension on the cable is critical to the safety of the operation.

"The crane operator knows when to take up slack so there is slight tension on (the cable), so as soon as the bolts are removed from the beam it will still be suspended in close proximity to where it was," explains Love. "You don't want any movement."



Jimmy Love

A tag line enables crew members in the bucket to have a bit of manual control over the beam after it's been hooked up. When the beam is about to be lowered, they drop the tag line so that crew members on the ground can exert some control as the beam comes down.

"It's real important to shackle correctly so that the weight of the I-beam does not cut the cable," Love notes. "Any cut cable can't be used."

The IRH/ABN operation, performed under a project agreement with the union, could be a model for future substation work at PG&E.



PG&E Electric Tech Gary Henry, left, and Working Foreman B Jim Bradley share a lighter moment at the East Shore Substation.



A wrench is used in dismantling part of the tower structure.



Using a torch to cut a beam from the tower structure so that it can be removed.



IRH/ABN employee is grinding smooth the surface where the transformer was cut loose from the pad.



After being cut free from the tower, the “bridge” is carefully lowered to the ground.



The transformer is being relocated so IRH/ABN can cut it up for salvage.

Photos by Eric Wolfe

New Apprentice

First-year Apprentice Electrician Nickey Dillard lent a hand during the transformer replacement at the East Shore substation, pulling old dead wire among other tasks.

Hired in January, Dillard began her two-year apprenticeship in mid-summer. Prior to coming to PG&E she was doing office work but her sights were set higher.

“I wanted to get into construction,” she explains, and PG&E provided that

opportunity. She was informed of the apprenticeship program when she was hired and it didn’t take her long to seize the opportunity.

When she spoke with the Utility Reporter in early fall she was getting ready for the electricity course, part of the apprentice curriculum. And she wasn’t having any doubts about the path she has chosen.

“I’m not going anywhere,” she says. “This has more than doubled my income. I’m very grateful to be part of PG&E.”



First-year Apprentice Electrician Nickey Dillard.



PG&E President Bill Morrow, standing left, listens to CSR Richard Vasquez stress the importance of moving beyond “flavor of the month” slogans when undertaking change. From left: Morrow, Supervisor Kelly Gorden (now an Analyst), Diane Tatu, Gracie Munez, Cecelia de la Torre, Supervisor Ina German, Richard Vasquez, Karen Mertz, Debbie Mazzanti, Dorothy Fortier, and Ruth Bailey.

Employee empowerment key to customer satisfaction

Contact Center of the Future

Pacific Gas & Electric is looking to its employees for help in transforming company call centers into high functioning “Contact Centers of the Future.”

The joint effort by company and union to rethink this crucial front-line work reflects renewed company interest in transforming the rhetoric of customer satisfaction into the reality of satisfied customers.

In November the group was putting the finishing touches on recommendations to be reviewed in December by company and union leadership. Ideas have ranged from improving efficiency, to targeted consolidation, to resolving customer inquiries on a “first call” basis through enhanced training for customer service representatives.

PG&E President and CEO Bill Morrow, attending a preliminary roll-out of the committee’s findings in early October, praised the group “for bringing the people who actually do the work to the table” to deal with the issue.

The issue is satisfied customers. While PG&E has seen some recent improvement in ratings that compare its performance to other utilities, the company still falls short of its very ambitious goals.

Lasting Impressions

PG&E’s call centers are a strategic concern for the company. For many members of the public, their first contact with the utility is the customer service representative. It’s a crucial moment, when lasting impressions are made.

In the utility industry today, making a good impression involves a lot more than just being polite or referring the customer to another employee who might know the answer. The most successful customer contact is one that resolves the

customer’s issue right on the spot.

You can call it “one stop shopping” or “first call satisfaction,” but no matter what slogan you use, in the end you’re talking about the flesh and blood people who take the calls. They can resolve customer problems only to the extent that they are given the training to do so.

Richard Vasquez, a Customer Service Rep in San Jose and 5-year member of IBEW, told Morrow that employees have seen many new ideas and slogans through the years. “Too often it’s the flavor of the month.” The important thing, Vasquez said, is “following through with what is being said.”

“We would like to see the employees get the tools they need to make the customers happy,” Assistant Business Manager Dorothy Fortier added.

Morrow acknowledged that the role of customer service rep has been viewed in our society as an “entry point,” where no formal education is required and employees are sometimes accorded little respect. Morrow recalled one phone center he visited where employees “had to put out a frog (toy) to indicate they needed a bathroom break.”

He contrasted that view of customer service reps with the view held in Japan. “In Japan,” Morrow said, “supervisors put CSRs almost on a pedestal” because they are the link to the customer.

“No Boundaries”

PG&E has made it clear through the work of this joint committee that it wants real participation from its customer service reps in shaping the Contact Center of the Future.

“We’ve given this team no boundaries and they’ve taken advantage of it in several positive ways,” said Phil Balistreri, Contact Center Director.

Members of the committee “came

together as strangers,” noted Local 1245 Business Representative Arlene Edwards, but were able to work together to address this issue:

“How do you find an operating model where employees want to come to work, and how do you provide them the tools to take care of the customer?”

To gain some perspective, members of the joint committee visited several call centers operated by other companies in California and Nevada. They looked at everything from employee training opportunities, to facility layout, to expanding the use of reader boards for safety, training, rewards and recognition—not just call statistics.

Culture of Service

Ideally, these things add up to a “culture of service,” and the committee spent a fair amount of time trying to describe what such a culture looks like, based on practices they observed at some of the facilities they visited.

“It’s being proud of who you are, looking at the business as a whole but also at the employees who do the work,” said Vasquez.

At the more successful centers, employees “really believed in the message that was being communicated—it wasn’t just words on the wall,” said Cecelia de la Torre, a customer service rep in Stockton and IBEW Local 1245 Treasurer.

Local 1245 Business Rep. Debbie Mazzanti noted that corporate terminology sometimes works at cross purposes with employee empowerment.

“It’s when you have to get employees to “buy in” to something that you have a problem,” she said, because it implies that you’re trying to sell somebody something that’s already been decided rather than trying to develop a model together that everyone can believe in.

The committee is schedule to meet a final time in San Ramon on Nov. 8, ending “Phase 1” of the project. Its recommendations will go to a Steering Committee that includes Business Manager Tom Dalzell on Dec. 17.

Edwards believes the committee will be able to identify “quick wins” that can be implemented through policy changes, such as emphasizing the reso-



Assistant Business Manager Dorothy Fortier listens as Ruth Bailey, CSR-Sacramento, discusses the importance of attracting and hiring the right people.



Karen Mertz, Senior Service Rep, San Jose



Cecelia de la Torre, CSR, Stockton

lution of problems on the first call rather than creating arbitrary time limits for completing a call whether the customer’s problem is solved or not.

Other changes could involve the consolidation of facilities, which would raise significant budget issues for company management.

But even if the company does not incorporate all of the joint committee’s ideas into its final plan of action, Edwards believes the exercise has been a valuable one.

“They solicited input, they’re trying to actually listen to what the bargaining unit members are saying. And I think they do want to act on most of those things, but the budget could change a lot of it or put it on hold,” she said.

In any case, change is in the air for union members at PG&E’s contact centers. In phase two of the project, teams of committee members will visit PG&E’s own call facilities to engage in dialog with employees and discuss policy changes on the horizon.

“We’ll be looking for indications the committee is heading in the right direction, or if there are things that need to be looked at that this committee hasn’t seen,” Edwards said.



Gracie Munez, part-time CSR, language line, Fresno



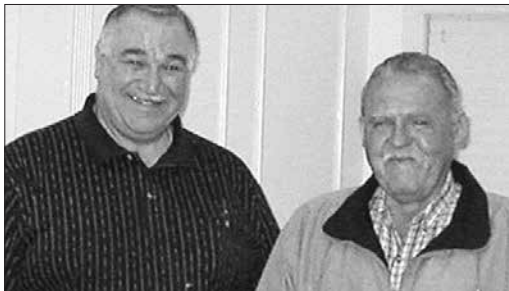
At right, Supervisor Kelly Gorden, left, and Diane Tatu, CSR-Records, Stockton

SERVICE AWARDS



Merced, California

March 23, 2007



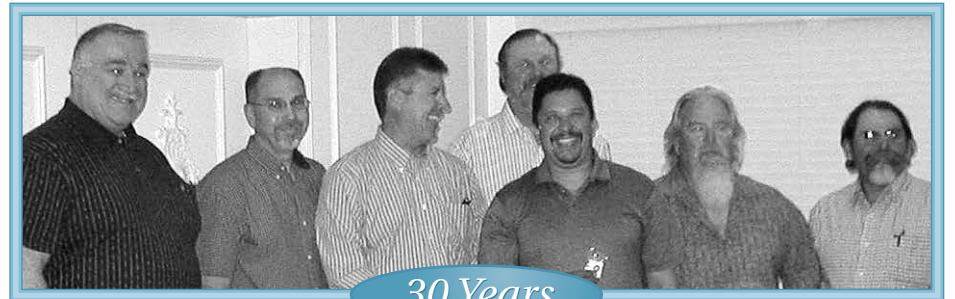
Tom Hunt, right, receives 40-year award from Assistant Business Manager Bob Choate.



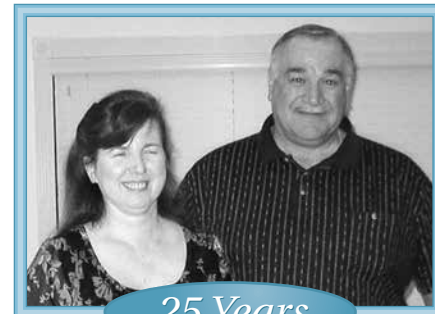
Ronald Erskine receives a special award.



35 Years



30 Years



25 Years

THE HONOREES

65 Years

Clifford Smith

40 Years

James Duncan
Tom Hunt
B. B. Lagan

35 Years

Michael Belloli
Edward Deldotto

Robert Delgado

Michael Dessauer
Otha Harris
Kenneth D. Hill
Geraldine Hinson
Steve Landers
Louis Padilla, Jr.
John Rhoades
Manuel Romero
Larry Waggerman
Robert C Williamson

30 Years

Johnny Carrasco, Jr

Antonio Gutierrez

Brian Haygood
Arthur Mendes
James Petersen
Michael Sakaguchi
Dennis Slocum
Robert Telles
Loren Unruh
Jose Urena

25 Years

Mike Jameson
Catherine Wilson-Blackmon

San Luis Obispo, CA

April 28, 2007

THE HONOREES

40 Years

J H Hoffman
Alfred Moore

35 Years

L J Alves
James Boatman
Frank Dalcerra
Lazaro Estrada
R J Fiscalini
Wesley Nail, Jr
Raymond Rademacher
Don Wilson

30 Years

Richard Angel
Johnny Apodaca, Jr.
Samuel Bailey
Douglas Cates
Steven Ebel
John Elder

Brenda Friesen

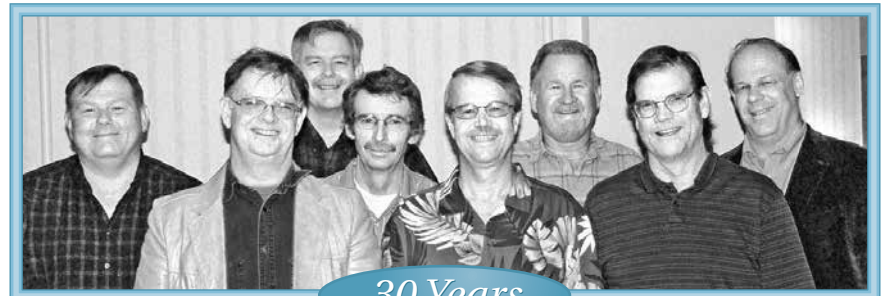
Gary Giese
Mark Hedlund
C W Kendrick
Randall Kern
Maryann Koens
Greg Lugo
Benjamin Luna
Gary Martin
Gregory Morasca
Alfred Nunez
Doug Paslay
Bill Pope
Harmon Rider
Lorene Rodriguez
Craig Smith
Phillip Sumner
Dennis Van Meter
Rich Vandeneikhof
Hector Wilson
Robert Wilson III

25 Years

Kim Biondo
Stephen Burket
James Ewart
Mavlynn Goble
Patrick Goodyear
Irene Greenelsh
Gary Hartig
James Haynie
Rick Jaime
Donald Johnson
James Knight
Barbara Larcom
Cathleen Mazzacavallo
John Mercurio
Chris Rademacher
Sandra A. Smith
Gregory Sturgeon
Robert Wathen
Thomas Weaver
Martin Wefald
Michael Whiting



Honoring Wesley Nail, left, for 35 years of service are Business Reps. Dan Lockwood, middle, and Mike Haentjens.



30 Years



25 Years



Hard hat saves the day

By Art Torres

How many of us complain when we are required to wear our hard hats?



Art Torres

They are cumbersome, hot, and cold, they fall off. All in all they are at times a pain to wear. But think of the pain if we weren't wearing one when we needed to.

Our heads are not designed to take much trauma. At SMUD we have a troubleman by the name of Ed Hall who is very grateful for having worn his hard hat. There was a fault on an underground line. He re-closed a 65 amp Universal feral type fused disconnect on an underground riser.

Ed was in his one-man bucket. He was using a 16-foot. extendo hot stick to close the disconnect. Upon closing the disconnect the fuse failed. From the bottom of the fuse holder a piece of lead flew out striking the cross arm, ricocheting off the crossarm and striking Ed's hardhat.

Let's not forget that Ed was roughly 14 feet from the disconnect. The piece of lead was flying with enough energy to penetrate the hardhat and lodge itself in Ed's scalp. The piece of lead broke the skin on his head and obviously left a sizeable welt. If Ed had not been wear-

ing his hard hat the injury would most likely have been much more serious. His hard hat saved the day.

How many of us check the integrity of our hard hats? They are hopefully worn everyday, exposed to the elements, thrown around. Do we ever clean our hard hats? Do we ever test the integrity of our hard hats?

There is a test we can perform on hard hats to test their resiliency. Try folding the hat in half. If it springs back to its original shape chances are it's good. If it stays folded get rid of it for a new one.

Has your hard hat lost its luster, that new hard hat look? Change it for a new one. Most hard hats have a life expectancy of about 5 years. Check with your tool room or whoever issues the hard hats. Ask them for information.

For those of you that work around energized equipment make sure your hard hat has the appropriate stickers inside stating that this PPE is designed for the intended usage.

Remember: using the appropriate hard hat could save your day.

Being aware

By Art Torres

A basic technique to troubleshooting is a visual inspection of whatever we're working on.

Upon entering an energized substation, a confined space, opening the door on a transformer, a breaker cabinet, it's vitally important to be aware of your surroundings. Look for potential hazards.

Danger lurks around every corner. Don't walk around with blinders on like a horse pulling a wagon. Don't ever assume that your environment is warm and fuzzy.

This not only pertains to work but also our environment in our personal lives. Driving, walking through the parking lot

at the mall, especially at night. Walking past some folks that look like trouble.

One of my fellow co-workers was seriously injured during a home invasion. There's a knock at the door, next thing he knows he's fighting for his life. It's questionable whether this incident could have been avoided, but it's an ugly example that a life-altering event could happen to anyone at any time. In a matter of minutes this man's life has changed forever.

It's impractical to say that we can be prepared for every possible situation at every possible moment, but one thing for sure, the more we are prepared the better our chances of not being a victim of a situation because we were not aware.

Harness safety

By Art Torres

Falls are the number one cause of fatalities in the construction industry. Of the 1224 deaths in construction in 2004, 441 (36%) were from falls. Many thousands more are injured each year in falls.

These are serious statistics for the American worker. Federal OSHA and Cal-OSHA have implemented statutes to help reduce these injuries.

That brings us face to face with another problem, which occurs when an individual falls while wearing a fall restraint harness. Yes, the harness may keep the worker from impacting the ground, but it leaves the worker suspended. This new problem we face is called suspension trauma or orthostatic intolerance.

Following a fall, a worker may remain suspended in a harness. The sustained immobility may lead to a state of unconsciousness. Depending on the length of time the suspended worker is unconscious/immobile and the level of venous pooling, the resulting orthostatic intolerance may lead to death.

Such fatalities are sometimes referred to as "harness-induced pathology or "suspension trauma."

Unconscious/immobile workers suspended in their harness will not be able to move their legs and will not fall into a horizontal position, as they would if they fainted while standing. During the static upright position, venous pooling is likely to occur and cause orthostatic intolerance, especially if the suspended worker is left in place for some time.

Venous pooling and orthostatic intolerance can be exacerbated by other circumstances related to the fall. For example: shock or the experience of the event that caused the fall, other injuries, the fit/positioning of the harness, the environmental conditions, and the worker's psychological state. All of these may increase the onset and severity of the pooling and orthostatic intolerance and could result in serious or fatal injury, as the brain, kidneys and other organs are deprived of oxygen.

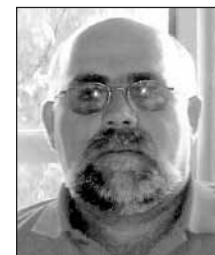
The amount of time spent in this position, with the legs below the heart, affects the manner in which the worker should be rescued. Moving the worker quickly into a horizontal position, a natural reaction, is likely to cause a large

continued on page 15

Safety Credit

By Keith Hopp

It doesn't matter how much time you've spent on the job—three months or 30 years: There's no such thing as a safety credit when you get hurt on the job. Injured is injured.



Keith Hopp

Don't assume you're going to get a safety credit when it comes to discipline, either. No matter how much accident-free service you have accumulated, you'll be getting a close look when you're injured on the job. Discipline is discipline, and sometimes it's easier to pin the blame on the employee than to look for deeper causes, such as faulty procedures.

In a sense, long years of accident-free service is a good reason to be even more careful on the job. For one thing, it's tempting to become complacent when you've dodged the bullet for so long. For another, every additional day you work creates new opportunities for something to go wrong.

If you think you've stored up some safety credit, forget it. Keep cut in at home and work. Pain and suffering know not how old you are, nor how much time you've spent on job. And your employer isn't going to care about that, either, when it comes to discipline.

You get no credit.

Keith Hopp is a member of the Local 1245 Safety Committee.

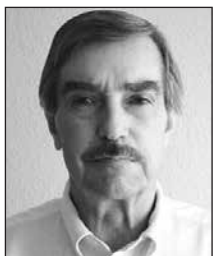
Respirator-fit employees

By Larry Pierce

Letter Agreement 99-76 established the ground rules concerning Pacific Gas & Electric compliance with OSHA regulations for emergency responders in the Gas Department.

The letter agreement sets the minimal number of employees in each headquarters who will be respirator-fit and capable of emergency response.

Over the past seven years the actual number of respirator-fit employees has fallen significantly below the agreed to level because of retirements and other attrition related causes. The PG&E has recently notified Local 1245 of their intent to reestablish the levels previously agreed to.



Larry Pierce

This will involve seeking volunteers first and possibly, if there are an insufficient number of volunteers, directing some employees to be designated emergency responders.

The company has informed the union that increased respirator use will be required for other than emergency responders as well, due to changes in OSHA's permissible exposure level to Hex/Chrom vapors when welding.

Hexavalium Chromium is in the flux and manufacturers have not yet found a way to remove or replace it. The concerns involve welding on stainless steel, electrical arc welding, and oxyacetylene welding indoors or in a confined space.

PG&E believes that Hydro Generation and Diablo Canyon Power Plant will be the most highly affected areas.

Larry Pierce is Assistant Business Manager for Local 1245.

Safety Committee

Members of the IBEW Local 1245 Safety Committee are Al White, Pacific Gas & Electric; Bob Burkle, City of Santa Clara; Keith Hopp, Pacific Gas & Electric; Michael Gomes, Modesto Irrigation District; Art Torres, Sacramento Municipal Utility District; Sergio Munoz, Asplundh Tree; Tom Greer, Frontier; and Assistant Business Manager Larry Pierce.

Check out the safety information on our website at:
www.ibew1245.com/safety-section/safety.html

Retirees' Corner



Retirees hope to coordinate efforts in support of bargaining

The five chapters of the Local 1245 Retirees Club appear to be moving toward increased coordination of their efforts as 2008 bargaining with Pacific Gas & Electric looms ever larger on the horizon.

The San Jose chapter at its November meeting discussed "the urgent need for representatives of the five retiree chapters to meet and organize proposals for 2008 negotiations," President Jack Hill reported. The object of these proposals would be to "stress improvements in benefits of pensions and health care for current and future retirees."

North Bay retirees meeting in Santa

Rosa adopted several motions at their September meeting calling for increased coordination among Retiree Club chapters. The chapter proposes having the leaders of all five chapters meet at Weakley Hall in Vacaville to "put all the clubs ideas together and brainstorm ideas for upcoming 2008 negotiations."

The Santa Rosa chapter also proposed having more than one retiree representative on the negotiations committee. A third motion called for all pre-1995 retirees to receive their medical plan fully paid, "just as they had it paid under their contract with PG&E" while working.

Congratulations newly-retired members

The Local 1245 Retirees Club congratulates these recently-retired members of the union. We invite you to participate in a Retiree Club chapter in Dublin, San Jose, Vacaville, Santa Rosa, or Merced. If you don't have a chapter nearby, call the union at 707-452-2718 and find out how you can help start one!

Max Bakke 37 years Arroyo Grande, CA	Joseph Mann 35 years So San Francisco, CA	William Cannon 23 years Pismo Beach, CA	Alan Mathison 20 years Tracy, CA
Alberto Beltran 34 years San Jose, CA	Richard Mendez 34 years Pittsburg, CA	Michael Carrera 33 years Shingle Springs, CA	William Nolan 36 years Fenton, MI
Randolph Cannarozzi 29 years Auburn, CA	Thomas Monson 37 years Lodi, CA	Kalvin Cazier 36 years Antioch, CA	Linda Onstad 11 years Santa Rosa, CA
Tito Castillo 33 years Rio Vista, CA	Joseph Ormando 29 years Lincoln, CA	Wayne Champion 35 years Firebaugh, CA	Robert Portis 39 years Pittsburg, CA
Gail Crowell 22 years Manteca, CA	Kenneth Owens 35 years Richmond, CA	Rusty Cook 12 years San Luis Obispo, CA	Larry Preszler 35 years Livermore, CA
Daniel Dennis 37 years Stockton, CA	Alfred Patrick 37 years Clearlake, CA	Robert Crone 23 years Ewa Beach, HI	Jaime Ramirez 27 years Antioch, CA
Barbara Dyer 32 years Petaluma, CA	Jerry Runswick 24 years Vacaville, CA	William Dilbeck 26 years Redding, CA	Frederick Reed 23 years Newcastle, CA
Juanita Eddings 27 years Salinas, CA	Harry Skemp 35 years Quincy, CA	Sandra Dukes 0 years Paso Robles, CA	Jackie Robinson 27 years Yuba City, CA
Jerry Elwood 19 years Santa Rosa, CA	Jo Ann Thurman 21 years Chico, CA	Louie Gaeta 37 years Fresno, CA	Ernie Sierra 33 years Avenal, CA
Thomas Fonseca 31 years Concord, CA	Gerald Trudeau 15 years Mesquite, NV	William Gann 28 years Sanger, CA	Robert Steiger 23 years Salinas, CA
Steve Gearhart 35 years Durham, CA	Robert Turney 32 years Paso Robles, CA	Douglas Gordon 39 years Georgetown, CA	Charlotte Stemen 27 years Galt, CA
Marcus Gibson 33 years Stockton, CA	Carlos Vasquez 34 years San Bruno, CA	Howard Gover 27 years Antioch, CA	Lynn Tackmier 36 years Cottonwood, CA
Ronald Giorgi 35 years Pt Reyes Sta, CA	June Wells 29 years Penn Valley, CA	Patrick Haentjens Pismo Beach, CA	Craig Tangen 41 years Hayward, CA
David Greer 35 years Livermore, CA	Ping Wong 30 years San Francisco, CA	Emmett Havemann 16 years Trail, OR	Thomas Weaver 24 years Oceano, CA
Michael Hamasaki 31 years Dinuba, CA	Clyde Been 7 years Clovis, CA	Robert Hixson 28 years Salyer, CA	David Wiggins 22 years Madera, CA
Hector Hernandez 33 years San Francisco, CA	Randolph Bennett 38 years Livermore, CA	Dennis Holcomb 29 years Fresno, CA	
Dennis Heyeck 34 years Redwood City, CA	Patrocino Calingo 32 years Berkeley, CA	Ronald Kohler 39 years Bakersfield, CA	
Erik Larsen 41 years San Mateo, CA		Richard Marcantelli 36 years Rio Vista, CA	

Season's Savings



Special union **discounts** make your holiday shopping a joy.

During the holiday season and all through the year...you can save on great gifts and take advantage of exciting offers **available only to union members**. Here are some of the ways your union membership can help you delight everyone on your list—while getting the BEST VALUE for every gift dollar you spend!

Computer & Internet Deals

- Save up to 12% on **Dell computers**—and more.
- Use **Union Plus Voice** with your broadband connection and save 85% on your phone bill.
- Get high-speed dial-up **Internet service** for only \$14.95 a month.

Clothing Discounts

- Get up to **10% off** quality, comfortable union-made apparel.
- Wide selection for **all ages and sizes**—everything from golf shirts, henleys, sweats and jeans to dresses, oxford shirts and pants to kids' tees and sneakers.
- You also can order **gift certificates**.

AT&T Wireless Saving

- Take an additional **10% off** the regular rate of any individual or family **calling plan** purchased at an **AT&T Wireless** store and also receive a \$50 in-store credit when signing up for service*.

*The union discount is ONLY available at AT&T stores, NOT available through the phone, at any authorized AT&T dealer or kiosk. (If you call any AT&T customer service phone number, they cannot apply the discount.)

Flower Discounts

- Get **20% discount** on every order.
- Call **1-888-667-7779** to place your order today.

Entertainment Specials

- Save up to 40% on **movie tickets**.
- Find bargain prices and great selections at **Powell's Book Store**, the largest unionized Internet bookseller.
- Get discount **DVD rentals** at Blockbuster.
- Save on **sporting events** in selected cities.

Union Plus

Retiree Club Meeting Schedule

East Bay Chapter: 2nd Thursday each month, 10 a.m., IBEW Local 595, 6250 Village Parkway, Dublin, CA

San Jose Chapter: 1st Thursday each month, 10 a.m., at IBEW Local 332, 2125 Canoas Garden, San Jose, CA.

Vacaville/Sacramento Chapter: 2nd Wednesday each month, 10 a.m., at IBEW Local 1245, 30 Orange Tree Circle, Vacaville, CA.

Santa Rosa Chapter: 1st Tuesday each month, 10 a.m., at Coco's Restaurant, 1501 Farmers Lane, Santa Rosa.

Merced Chapter: 1st Tuesday each month, 10 a.m., Merced Senior Community, 755 W. 15th Street., Merced.

Harness Safety, from page 14

volume of deoxygenated blood to move to the heart if the worker has been suspended for an extended period. The heart may be unable to cope with the abrupt increase in blood flow, causing cardiac arrest. Rescue procedures must take this into account.

Additional information is available at www.osha.gov/dts/shib/shib032404.html.

Bring up the topic of suspension trauma/orthostatic intolerance at your next safety meeting. If you have a joint labor-management safety committee, bring it up there also. This new problem that we are facing can be manageable with the proper training, the proper equipment and the motivation of union members to make it work.

Art Torres is a member of the IBEW Local 1245 Safety Committee.

For more information about **benefits**, and **savings** available to you visit

www.UnionPlus.org/Gifts

WEB 07

IBEW 1245 UNIT MEETING SCHEDULE: JANUARY—JUNE 2008

CITY	UNIT	LOCATION	UNIT CHAIR	DAY	TIME	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
Alturas (Frontier)	4013	The Brass Rail, Hwy 395	M. Nelson	Weds	5:30pm	9	13	12	9	14	11
Angels Camp	2512	Mike's Pizza, Hwy 49/Murphy Grade Rd.	G. Day	Thurs	4:00pm	17	21	20	17	15	19
Antioch	2317	Aladino's Pizza, 1324 Sunset Dr.	D. Tucker	Weds	5:00pm	9	13	12	9	14	11
Auberry	1129	Daddy Joe's Java, Auberry Road	C. Riggs	Tues	5:45pm	15	12	11	8	13	10
Auburn	3511	Round Table Pizza @ Auburn-Folsom Road	K. Davis*	Tues	5:00pm	8	12	11	8	13	10
Bakersfield	1112	Labor Hall, 200 W. Jeffrey	M. Rolow*	Weds	6:00pm	9	13	12	9	14	11
Buellton	1221	Firestone Walker Brewing Co., 620 McMurray Road*	B. Swanson	Mon	4:00pm	14	11	10	14	12	9
Burlingame/Peninsula	1512	TWU Local 505, 1521 Rollins Rd., Burlingame	B. Quinn	Weds	5:30pm	9	13	12	9	14	11
Burney	3213	Sam's Pizza, Hwy 299, Johnson Park	P. Baker*	Tues	6:00pm	1	5	4	1	6	3
Burney (Frontier)	4015	Sam's Pizza, 38077 Hwy 299 East	D. Washburn*	Tues	6:00pm	15	19	18	15	20	17
Chilcoot	3514	Last Chance Saloon, Highway 70	T. Wolf*	Weds	6:00pm	9	X	12	X	14	X
Concord/Davey Tree	4716	Round Table , 3393 Port Chicago Hwy	J. Sims*	Thurs	5:30pm	17	21	20	17	15	19
Concord/Walnut Creek	2316	Round Table Pizza, 2960 Treat Boulevard	R. Lassus	Thurs	5:00pm	10	14	13	10	15	12
Davis General Construction	3000	Steve's Pizza	K. Goodner	Thurs	4:00pm	10	14	13	10	8	12
Donner	3309	Best Western Hotel, Hwy. 267, Truckee	S. Camara*	Thurs	5:30pm	X	7	X	3	X	5
Elk Grove (Frontier)	4014	Round Table Pizza, 5110 Laguna Blvd.	S. Lawton	Tues*	5:00pm*	22	26	25	22	27	24
Elko, NV	3318	Stockman's Casino	J. Peterson*	Thurs*	5:30pm	X	14	X	10	X	12
Ely, NV/Mt. Wheeler	3315	Ely Fire Dept, Meeting Hall	M. Venturino	Tues*	4:30pm	X	12	X	8	X	10
Eureka/Tree Trimmers	3111	Labor Temple, 9th & "E" Street	W. Hollesen*	Tues	6:00pm	15	12	11	15	13	10
Fallon, Nevada	3316	Fallon Country Club, 2655 Country Club Drive	C. Robertson	Tues	5:30pm	X	12	X	8	X	10
Fort Bragg/Pt. Arena	3717	PG&E Yard, 3539 Walnut Street*	G. Fernandez	Thurs	5:00pm	24	21	20	24	22	19
Fresno	1111	AMF Sierra Lanes, 6450 N. Blackstone	P. Sandoval*	Tues	5:00pm	8	5	4	1	6	3
Fresno/Trees Inc.	4712	Round Table Pizza, First & Bullard	R. Ramos	Weds	5:30pm	2	6	5	2	7	4
Grass Valley	3513	Miner Moe's, 716 Freeman Lane Ste C*	M. Fitting*	Weds	5:00pm*	9	13	12	9	14	11
Hayward/Fremont	2314	Bronco Billy's Pizza, 3940 Smith St., Union City	I. Araquistain	Weds	5:30pm	16	20	19	16	21	18
Hinkley	1311	Clubhouse, Hinkley Compressor Station	P. Earl	Weds	5:30pm	x	6	x	2	x	4
Hollister	1219	Paine's Restaurant, 421 East St.*	J. Schlegel*	Weds	5:00pm	9	6	5	9	7	4
Jackson	2513	Mountain Mike's Pizza, 525 S. Hwy 49	B. Boitano	Tues	4:00pm	*8	5	4	1	6	3
Klamath Falls, OR	3022	Mia's and Pia's Pizza, 3545 Summers Lane	J. Rojas*	Mon	5:45pm	21	18	17	21	19	16
Lakeport	3715	Senior Center, 527 Konocti Ave.	B. Dawson	Tues	5:00pm	8	5	4	8	6	3
Lemoore	1128	Fleet Reserve, 788 "D" Street	R. Ramirez*	Thurs	5:00pm	10	14	13	10	15	12
Livermore	2315	Round Table Pizza, 1024 Stanley Blvd.	J. Pruett*	Weds	4:00pm	23	27	26	23	28	25
Lodi, City of	2516	Cheezer's Pizza, 1040 W. Kettleman Lane*	D. Schulz*	Thurs	5:00pm	10	14	13	10	8	12
Los Banos	1115	Me-N-Ed's Pizza, 2160 E. Pacheco, Suite A*	P. Danieli*	Tues	4:00pm	22	19	18	15	20	17
Madera	1113	Madera Valley Inn, 317 "G" Street	R. Danieli/D. Camarena*	Weds	4:30pm	16	13	12	9	14	11
Marysville	3611	Stassi's, Fourth Street	M. Anderson	Weds	5:00pm	2	6	5	2	7	4
Merced	1123	Branding Iron, 640 W. 16th St.	M. Jameson	Weds	5:30pm	9	6	5	2	7	4
Merced ID	1122	Branding Iron, 640 W. 16th St.	C. Tatum*	Thurs	5:00pm	10	7	6	3	8	5
Mirant	2319	Skipolini's Pizza, Fitzhuren Drive, Antioch	J. Ricard	Weds	4:00pm	23	27	26	23	28	25
Modesto	2515	Days Inn, 1312 McHenry Blvd.	T. Fortune	Weds	5:30pm	9	13	12	9	14	11
Modesto/Modesto Irr. Dist.	2518	Hero's Sports Lounge, 821 "L" Street	M. Gomes*	Weds	5:00pm	2	6	5	2	1	4
Napa	3716	Round Table Pizza, 3331 Solano Ave.	J. Kent	Thurs	6:00pm	10	7	6	10	8	5
North Lake Tahoe/Kings Beach	3320	Carpenter's Hall, Kings Beach (Deer Street)	B. Warmuth	Weds	5:30pm	16	20	19	16	21	18
Novato/Marin County	3711	Round Table Pizza, S. Novato Blvd.	I. Snyder	Weds	5:30pm	9	13	12	9	14	11
Oakland Physical	2311	Francesco's, Hegenberger & Pardee	M. Swain*	Tues	4:45pm	8	5	4	1	6	3
Oakland, City of	2211	Francesco's, Hegenberger & Pardee	A. Fortier	Thurs	4:00pm	17	21	20	17	15	19
Paradise	3417	Round Table Pizza, 6038 (B) Clark Road	R. Manley*	Weds	5:30pm	9	13	12	9	14	11
Placerville	3813	Spanky's Pizza, 197 Placerville Dr.	G. McNamara	Tues	3:45pm	tbd*	5	4	1	6	3
Placerville/Davey Tree	4714	Round Table Pizza, 512 Main Street, Placerville, CA	S. Speak	Tues	5:30pm	8	5	4	1	6	3
Portland, OR	3026	TC Headquarters, Portland, OR	L. Mitchell*	Thurs	12 noon	17	21	20	17	22	19
Red Bluff	3214	Casa Ramos, 2001 Main Street, Red Bluff	J. Johnstone	Thurs	5:45pm	3	7	6	3	8	5
Redding	3212	Round Table Pizza, 2808 McMurry Dr., Anderson	R. Rylee	Weds	5:15pm	2	6	5	2	7	4
Redding, City of	3217	Round Table Pizza, 900 Dana Drive, Redding	P. Snyder*	Tues	4:30pm	2	5	4	8	6	3
Redding/Davey Utility	4419	Round Table Pizza, 900 Dana Drive, Redding	R. Bodner*	Weds	5:00pm	23	27	26	23	28	25
Redmond, OR	3028	TC Headquarters, Redmond, OR	J. Kisee	Thurs	5:00pm	10	14	13	10	9	12
Redwood City/Asplundh Tree	4711	Mountain Mike's Pizza, 120 El Camino Real, Redwood City.	D. Urbina	Tues	5:30pm	22	19	18	15	20	17
Reno, NV	3311	IBEW LU 401, 2713 E. 4th St.	D. Moler	Weds	6:00pm	2	6	5	2	7	4
Richmond	2318	La Strada Rest., 2215 Church Lane, San Pablo	T. Verndon	Weds	4:00pm*	2	6	5	2	7	4
Richmond/E. Bay Clerical	2301	La Strada Rest., 2215 Church Lane, San Pablo	D. Ambeau	Weds	6:00pm	2	6	5	2	7	4
Roseville, City of	3512	Fast Freddie's Pizza, 130 Main Street, Roseville	D. Willford*	Tues	4:15pm	8	12	11	8	13	10
Sacramento	3811	Florin Rebecca Hall, 8360 Florin Rd., Sacramento	L. Mennel	Weds	5:15pm	2	6	5	2	7	4
Sacramento/Trees & Davey	4717	Pizza Bell, 8591 Elk Grove Blvd. Elk Grove, CA	O. Perez*	Tues	4:30pm	15	12	11	8	13	10
Sacramento Clerical	3801	Round Table Pizza, Arena Blvd., Sacramento*	D. Ryan	Thurs	5:30pm	3	7	6	3	1	5
Sacto. Muni Utility District	3911	Dante Club, Sacramento	J. Basil*	Weds	4:30pm	9	13	12	9	14	11
Sacto. Regional Transit	3011	Espanol Restaurant, Sacramento	vacant/tbd*	Weds	4:30pm	16	20	19	16	21	18
Salinas	1211	Mountain Mikes Pizza E. Alisal, Salinas	D. Montanez	Tues	5:00pm	8	5	4	8	6	3

IBEW 1245 UNIT MEETING SCHEDULE: JANUARY—JUNE 2008

CITY	UNIT	LOCATION	UNIT CHAIR	DAY	TIME	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
San Francisco	2412	Ship Clerks Union Local 34 Hall, 4 Berry St.	V. Jones	Weds	4:30pm	2	6	5	2	7	4
San Jose	1511	Straw Hat Pizza, 1535 Meridian Ave., San Jose	D. Johnson*	Weds	5:15pm	9	13	12	9	14	11
San Jose/Asplundh Tree	4713	Mountain Mike's, 1289 S. 1st. St. San Jose, CA	E. Arellano	Thurs	4:30pm	10	14	13	10	8	12
San Luis Obis./Pismo Beach	1215	Vallarta's Mexican Food, 1761 Monterey Street, SLO	S. Weaver*	Thurs	4:00pm	10	7	6	10	8	5
San Luis Obispo/DCPP	1220	Margie's Diner, 1575 Calle Joaquin	L. Moon	Weds	5:30pm	9	6	5	9	7	4
Sandpoint, ID	3021	Sandpoint Headquarters	D. Christman	Weds	5:00pm	9	13	12	9	14	11
Santa Clara, City of	1411	Vesuvios Resturant, 3044 El Camino	B. Burkle	Weds	4:30pm	9	13	12	9	14	11
Santa Cruz	1513	VFW Post #7263, 2259 7th Ave., Santa Cruz	G. Bargas	Tues	4:30pm	8	12	11	8	13	10
Santa Maria	1216	Round Table Pizza, 2508 S. Broadway, Santa Maria	M. Landeros	Weds	4:00pm	16	13	12	16	14	11
Santa Rosa	3712	Round Table, Steele & Cleaveland	L. Stubblefield	Tues	6:00pm	*8	5	4	1	6	3
Santa Rosa/Davey Tree	4719	Round Table Pizza, Marlow & Guerneville	D. Rathe	Weds	6:00pm	16	20	19	16	21	18
Selma	1120	Sal's Mexican Restaurant, 2163 Park St.	S. Zamora*	Thurs	4:30pm	17	14	13	10	15	12
Shasta/USBR	3218	Keswick Dam Rd., Keswick (Redding)	P. Mastan*	Tues	5:15pm	15	x	18	x	20	x
SMUD/Fresh Pond	3912	50 Grand Club, Pollock Pines	R. Curtis	Weds	5:00pm	2	6	5	2	7	4
Sonora	2517	Mike's Pizza, 14721 Mono Way	B. Owens	Tues	4:00pm	8	12	11	8	13	10
Sonora /Asplundh Tree	4715	Round Table Pizza, 13769-B Mono Way, Sonora, CA	S. Hix	Mon	4:30pm	7	X	13	X	5	X
South Lake Tahoe	3314	Round Table Pizza, 1062 Emerald Bay Road	P. Stahl	Thurs	5:00pm	3	X	6	X	1	X
Spankel, WA/Rosalia	3027	TC Headquarters, Rosalia	P. Brown	Thurs	5:00pm	10	14	13	10	9	12
Spokane, WA	3025	TC Headquarters, Spokane	vacant	Thurs	12 noon	17	21	20	17	22	19
Stockton	2511	Ed Stewart American Legion Post #803, 3110 N. West Ln.	C. DeLaTorre	Thurs	6:30pm	10	14	13	10	8	12
Stockton/Trees Inc.	4718	Eddie's Pizza, 1048 Waterloo Road, Stockton, CA	J. Cervantes	Weds	5:30pm	9	13	12	9	14	11
Stockton Clerical	2509	8110 Holman Road, Ste. #1, Stockton	C. Wood*	Thurs	4:00pm	10	14	13	10	8	12
Susanville (LMUD/Frontier)	4012	The Pizza Factory	K. Merrill	Thurs	5:30pm	10	14	13	10	15	12
Templeton	1217	The Pizza Place 105 Main St.	J. Comancho*	Tues	4:00pm	15	12	11	15	13	10
Tiger Creek/Pine Grove	2519	Pine Grove Pizza, 19724 St. Hwy 88, Pine Grove	R. Davis	Tues	6:00pm	15	19	18	15	20	17
Topock	1313	PSEA Clubhouse, Moabi Park, Topock	G. Shettco	Thurs	4:45pm	x	7	x	3	x	5
Truckee Meadows Water Auth.	3310	Round Table Pizza, Mira Loma & McCarren, Sparks, NV	F. Chadwick*	Tues	4:30pm	X	5	X	1	X	3
Turlock	1126	Turlock Chamber of Commerce, 115 S. Golden State Blvd	R. Lane	Thurs	4/5 pm	3	7	6	3	7	5
Ukiah	3714	Ukiah Garden Café, 1090 S. State Street	C. Spaletta	Weds	5:30pm	9	6	5	9	7	4
USBR/CVO	3012	Round Table Pizza, 7943 Greenback Lane, Citrus Hts.	P. Pipis*	Tues	5:00pm	8	12	11	8	13	10
Vacaville	3812	Pietro's #2 679 Merchant St., Vacaville	E. Owens	Weds	5:00pm	9	13	12	9	14	11
Vacaville/Outside Line	4911	Ron Weakley Hall, IBEW 1245, 30 Orange Tree Circle	C. Kelly	Weds	7:00pm	9	13	12	9	14	11
Walla Walla, WA	3023	TC Headquarters - Wallula, WA	M. Prior	Thurs	5:00pm	10	14	13	10	9	12
Wells R.E.C., NV	3319	Silver Sage Senior Citizens Center, 1st St., Wells, NV	A. Reusch*	Weds*	5:00pm	X	13	X	9	X	11
Winnemucca, NV	3317	Los Marguerits, 47 E. Winnemucca Boulevard	J. Henriod*	Weds	7:00pm	X	13	X	9	X	11

Help is available to fight elder abuse

By Felicia Curran
Special to the Utility Reporter

You probably think it is unlikely that you or a family member will ever spend time in a nursing home. Well, think again. The United States General Accounting Office estimates that more than 43 percent of all Americans over the age of 65 will wind up in one at some point during their remaining years. After a hospitalization, many people will also need to spend time in a rehab center or convalescent hospital before going home.

Unfortunately, many of these facilities provide very poor care. In 1998, the federal government reported that one in three California nursing homes was cited for serious or potentially life-threatening problems. Many cases of medical neglect result from corporate owners of nursing facilities trying to cut corners to widen their profit margins.

The corporate owners of care facilities have legal liability for understaffing their facilities. The less staff at a care facility, the higher the probability of injury to elderly patients. The patient

may go in with one medical problem, and acquire other medical problems in the facility as a result of neglect by staff.

Care facilities that are short staffed often leave elderly adults lying in bed unattended, which can lead to pressure ulcers. Elderly adults are more likely to suffer from falls because no one is around to assist them getting in and out of bed or up from a chair. Elderly adults are more likely to be malnourished because no one takes the time to assist them with eating or monitor their consumption of food. Overworked staff may not notice a change in the patient's condition, and consequently, may not call the doctor in time to get the resident needed medical help.

For incidents of abuse or neglect in either a nursing home or other care facility, file a complaint with the local Ombudsman. Call 1-800-231-4024 to find the location of their office.

You can also complain to the agency that licenses the care facility. Call the state Department of Health Services (Licensing and Certification Program) for nursing homes, skilled nursing facil-

ities, group homes and home health agencies. Their telephone number is 1-800-236-9747, and their website is www.dhs.gov/lnc.

Call the state Department of Social Services' Community Care Licensing Division for residential care facilities and assisted living facilities. Their telephone number in Sacramento is 916-657-2592. Their website is <http://ccl.dss.cahwnet.gov>.

For abuse or neglect outside of a facility, call your local Adult Protective Services. For your local number call 1-800-510-2020.

You should also consult a lawyer. The threat of a lawsuit often gets more of a response from care facilities than action by a licensing agency. This is because the licensing agency can only fine the offending facility for a comparatively small sum. Unscrupulous owners often would rather pay the small fine or simply gamble they will not be caught than adequately staff their nursing homes. A lawsuit is often the most effective way to force the nursing home or care facility to abide by proper regulations and pro-

vide for a sufficient number of staff.

Keep in mind as well that elderly adults (i.e., 65 and above) and adults with disabilities have a right to monetary compensation under the Elder Abuse and Dependent Adult Civil Protection Act for their injuries due to abuse or neglect. The elderly victim's family may have a right to compensation for wrongful death of their loved one.

Nursing homes are required to post the number of staff on duty each day. If you are concerned that the facility may be understaffed, contact the appropriate licensing agency, or your lawyer.

Felicia Curran is a lawyer at Boxer & Gerson, LLP, in the firm's elder abuse and medical neglect practice areas. She provides legal analysis on preventing nursing home abuse and elder abuse in her blog www.elderadvocacyblog.com. Visit the firm's website at www.boxer-law.com or call 510-835-8870 for more information.

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 Colors: Light Blue Denim or Charcoal Denim
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 S, M, L, XL: \$91
 2X: \$94, 3X: \$97



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Item #85
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 S, M, L, XL: \$84
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"Retro" Logo: "Strength Through Unity"
Item #84
 Sanded cotton 10 oz duck shell with quilt lining, Full zip front with contrasting distressed shading sleeves.
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St. Bernard *continued from page 20*

Fourteen of them lived on-site, crowded together in a doublewide trailer provided by the company.

You'd think, two years after the apocalypse, the Louisiana parishes ravaged by Katrina would be surging with employment opportunities. The need is vast—for hospitals, for schools, for transportation, for sewers, for housing. For the fundamental building blocks of community.

President George W. Bush stood in the French Quarter less than three weeks after Katrina struck her blow and pledged to orchestrate “one of the largest reconstruction efforts the world has ever seen.”

It took the federal Marshall Plan to help a devastated Europe recover after World War II. It's increasingly clear that St. Bernard Parish and other Katrina-ravaged communities will require federal leadership on that order.

They're not holding their breath in St. Bernard Parish.

Two years after Katrina, the community Chet Held once called home remains largely a ghost town.



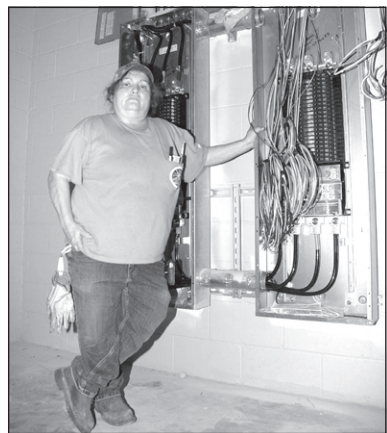
Still, work for electricians has bounced back. Chet will tell you with some pride that their union—the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 130—now has 1100 members serving the New Orleans area, about the same number as before Katrina.

But it's a displaced workforce, housed by relatives or friends or FEMA trailers. Many no longer live anywhere near the communities they serve.

Chet, a rank and file union leader before Katrina, now works full-time for Local 130 as an assistant business manager. It makes sense. His great-uncle, grandfather, father, and various cousins were in the IBEW before him. His oldest son, Bradley, is a first-year apprentice.

Chet wants you to know that the IBEW surrendered no one to Katrina. “All our members are accounted for.”

At Southern University of New Orleans, some of those IBEW members are installing a dehumidification system.



Sandy Theriot: “I’m a voter. I don’t miss elections.”

They're trying to dry one of the buildings and kill the mold. The foreman is Sandy Theriot, a woman 27 years in the trade.

Recovery work is “caught up in red tape,” Sandy says.

She has first-hand experience with red tape. After Katrina, she stayed in a fishing camp 70 miles from her home. She wanted to get a FEMA trailer, but no dice. So she called the White House directly.

“I spent \$14 in phone calls. I got my trailer,” she says. She thinks about this for a moment, then adds: “I’m a voter. I don’t miss elections.”

Sandy has two sons in the Navy. One is an airline electronics technician. Unfortunately, Louis Armstrong Airport still isn't hiring.

“He asked me if he should move back here and I couldn't tell him yes.”

Sandy says she feels sorry for all the professional people thrown out of work when their companies left town after Katrina.

“I was very fortunate that I had a skill—I could go back to my trade.”

And work was a welcome distraction—all that overtime after the storm.

“When you're busy working you just come home and collapse,” she says. “But when you go back to 40 hours and have time to think about it, you cry.”

There's commotion nearby, at the university's library. Workers in respirators and hazard gear are starting to haul out ruined computers, rusty cabinets, and things made unrecognizable by mold and neglect. After 25 months, the doors of this building are just today being opened for the first time since Katrina. “...one of the largest reconstruction efforts the world has ever seen.”

Let's talk about guns.

Chet had a lot of them—all lost in the flood.

One of Chet's neighbors decided to continue living at home after the flood.

“He would put his garbage out at night with a pistol in his hand,” Chet recalls. It's not clear whether Chet regards the man as a hero or a crazy fool. Maybe both.



Chet Held returns home: nothing but studs and memories.

“When you're busy working (overtime) you just come home and collapse. But when you go back to 40 hours and have time to think about it, you cry.” - Sandy Theriot

“He'd confront looters at neighbors' houses: ‘Freeze, mother-...’” Well, you know what he said.

Jeffrey Johnson, an IBEW steward and electrician on the job with Sandy at Southern University of New Orleans, was living on the Mississippi coast when Katrina hit. Jeff's wife came back, right afterward, to see what was left. “It affected her and it affected me,” Jeff says. “It affected everybody—physically and mentally.”

His wife didn't come back again for months. Couldn't bear it. Jeff stayed by himself in a tent on the deck, armed, protecting their house. He lived like that for over a month.



Jeffrey Johnson at work. IBEW Local 130 now has 1100 members serving the New Orleans area, about the same number as before Katrina.

There were 161 homicides in New Orleans in 2006. Many of the victims as well as the suspects were teenagers.

New Orleans fired its education workforce in the months following Katrina—7,000 teachers and other school employees. The state is trying to impose a system of charter schools, an approach already discredited in California. Investigators there found millions of dollars were spent on huge executive salaries, perks and questionable contracts awarded to the friends and family of the CEO.

Flooded buildings aren't the only place you find toxic mold.

In the Chalmette neighborhood of St. Bernard Parish, Chet pulls up to the place he used to call home. It's not as bad as the first time, when he confronted an unspeakable toxic mess, “like a Port-O-Let turned upside down and then put through a blender.”

He pauses at the front door, lowers his head.

“This is really hard for me, guys.”

The inside is gutted, just studs and memories. The brick base of the stove that he built just before the storm. The remnants of a fireplace.

Chet doesn't say much, just moves among the studs, alone behind his sunglasses.

An hour later, along the shoreline of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet near Shell Beach, Chet points out the name of a childhood friend.

“I grew up with him. We were almost exactly the same age.”

It's one of about 150 names on a monument to victims of Hurricane Katrina from this parish of St. Bernard, the 12th century Catholic abbot who viewed the world as a place of banishment and trial. Behind the shrine, a golden metal cross is anchored in cement next to the water, catching sharply angled rays from the lowering sun.

In one direction is the bayou where Chet's father hunted alligators. In another, the waters where he caught oysters and crabs in boats that he built with his cousins.

Boats in Shell Beach have personalities. Miss Bonnie. Pretzel Logic. Brothers. In Shell Beach, losing a boat is like losing a relative.

Katrina took a terrible toll here. But somehow, seeing the deep feeling Chet has for this place, it's impossible to think that Katrina will have the last word.

The performance of local, state and federal officials in the aftermath of Katrina is not likely to be judged kindly by history. There's plenty in government that's bent, and people never seem to catch on quick enough to straighten it out.

Chet suggests a shrimp po' boy at Rocky & Carlo's, although oyster is good too. It's a big noisy place where you're really missing out if you don't like it battered and fried. T-shirts abound, tooting the horn for various candidates for local political office.

Old friends stop by Chet's table. There's real joy in these hugs.

The Ninth Ward has received the lion's share of media attention in Katrina's aftermath. Chet understands this. But St. Bernard Parish has suffered, too. More than Chet can say, perhaps more than any outsider could ever understand.

“Black or white, Katrina didn't discriminate,” he says. “Tell people what happened here.”

Story and photos by Eric Wolfe. Ed Maher contributed to this report.

*“Total darkness.
Snakes in the water.
Dead bodies in
the water.
People on their
roofs yelling,
‘Help, help!’
Nothing but
silence.”*

- Chet Held



Reporters with the International Labor Communications Association (ILCA) fanned out across New Orleans in mid-October to report on the city's struggle to come back after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. This story, filed by Local 1245 Communications Director Eric Wolfe, also appears on-line at www.neworleanslabormedia.org, along with many other reports filed by ILCA members.

ST. BERNARD'S TRIAL



TWO YEARS LATER, Chet Held still hasn't escaped that massive wall of water that rolled over two levees and swept away St. Bernard Parish.

He wasn't there, he evacuated his family the night before. But he experiences those apocalyptic hours like an amputee revisits the pain of a missing limb. The overtopping of the levees, the loss of power, the rush of water, people fleeing to their roofs.

Katrina is part of him now.

A neighbor told Chet the first thing he saw after making it to the roof was Chet's truck floating by.

Chet is driving through that neighborhood now, a vast cemetery of gutted houses and lingering debris. His voice is measured, a personal levee against a flood of feelings, as he thinks about those long nights that people spent clinging to their roofs.

“Dead silence,” he says, hearing it still. “Total darkness. Snakes in the water. Dead bodies in the water. People on their roofs yelling, ‘Help, help!’ Nothing but silence.” He is speaking to you but he is somewhere else. “The next night there are fewer ‘Help, helps.’”

Some were rescued. Too many were lost. Chet points out their houses, in memoriam. There. There. And there.

St. Bernard Parish remained submerged for 10 days.



Chet lost his home and nearly everything he owned. But he knows he's among the lucky. Along with 25 members of his extended family, he ended up at his wife's cousin's place in Tampa, Florida.

A week later, Chet moved his family to St. Louis, where they were sheltered by members of IBEW Local 1—union brothers Chet had befriended a decade earlier while working at a car plant.

Chet and his family returned the day after Hurricane Rita, staying in a travel trailer on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain.

Despite the massive economic dislocation inflicted by Katrina and Rita, his skills as a journeyman electrician gained him temporary work at CCI Carbon, a co-generation plant that sells its surplus power to the area's utility company. Lines were down between the generators and the substation. Chet worked alongside 30 other men on repairs.

continued on page 19

Chet Held finds the name of a friend on a memorial to Katrina's victims from St. Bernard Parish.



Two years after Katrina, the doors of this university library are just now being opened to reveal a toxic mess.

