L. L. "Mitch" Mitchell
Union Founder, Union Leader, Union Man
1916 - 1998
Workers here and abroad

Rolling the union on...

**Duh:** Kathie Lee Gifford, who was "surprised" a couple of years ago to find out that her line of clothing was made in sweatshops, says she's learned another lesson. According to Labor Notes, she is facing new charges about sweatshop conditions in Chinese factories that make some of her clothing. Gifford says she sent her own inspectors to the factories in question, but they didn't find any problems because they weren't able to communicate with the workers. "We have learned a lesson," said a spokesperson. "We must go in with translators."

**Stir Backfires:** The 140 workers at the Hamilton Rehabilitation and Health Care Center in Norwich, Conn., turned back a vicious anti-union campaign that included one administrator telling pro-union workers, "we can have monkeys do your work." The workers voted for a union.

**But Officer...** Labor Notes reported that a bus driver carrying scabs through a picket line at Coca-Cola in Braintree, Mass., made the mistake of hitting two cops as well as a cop. He was arrested.

**Thanks, No:** Air Traffic Controllers are not happy about Congress' plan to rename Washington National airport for Ronald Reagan, who fired 11,000 striking air traffic controllers in 1981. "I'd rather than a hot poker in my eye than have an airport named after him," says Randy Schwitz of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association.

**Bill of Rights:** Congressional Democratic leaders, with support from labor, introduced legislation March 31 to protect patients by regulating the practices of health insurance companies and health maintenance organizations. The bill defines a long list of patients' rights, guaranteeing choice of doctors, access to medical specialists, and grievance procedures allowing patients to appeal the denial of care to independent bodies certified by Federal or state officials.

**Women in Construction:** Interviews with 30 tradeswomen are featured in We'll Call You If We Need You: Experiences of Women Working Construction. Written by electrician Susan Ellenberg, the book includes stories and photographs of women carpenters, ironworkers, electricians, painters, and plumbers. Chapters like "Carrying Weight," "Bucket or Bathroom?" and "Exceptional Men" highlight the positive and negative experiences of women going to work in "men's jobs." Cost is $25 plus $3.75 shipping. Contact Cornell University Press, Order Dept., PO Box 6525, Ithaca, NY 14850.

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**APPOINTMENTS**

**CITY OF WILLITS**
City of Willits Bargaining Committee
J. C. England
Den Ver Caine Jr.

**RESORT DISTRICT**
Resort District Bargaining Committee
D. J. Millette

**CONFERENCES & CONVENTIONS**
California Labor Federation Legislative Conference
Jim McCauley
Miko Davis
Ed Mallory
Dada Rao
Jack Osburn
Wayne Greer
Don Harden

Conferences of Southern California Electrical Workers
Jack McNally
Art Murray
Rich Dunkin

IBEW Construction and Maintenance Conference
Jack Mcnally
Daniel Mitchell
Art Murray
Rich Dunkin

California State Association of Electrical Workers Meeting
Jack McNally
Bob Choate
Art Murray
Rich Dunkin

IBEW Pre-Primary Election Convention
Jack McNally
Howard Stiefer
Jim McCauley
Ed Mallory
Miko Davis
Dada Rao
Micky Harrington

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**July**

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Save this date!

for the Local 1245 Golf Tournament

Details coming soon

Early birds call Frank Saxsenmeier
510-933-6060 ext. 358 or 707-939-7611
Stewards explain PG&E rate case

Is that a union steward you heard speak about PG&E's General Rate Case during a recent shop floor meeting? Quite likely. Local 1245 stewards have been fanning out across the PG&E system to inform union members about the importance of the GRC to future job stability at PG&E.

PG&E is seeking base revenue increases starting in 2012. Funds from the increase will pay for capital improvement programs that will maintain and improve safety, reliability and service.

Maintaining high standards for service has been a chief concern of Local 1245 historically, and especially since electric deregulation became an issue in 1993. Reliability was the central issue when Local 1245 protested PG&E's plan to cut the workforce in 1994-95. PG&E responded by retaining 800 employees it had planned to lay off, and has utilized up to 3000 additional temporary employees through the hiring hall in the intervening years. But these additional employees were not foreseen when PG&E's current rates were established, so these expenses were not included in those rates. In 1996, PG&E spent $228 million more on providing service than was authorized by the CPUC.

Without an increase, PG&E says it cannot carry through all of its planned maintenance activity. It is in the interests of all PG&E employees—and the customers they serve—that PG&E be allowed to recover the cost of providing safe, reliable service. That's the message that union stewards are spreading throughout the PG&E system, and that union members should spread in their local communities.

CORRECTION

Due to an error at the printer's last month, the wrong photo was printed in connection with 20-year service award presentations at last year's San Bernardino pin dinner. The 20-year members, including those shown above with Business Manager Jack McNally, were: Larry Cournoyer, Jim D'Avanzo, Ray Obregon, and Gregory Krogh.
Prop. 226 endangers job safety

In California, health-and-safety standards protecting workers are fought and won in the political arena. But right-wing, out-of-state interests are successful in passing Prop. 226, the anti-worker initiative, unions would be sent into battle without ammunition.

Regulations safeguarding workers, such as the recently enacted ergonomic standards to prevent repetitive strain injuries, are set by the California Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board. But pro-worker health-and-safety regulations always face an uphill battle because board members are appointed by Gov. Pete Wilson, routinely side with business.

"Safety shouldn't be a political issue, but unfortunately it is," said Business Rep. Art Murray, who handles safety matters affecting Local 1245 members at municipal utilities, outside line contractors, and Sierra Pacific Power. "If we're serious about protecting our members' health and safety, we have to play the political game just as seriously as our opponents do."

Prop. 226 is a dead serious effort by Gov. Wilson and his friends in big business to take unions out of the political process. Prop. 226 would make it illegal for unions to spend money on politics without gaining authorization from its members using a complicated and costly procedure every 12 months.

"This proposition, if it passes, would let employers dismantle the gains that unions have made in workplace safety," said Murray.

Scientific Analysis?

"The average citizen might think that health-and-safety standards are adopted based on scientific analysis of what causes and prevents injuries," said Business Rep. Landis Marttila, who represents Local 1245 members on safety issues at Pacific Gas & Electric and at tree trimming companies.

"But once you get involved in the process, you realize that the standards board doesn't decide things based on objective data. Politics affects every decision," Marttila said.

If Prop. 226 passes, it is almost certain that anti-worker forces would attempt to abolish the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal-OSHA). Just ten years ago, Cal-OSHA was abolished by then-Gov. George Deukmejian, but the labor movement was able to revive the agency by passing Prop. 97—a campaign which Local 1245 vigorously supported.

"Our union can exert influence over health and safety matters at the state level in two basic ways: we can help elect pro-worker legislators, and we can participate in the Cal-OSHA rule-making process," said Local 1245 Business Manager Jack McNally.

"Proposition 226 would directly undermine our influence by hampering our ability to support legislators who support us. And if Cal-OSHA got axed, we would lose our seat at the rule-making table," said McNally.

"Safety shouldn't be a political issue, but unfortunately it is. If we're serious about protecting our members' health and safety, we have to play the political game just as seriously as our opponents do."
L. L. Mitchell: the man who built a union

L. "Mitch" Mitchell, an original founder of IBEW Local 1245 and a principal architect of the union's contract with Pacific Gas and Electric, died March 15 at his home in Sacramento at the age of 82.

Mitchell, initiated into Local 1245 in 1942, served an extraordinary 25 years in the union's leadership, first as right-hand man to Business Manager Ron Weakley from 1951 to 1971, and then as business manager in his own right from 1971 to 1977.

“He was a tactician and a researcher,” said Weakley. “He could really write contract language.” (See Page 8)

And write contract language he did. In concert with Weakley, Mitchell laid the foundation for virtually all of the contract provisions that remain in force today at PG&E, including medical, dental LTD, and retirement benefits; vacation, sick leave, and holiday pay; meal allowances, shift premiums, overtime provisions; apprenticeship and safety programs; the grievance procedure, and—of course—regular wage increases.

Mitchell’s accomplishments at the bargaining table were not the product of table-pounding theatrics but of sound logic, according to former Assistant Business Manager Orv Owen.

PG&E line crew ready for work in Modesto, California in the 1930s. L. L. Mitchell is 3rd from the left. Other crew members are: Bruce Hoque, Norbert Scharankeck, Harcourt "Haircut" Smith, Bob Turk, Ed Elhardt and George Rawls. (Photo: Local 1245 archives)
In the early '40s, Mitchell transferred to Humboldt to become a lineman. The first time it rained, he was surprised to find his fellow workers jumping out of the truck and preparing to walk with all their gear through a mile or so of rugged countryside to get to the worksite. 

"I just refused to get out from under the canvas," Mitchell recalled. "So the foreman told me if I didn't get out he was going to can me."

When the rest of the crew saw that Mitchell wasn't going to budge, they were emboldened to rejoin him in the truck.

In those days, crews sometimes worked seven days a week straight through the summer, with no weekends, no holidays, and no overtime pay. But through the bravery and willpower of union men like Mitchell, employees were gaining a newfound sense of their own power.

From PAGE FIVE

"Mitch was very soft spoken and very methodical at the bargaining table. He just lead you down the path," said Owen, who watched Mitchell apply those skills with great success during bargaining with Sierra Pacific Power Co. in the 1950s. "After a couple of negotiations they had to hire a professional labor relations man to keep up with Mitch," recalled Owen, who served as a rank and file member of the Sierra Pacific Power bargaining committee from 1955 to 1962.

"Mitch was a master negotiator," said Business Manager Jack McNally, who served on Mitchell's staff in the 1970s. "I watched him lead the company on a path that would make them think the union's proposal was their proposal. Much of my success as business manager over the last 18 years is a direct result of how Mitch raised me, taught me, drilled me."

Learning Solidarity

Mitchell was initiated into the labor movement in 1931 when, at age 15, he went to work for the Sugar Pine Lumber Company in the woods above Fresno at Shaver Lake. There he was signed up by the Industrial Workers of the World, the militant labor union that preached "an injury to one is an injury to all."

Although Mitchell did not fully embrace their militant tactics, he was impressed by their solidarity.

"Their own strength was the thing," Mitchell said in a 1991 Utility Reporter interview. "You can one guy, the whole job walked off. They were united...They all had names like 'three-fingered Jack' and Broken-toed John. There was a camaraderie that you don't have now."

After leaving the woods, Mitchell went to work as a grunt for PG&E in Modesto, Ca. in 1935. Even as a grunt he was expected to climb, and he earned 50 cents an hour for his efforts.

However, it wasn't his ability to climb that landed Mitchell a job at PG&E. It was his ability to handle a bat and ball. Mitchell's skills as an infielder were needed by the company baseball team.

IBEW International President J. Scott Milne (middle) recognized that Ron (right) had the talent and dedication needed to unify the organizing drive at PG&E.
From PAGE FIVE

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In the late 1930s Mitchell was transferred from Modesto to Stockton, where the IBEW and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) were engaged in a bitter struggle over who would represent workers at PG&E.

"You'd have fistfights on the docks over it," Mitchell recalled.

That competition increased in 1941 when both the IBEW and the CIO chartered new union locals for the enormously difficult task of trying to organize all PG&E workers into one union. IBEW Local 1245 was chartered April 18, 1941, and Mitchell was initiated in 1942, about the same time that he got an opportunity to become a lineman by transferring to Humboldt.

The first time it rained, Mitchell was surprised to find his fellow workers jumping out of the truck and preparing to walk with all their gear through a mile or so of rugged countryside to get to the worksite.

"I just refused to get out from under the canvas. So the foreman told me if I didn't get out he was going to can me."

When the rest of the crew saw that Mitchell wasn't going to take the emboldened attitude, Mitchell managed to force the rest of the crew to follow him. "I'm a little bit of a hard guy; I don't want them to give up on me."

In those days, there were only seven or eight miles of road the summer Mitchell joined, and no company store or anything else. Mitchell had to go to Weaverville, the new town that had sprouted up.

Creating Solidarity

But the IBEW and the CIO had<br>

Workers to go up against. Labor movement leaders in 1950<br>

were ideologically<br>

infectious. They<br>

laughed at the idea that one<br>

man could make a difference, and they<br>

wanted to see the company<br>

overthrown. They<br>

wanted the union to<br>

soundly win the<br>

vote, and no more than that.

In 1950, sharp differences<br>

in the ways of<br>

Central<br>

Labor<br>

Counseling<br>

caused<br>

the<br>

amalgamation<br>

of the CIO and the<br>

AFL. Several<br>

years later, as<br>

the<br>

amalgamation<br>

was often<br>

thought, it<br>

was because<br>

of Weaverville's<br>

Mitchell.<br>

Mitchell<br>

made his mark<br>

as a labor<br>

man manager.<br>

In 1950, the<br>

company fell<br>

back on<br>

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IBEW. The<br>

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preferences, joint<br>

conferences, and<br>

management<br>

"They didn't want<br>

the union.<br>

For<br>

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Mitchell<br>

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IBEW International President J. Scott Milne (middle) recognized that Ron Weakley (left) and Mitch Mitchell (right) had the talent and dedication needed to unify the organizing drive at PG&E. (Photo: Local 1245 archives)

Weakley remembers Mitch. See Page 8.
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"I just refused to get out from under the canvas. So the foreman told me if I didn't get out he was going to can me."

When the rest of the crew saw that Mitchell wasn't going to budge, they were emboldened to rejoin him in the truck. Mitchell wasn't fired, but the company tried to force him to clean toilets as punishment. Mitchell refused, saying, "I'm not a janitor. I'm a lineman. I just don't do that. If you want that done you hire a janitor."

In those days, crews sometimes worked seven days a week straight through the summer, with no weekends, no holidays, and no overtime pay. But through the bravery and willpower of union men like Mitchell, employees were gaining a newfound sense of their own power.

Creating a Union

But the bitter competition between the IBEW and the CIO (operating as the Utility Workers Organizing Committee) kept the labor movement at PG&E divided and ineffective. In 1948, Ron Weakley led a massive defection of CIO members into the IBEW, which chartered a new local, Local 1324, to accommodate them.

While much of the leadership of Local 1245 remained highly suspicious of their new "brothers" in Local 1324--regarding them as a bunch of Bay Area radicals--Mitchell could sense the historic opportunity in the events now unfolding. Along with Elmer Busby he drove down from Humboldt to meet with Don Hardie, one of Weakley's cohorts in Local 1324.

Over the next year or so, Mitchell helped cement relations with Weakley's local, and in 1950 the IBEW won a systemwide election to represent physical workers at PG&E, soundly defeating the CIO by a margin of more than two-to-one.

In 1951, Locals 1245 and 1324 were amalgamated (retaining the name Local 1245). Several men aspired to the leadership of the amalgamated union. But movements often find their own leaders, and by 1951 it was becoming clear that those leaders were Weakley and Mitchell.

Mitchell said Weakley's political skills made him the logical choice for business manager. Mitchell became his top assistant.

In 1952, the IBEW defeated a comeback attempt by the CIO, and then settled down to the serious business of negotiating a contract with PG&E. The union's priorities included wage security, working conditions, job security, and pension security.

For the next quarter century, Mitch Mitchell was at the forefront of the union's efforts to win basic rights and improve living standards for employees at PG&E, Sierra Pacific Power, Sacramento Municipal Utility District, Citizens Utilities Co., and other properties represented by Local 1245.


During his tenure at Local 1245, Mitchell was named as a Vice President to the California Labor Federation and served on the executive board of the California Council on Economic and Environmental Balance.

His talents were recognized early on by his peers. In 1954 he was elected president of the class at the 15th Harvard University Trade Union Program and delivered the valedictorian address at graduation. He served as guest lecturer at various times at Stanford University, the University of California at Berkeley, and the University of Chicago.

In 1978, Mitchell was appointed by Gov. Jerry Brown to the California State Water Resources Control Board, where he served as vice chairman for eight years.

For the last 12 years of his life Mitchell remained active in public causes, volunteering with the Utility User Rebate program and the Tax Preparation Program of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), as well as serving as a docent at the Sacramento Zoo and at the California State Indian Museum.

He is survived by his wife, Avis, nine children, nine grandchildren, and two sisters.

For his keen intelligence, his gifted leadership, and his steadfastness in the cause of unionism, L. L. Mitchell will be long remembered.
A Tribute to L. L. Mitchell

By Ron Weakley,
Business Manager, 1951-1971
IBEW Local 1245

Like many others, I was very saddened to learn of the death of L. L. Mitchell.

I first met Mitch at the 1950 IBEW International Convention in Miami, Florida. He was a delegate from old Local 1245 and I was a delegate from new Local 1324. We got together to discuss how we might arrange a merger between the locals in the interests of all of the members then represented by the two locals.

As time went by, Mitch and I became close friends and when the two locals were merged into new Local 1245 I became Business Manager/Financial Secretary and was able to secure Mitch as my top staff assistant.

He and I worked together as a close team toward building an effective force for progress among our thousands of members and their families. We shared each other’s views as we became a sort of dual leadership and built ideas and expectations into positive action, supported by our fellow officers, representatives, assistants, office personnel and the general membership.

Mitch was an expert researcher, program planner and negotiator and he worked hard and long hours to do what was needed to be done.

When I left as Business Manager of Local 1245 to go to Washington DC to work in the US Department of Labor in early 1971, I recommended that Mitch be appointed to fill my unexpired term and our Executive Board concurred in my recommendation. His experience and knowledge gained in two decades of leadership service put him in good stead as my successor.

While we were separated by our different jobs and a long distance, we kept our personal friendship intact. The past few years during our retirements, we remained close up to the day of his passing.

I write these words to pay some respect to Mitch as a leader of union people and as a fine friend.

He was a major factor in the building of our union as well as a major element in its success. We who knew him as a friend will remember him not only as a friend but as an important leader in our union’s history.
L. L. 'Mitch' Mitchell: a man of principle

By Ory Owen

Along with many thousands of Local 1245 retirees, I am saddened by the passing of union Brother L. L. Mitchell. My wife and I joined friends and family in Sacramento on March 21 in a memorial service to honor and celebrate the life of Brother Mitchell.

During the service, friends and family shared with each other our many fond memories of Mitch and how he touched each of our lives.

Local 1245 and its members lost one of the original founders and architects of our union. Current members and retired members now enjoy and receive the benefits originally established in our labor agreements negotiated by Brother Mitchell.

The labor movement has lost one of its most skilled and talented leaders of principle and integrity.

Working people have lost one of its champions and most ardent supporters for dignity and justice and safety at the workplace. My wife, Lois, and I have lost a dear friend and will be forever grateful for his friendship, wisdom and guidance that has touched our lives. I, along with the thousands he served so well, love him and will miss him. I will keep the faith, Mitch!

L.L. Mitchell shares a few laughs with other former Local 1245 staff members at the local's 50th anniversary celebration in 1991. Clockwise, from left, are: Larry Foss, Spike Ensley, Ory Owen, L. L. Mitchell, Dan McPeak and Mert Walters. (Photo: Eric Wolfe)

"Everybody should be concerned about Prop. 226. If this proposition passes and unions are forced out of politics, watch for its backers to target environmentalists and then seniors and then civil rights activists."

--Bill Craven, state director, Sierra Club
Proposition 226: dangerous . . . and unnecessary

The proponents of Proposition 226 claim that restrictions on union political action are needed to protect the rights of individual union members. Is there any validity to this claim? Current law already allows individuals who do not support their organizations’ positions or who do not want any of their dues spent on political activities to opt out of paying for legislative and political action. And the funders of this initiative know this to be a fact.

Unions already have internal democratic avenues available for members who want to change the procedures used for approving or spending dues money. In fact, employees in unions already enjoy more protections under current law than members of any other organization. Unions are voluntary, democratic organizations in which leaders are chosen through secret ballot elections.

All decisions affecting the collection and allocation of dues money and the endorsement of political candidates are made in a democratic fashion. Members support their organizations’ positions by wide margins; for example, in 1996, independent polling showed that union members supported the positions advocated by the AFL-CIO by a 6 to 1 margin.

If any union member objects to the policies and positions taken by his or her union, he or she is free to participate in the democratic process to change those positions.

None of these safeguards are available to protect members of the American Medical Association, or the National Rifle Association—other voluntary membership organizations—and yet we don’t see initiatives to authorize their political contributions once a year.

In short, this initiative is a trap—designed to snare ordinary working people and the unions that try to represent their political interests.

But who would set such a trap—and why?

To date, the public records show that all of the major funding for this initiative has come from extremist Republican groups and individuals from outside California. All of them have links to national school voucher efforts and/or efforts to eliminate Medicare.

Early backers include J. Patrick Rooney of Golden Rule Insurance Company in Indianapolis, a wealthy executive who has spent millions of dollars supporting school voucher plans across the country, and Grover Norquist of American for Tax Reform, which opposes Social Security and Medicare, among other things. Norquist’s organization is currently under investigation by the US Senate for its campaign practices in support of Republicans during the 1996 campaign.

Extremist Agenda

Well known in Washington political circles, but virtually unknown in California, these two individuals have each contributed huge sums to Republican causes and the Republican National Committee, and have been instrumental in backing extremist ballot initiatives in several other states. Achieving their extremist goals depends upon winning legislative and gubernatorial control across the country. And that is what they hope to accomplish in California by passing Proposition 226 in the June primary.

The proponents of this initiative never asked organized employees if they wanted or needed their so-called “help.” The employees could have told them what is really needed, like better care for our children and elderly parents, affordable healthcare, enforcement of our worker safety laws and improved schools. No one needs, or wants, more government forms to fill out or more red tape.

Most employees can’t afford to make big individual contributions toward next November’s elections, and don’t meet a lot of politicians on the golf links. If this initiative passes, they lose their political voice on issues critical to their jobs and their livelihoods.

Members of Local 1245 have a huge stake in the outcome of political races over the next few years. The politicians who come out on top will make key decisions on the implementation of utility deregulation, the fate of health and safety regulations, and other issues that have a direct impact on the living standards of Local 1245 members and their families.

The out-of-state masters of Proposition 226 want to muzzle California’s unions by creating bureaucratic hoops for us to jump through.

Don’t let them succeed. Vote “No” on Proposition 226.
## We Need You

...to help defeat Prop. 226. Please call the Central Labor Council closest to you and volunteer a few hours of your time for phone banking or door-to-door canvassing.

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<td>Sacramento Central Labor Council</td>
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<td>San Francisco Labor Council</td>
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## Pact with AC Transit ratified

Members of Local 1245 ratified a new agreement with AC Transit.

The three-year agreement provides a bonus of $2500 per year in each of the first two years, with a general wage increase of 11% in the third year.

The agreement, which covers 24 members at AC Transit, also made significant improvements to the retirement plan, providing for 2% at 53 and 2.5% at 65. Vesting in the pension plan, which had been set at 10 years, was lowered to five years.

A contribution of $1000 will be made each year for the next three years into the 457 plan (deferred compensation). Employees will receive an additional day of Paid Time Off per year, and an additional week of vacation after 15 years.

The parties, which utilized "mutual gains" techniques during bargaining, agreed to create new committees for training, safety, and outreach to high schools regarding job opportunities.

Bargaining for the union were stewards Dennis Hert, Guy Greenwood, Lynne Morel, Ernie Orozco and Business Rep. Lula Washington.

Conducting negotiations between Local 1245 and AC Transit were (counter-clockwise from right): Steve Montoya, Central Maintenance Superintendent; Joe DeProspero, Maintenance Superintendent/Lead; Dennis Hert, Local 1245 Steward; Sharon D. Banks, General Manager; Lula Washington, Local 1245 Business Representative; Lynne Morel, Local 1245 Steward, Michael Chapman, Negotiation Facilitator; Guy Greenwood, Local 1245 Steward; Sharon Benatar, Treasury Manager; and Marcia Hoyt, Chief Labor Attorney. (Photo: Eric Wolfe)
San Francisco-area pin dinner honors long-time members

35 years
Thirty-five year member John Krol, above right, is presented with service award by Business Manager Jack McNally.

Pacifica, Ca.
February 20, 1998

25 years

30 years

20 years