



## We're ready to bargain

## Where is PG&E?

Local 1245 Bargaining Committee: Ready and willing for serious negotiations with the company. But where is PG&E?

# Re-vote proposal steams members

*PG&E now says it will return to table, but stalls for time*

**P**acific Gas & Electric abruptly abandoned its call for a re-vote on the Table Agreement rejected by Local 1245 members last December, and informed the union on Feb. 5 that company negotiators are willing to return to the bargaining table—but not until sometime in March.

PG&E's shift in tactics came just 13 days after company negotiators derailed negotiations by claiming that union members didn't understand the Table Agreement. That highly-dubious claim, coupled with the demand for a re-vote, prompted the union Bargaining Committee to walk out of the negotiations on Jan. 23.

Business Manager Perry Zimmerman said union members would keep the pressure on PG&E until their concerns were properly addressed.

Union members had reacted with astonishment and disbelief to the company's assertion that members didn't understand what they were voting on.

"I'm amazed they let me drive that \$120,000 rig they got me, if I

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## Agreements reached with SMUD, Sierra Pacific

**T**he Sacramento Municipal Utility District agreed to 3.8% equity raises for Pre-apprentice, Apprentice, and Journeyman Linemen in bargaining with Local 1245.

Equity adjustments of 3% were agreed to for Light Foreman, Heavy Foreman and Troubleman. Electricians received a 3.9% equity increase.

All of the equity raises, effective Dec. 29, 2002, are in addition to the 3% general wage increase negotiated last fall.

Other classifications that are difficult to fill will be reviewed for adjustment by June 30, according to Local 1245 Business Representative Wayne Greer, who retired on Feb. 1. (See story, Pages 10-11)



Greer

**L**ocal 1245 members at Sierra Pacific Power ratified a new three-year labor agreement in a ratification vote counted Jan. 3.

Of the 426 ballots received, 329 voted yes, 96 voted no, and one ballot was void.

The agreement, negotiated on Dec. 12, is effective immediately.

The agreement raises wages 3% effective the first full pay period after ratification, 3.25% in January of 2004, and 3.75% in January 2005. It also includes phased-in equity adjustments for 27 classifications.

Employees will receive a lump sum payment of \$200 in lieu of making the first-year wage increase retroactive to Jan. 1.

For a fuller description of the agreement see the January 2003 issue of the Utility Reporter.

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## MARCH 8 &amp; 15

Regional Stewards Conferences  
for Pacific Gas & Electric  
(See Page 4 for complete list)

## APPOINTMENTS

ASPLUNDH TREE EXPERT CO.  
(CITY OF ROSEVILLE)

Negotiating Committee  
David Martinez

## DUKE ENERGY

Negotiating Committee  
David Stoneham  
Pedro Arroyo

## GCC-1

Negotiating Committee  
Ron Cochran

CONFERENCES, COUNCILS &  
CONVENTIONS

## Electrical Workers Minority Caucus

John Mendoza  
Phillipa Mitchell  
Mindy Ivy  
Sam Gutierrez  
William Gilliam  
Alfred Fortier  
Mary Wise  
Jiro (Jerry) Takeuchi  
Jim Ford  
Donna Ambeau  
Lula Washington  
Dorothy Fortier

## IBEW 2003 Utility Conference

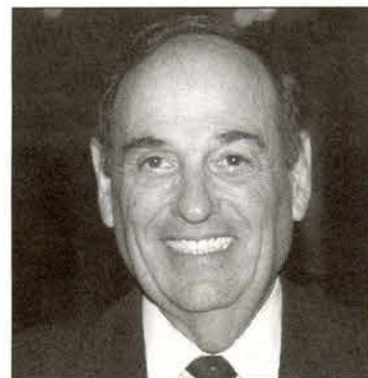
Ed Mallory  
Perry Zimmerman  
Mike Davis  
Chris Habecker  
Kathy Tindall  
Anna Bayless-Martinez  
Dave Scott  
Ron Moon  
John Mendoza  
Linda Jurado  
Lula Washington  
Mike Haentjens  
Roger Stalcup  
Stuart Neblett  
Dennis Seyfer  
Tom Dalzell

Employee Handbook/Liability  
Seminar

Tonya Alston-Maxwell  
Karen Kiley

## PG&E must come to grips with ratification vote

By Perry Zimmerman, Business Manager



I have a simple and short message this month on the subject of communication and understanding.

In the last month, Local 1245 members at Sierra Pacific and the City of Oakland ratified agreements that were negotiated without a great deal of fanfare. It appears that quick and quiet agreement has been reached with the Truckee-Donner Public Utility District. At the end of the year, SMUD and Local 1245 quietly worked out equity increases for a number of classifications, including climbing classifications.

When the employer treats negotiations as a business proposition, it is not all that difficult to reach agreement.

Why isn't that model working at PG&E?

As the October table agreement was being sent out for vote with our members at PG&E two months ago, I wrote of the importance of an informed electorate. I wrote: "The job of the union is then to explain as fully as possible to as many members as possible what the negotiating committee accomplished and why, as well as what it did not accomplish and why not. It is then the job of the membership to accept or reject the results of bargaining. The key to it all—an informed membership that becomes an informed electorate."

The right of our membership to accept or reject a bargaining package is fundamental. There's nothing new about it, it's been a fact of life at PG&E for more than fifty years. If the members reject a table agree-

ment, which they have done from time to time over the years, it just means that we have to return to negotiations, informed by the vote of our membership.

The company's response when we met on January 23 is thus a little hard to understand and impossible to accept.

Instead of giving Local 1245 credit for explaining the package and our members credit for understanding it—and accepting the fact that our members just didn't like what they saw—PG&E has chosen to blame Local 1245 for not explaining the package well enough. Implicit in that criticism is the belief that if we had explained the package better, the membership would have voted to accept it.

I don't buy it.

I cannot remember a bargaining agreement in the last 30 years that was explained more thoroughly than this one.

I believe that it was communicated. I believe that it was understood. I believe that it was considered. I believe that then, and only then, was it rejected.

Collective bargaining gives workers a voice in their working conditions. That voice is only meaningful if they have the final say on contract terms. You, our members, spoke loudly and unmistakably when you voted.

The issue is not one of poor communication or a lack of understanding. It is a matter of fairness and equity, both of which we expect and demand. I urge PG&E to come to grips with the ratification vote and return to the bargaining table. We've got a lot of work to do, and pretending that communication was the issue is not getting that work done.



### UtilityReporter

February 2003  
Vol. 52 No. 2  
Circulation: 23,400



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Published monthly at 3063 Citrus Circle, Walnut Creek, California 94598. Official publication of Local Union 1245, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, AFL-CIO, P.O. Box 4790, Walnut Creek, CA 94596.

Periodical postage paid at Walnut Creek and at additional mailing offices. USPS No. 654640, ISSN No. 0190-4965.

**POSTMASTER:** Please send Form 3579, Change of Address, and all correspondence to Utility Reporter, P.O. Box 4790, Walnut Creek, CA 94596.

Single copies \$1. Subscription by arrangement. Have you moved recently? Please send complete new address and your Social Security Number (by U.S. Mail) to: "Address Change", IBEW Local 1245, P.O. Box 4790, Walnut Creek, CA 94596. Our Web Site can be viewed at [www.IBEW1245.com](http://www.IBEW1245.com). Our phone number is (925) 933-6060.



## PG&E's proposal brings sharp response



### Try My Job for a Day

*Editor's note: The following e-mail to PG&E management is reprinted here with permission of the author.*

I feel compelled to write to you as a Bargaining Unit employee for 23 years, how I feel about the employees voting down the contract.

I am baffled why you think we don't understand the contract. We are all intelligent, informed employees, concerned about our future and our benefits that affect our families and ourselves. We want to be treated fairly and valued by the company—which we are not.

We are treated like second-class citizens. We *all* make this company run, from a Utility Clerk to the CEO. We all contribute to the success of PG&E, except as bargaining unit employees we don't get a big bonus check to show we are appreciated and we work hard.

We as employees have supported the company during bankruptcy and other major issues this company has endured over the years.

I don't understand why you want all the perks for management and don't want to give the union employees any enhancements, but want to take away from us. I feel so insulted by that.

My desk is the work for one-and-a-half people and now with Cordaptix, I'm doing the job of 2 people. With this program it takes us 10 times longer to do any inputting, and is very cumbersome and has a very big learning curve for everyone that uses it. This program has created a very high level of frustration to all users.

It is time management started treating union employees with respect and give us the recognition we deserve and work with the union to offer a contract we can all be happy with.

I invite any of you to come to Petaluma and work my desk for a day. You will then see how difficult and cumbersome our jobs have become because of Cordaptix, and then tells me we don't deserve any enhancements to our contract. I work 7-4 at 210 Corona Rd, Petaluma.

Betty DeConter  
Petaluma, CA

### Expected Better

*Editor's note: The following letter responds to an e-mail in which PG&E's Russ Jackson explains the company's belief that many members did not understand the Table Agreement that was voted down in December.*

To the Editor:

I became very upset when I read the letter sent out by Mr. Jackson. I felt it was an insult to the union leadership, the negotiating team and all the union members. I was very disappointed in the statements he made in that letter. They are so far removed from reality ...

I have always thought we should be able to expect better than that out of someone in such a high level position in this company. I can only hope our membership continues to stand strong on these issues, and that they continue to support the Negotiating Committee as they work to get us a fair contract.

This is definitely one of the most critical times we have faced as a union in recent history. It is very important that our members understand how important it is for us to let the management of this company know that we are paying very close attention to the information the union and the company provide to us. A lot of us really do study the issues thoroughly. We talk to each other constantly and we discuss these issues in great detail, so that we can make informed decisions when we vote.

The company has spent a lot of time and money training all of us to be able to perform our jobs as efficiently and professionally as possible. Don't they realize we would use those same skills to evaluate something as important as this contract proposal?

Rich Jaster  
Oroville, CA

### Read Our Lips

To the Editor:

IBEW 1245 members spoke loud and clear when we expressed our understanding of the contract proposal submitted for our vote—by our resounding rejection of same.

Perhaps the company would benefit by listening to its labor force, instead of their so-called "Sources, and First-line Supervisors" who the company apparently believes possess an incredible insight into what we, the people who "get the wash out," really think and understand.

Hogwash!

PG&E management: Read our lips! We're telling you "No, No, No." We do not accept your proposal and we do not accept your condescending attitude!

Liz Rounds  
Chico, CA

**Send your letter (with your name and phone number) to:**

**Utility Reporter Letters  
IBEW 1245  
PO Box 4790  
Walnut Creek, CA 94596**

*Note: We can't print personal attacks or letters dealing with union politics. Opinions expressed in Speaking Out are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IBEW Local 1245.*

## Local 1245 Unit Updates

Unit 3514, Chilcoot, will meet on March 12 and May 14. The February and April meetings have been cancelled.

Randy Osborn,  
Business Rep.

Unit 3314, South Lake Tahoe, has a new meeting location: Round Table Pizza, 1062 Emerald Bay Rd., South Lake Tahoe.

Randy Osborn,  
Business Rep.

Unit 1213, King City, will be meeting on a new day and dates for the near future. Starting in February, meetings will be on Thursdays. The dates for the next few months are: February 6, March 6, April 3, May 8, and June 5.

Mike Haentjens  
Business Rep.

Unit 3218, USBR-Keswick Dam, Redding, unit chair is Gordon Huber. He was mistakenly omitted from the unit schedule published in December Utility Reporter. Our apologies!

Unit 3025, PGT/Spokane, meets on the first Thursday at 12 noon at the Spokane PGT office. This unit was mistakenly omitted from the unit scheduled published in December Utility Reporter. Our apologies!



**REGIONAL SHOP STEWARD CONFERENCES**  
**On PG&E Contract Negotiations**

***Time for Action***

**March 8, 2003**

**Bakersfield**

Double Tree Hotel  
 3100 Camino Del Rio Court  
 Bakersfield, CA 93308

**Chico**

Holiday Inn  
 685 Manzanita Court  
 Chico, CA 95926

**Concord**

Holiday Inn  
 1050 Burnett Ave.  
 Concord, CA 94520

**Eureka**

Eureka Inn  
 518- 7th  
 Eureka, CA

**Fresno**

Holiday Inn Fresno Airport  
 5090 E. Clinton  
 Fresno, CA 93727

**North Bay**

DoubleTree Hotel  
 One Double Tree Drive  
 Rohnert Park, CA 94928

**Sacramento**

Radisson Hotel Sacramento  
 500 Leisure Lane  
 Sacramento, CA 95815

**San Jose**

San Jose Airport Hyatt  
 1740 North 1st Street  
 San Jose, CA 95112

**San Luis Obispo**

Embassy Suites  
 333 Madonna Road  
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93405

**Stockton/Modesto**

Bud's Seafood Grille  
 314 Lincoln Center  
 Stockton, CA 95207

**March 15, 2003**

**San Francisco**

Nick's at Rockaway Beach  
 100 Rockaway Beach Ave.  
 Pacifica, CA

**General Construction**

IBEW Local 1245  
 3063 Citrus Circle  
 Walnut Creek, CA 94598

Stewards: Please watch the mail for your invitation.

**Questions? Call 925-933-6060**



# Re-vote proposal steams members

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can't read, if I can't understand [the agreement]," said Richmond Troubleman Jack Spencer.

"The members did understand the package—that wasn't the issue. The package itself was the issue," said Bargaining Committee member Terry Andreucci at the union's Advisory Council meeting in Concord on Feb. 1.

Richmond Troubleman Tom Gillespie suggested the union produce a button reading: "What is it about 'No' that you don't understand?" But he settled for a button with an IBEW fist that says: "Understand THIS."

Operating Clerk-Typist Elizabeth Lee reacted with surprise to the news that the company wanted a re-vote on the original Table Agreement.

"Why?" said Lee, a 24-year member. "The decision would be the same."



**"What is it about 'No' that you don't understand?"**

Tom Gillespie  
Troubleman, Richmond

The company, apparently reconsidering the strategic value of insulting the union's membership, informed Business Manager Zimmerman by hand-delivered letter on Feb. 5 that it would be willing to return to the bargaining table in "early to mid March." The company said it needed additional time to update "benchmark data," referring to the wage surveys it cited repeatedly during negotiations last fall.

"It's important that PG&E now acknowledges it must come back to the table, but I see no purpose in delaying talks until mid-March," said Zimmerman. "I think our members have made it very clear they don't want to be compared to employees at other utilities—they want to be compensated for what they've contributed to *this* utility."

As the Utility Reporter went to press, the union was studying ways to continue the on-going campaign to achieve a fair contract that will be acceptable to the unions' members.

"The union is not going to go into hibernation until mid-March, and the members are not going to go into hibernation until mid-March," said Assistant Business Manager Bob Choate. "Members didn't like being insulted. They have very strong feelings about the issues on the table. If the company doesn't come back to the table prepared to listen to their employees, they'll be stirring up a hornets' nest that's already been whacked once."

**Extensive Preparations**

Local 1245 had made extensive preparations for the resumption of bargaining prior to the Jan. 23 meeting. The union fielded hundreds of phone calls, letters, faxes and e-mail messages from members wanting to make sure the union understood why they voted "No." In mid-January the union conducted an on-line survey that reaffirmed the members' bargaining priorities—led by pension improvements, no cost-sharing of medical premiums, and significant

wage improvements.

"The members see the CEOs being taken care of very well," said Dan Parmenter, a Woodland lineman and Advisory Council representative. "I don't begrudge management what they got, I just think we should get what's fair and equitable also."

Members scoffed at the idea that the union hadn't adequately informed the members.

"This package was given to more people and explained better than any other package since I've been around," said Leroy Foster, an Electric Crew Foreman in Antioch who represents East Bay and Materials on the Advisory Council.

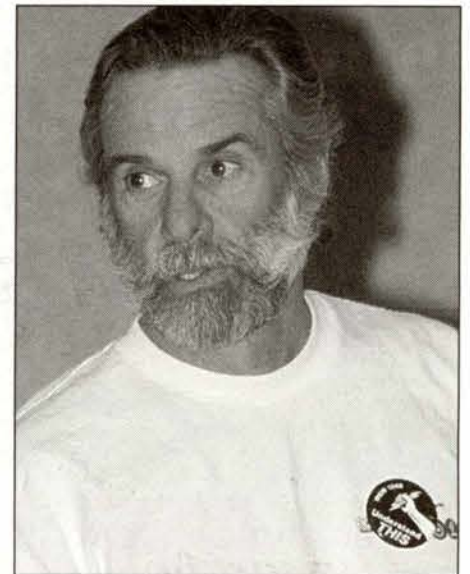
"I thought the members understood it very well and didn't like it," said Richmond Meter Reader Peggy Kelliher. "That's all there was to it."

**Keep Members Energized**

Chris Habecker, Fresno Operating Clerk and chair of the Fresno Unit, concurred.

"The company is totally wrong that we didn't understand the issues. Why are they telling me I don't understand?"

Habecker, sporting a freshly-minted "Understand THIS" button, said she thought the union's job now



**"The members did understand the package – that wasn't the issue. The package itself was the issue."**

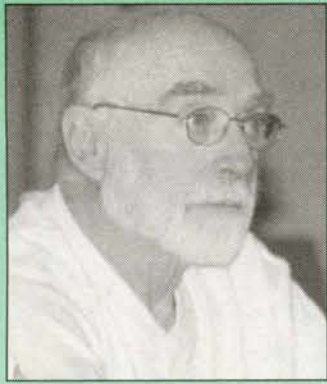
Terry Andreucci  
Bargaining Committee



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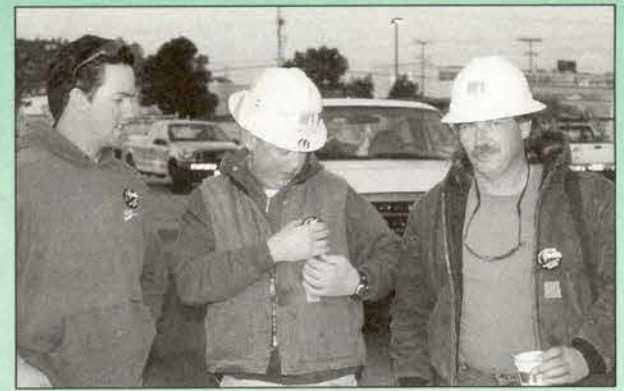






**“This package was given to more people and explained better than any other package since I’ve been around.”**

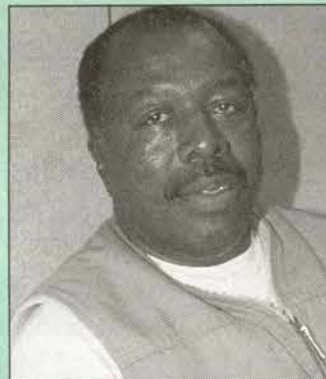
*Leroy Foster  
Electric Crew Foreman, Antioch*



Members working in General Construction put on “Understand THIS” buttons in San Francisco Yard. From left: Chris Reese, Pete Anderson and Floyd Kemp.

**“Yes, I understood [the Table Agreement]. In fact, the union was definitely pushing for it to pass.”**

*John Johnson  
Lineman, Richmond*



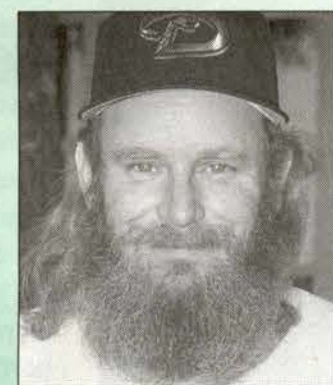
**“I think you’ll see the Gas Department involved in this, the Line Department involved in this, and General Construction, too.”**

*Chris Habecker  
Operating Clerk, Fresno*



**“Members didn’t like being insulted. They have very strong feelings about the issues on the table.”**

*Assistant Business Manager  
Bob Choate*



**“I don’t begrudge management what they’ve got, I just think they should get what they deserve and equitable.”**

*Lineman*

**► From Page 5**

was to keep the members energized and translate their frustration with the company into active support for the Bargaining Committee.

“I think you’ll see the Gas Department involved in this, the Line Department involved in this, and

General Construction, too,” said Habecker, who also serves as the union’s Recording Secretary.

Advisory Council members left the February 1 meeting armed with lapel buttons, materials for union bulletin boards, and visible determination to bring the company back to the bargaining table, and make them

bargain seriously when negotiations resume.

“I’m going to distribute buttons, put up fliers, and if people want to meet after work and discuss strategy, we’ll do that, too,” said Mary Wise, an Account Clerk in West Sacramento with 30 years service in the union.

Lee Thomas, a Eureka Lineman and Advisory Council member, urged members to attend unit meetings as the union campaign unfolds.

“We need to stay informed, and we need to show our support for our negotiating team,” said Thomas.

Andreucci, a member of that negotiating team, warned that a sus-



**"I think our members have made it very clear they don't want to be compared to employees at other utilities—they want to be compensated for what they've contributed to *this* utility."**

*Perry Zimmerman  
Business Manager*



Al Zazzarone, left, accepts a button from Business Rep. Hunter Stern in San Francisco.

**"Why [re-vote]? The decision would be the same."**

*Elizabeth Lee  
Operating Clerk-Typist, Richmond*



**"We need to stay informed, and we need to show our support for our negotiating team."**

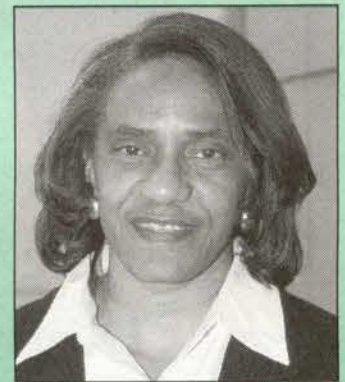
*Lee Thomas  
Lineman, Eureka*

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*Dan Parmenter  
man, Woodland*

**"I'm going to distribute buttons, put up fliers, and if people want to meet after work and discuss strategy, we'll do that, too."**

*Mary Wise  
Account Clerk, W. Sacramento*



tained effort by all of the members would be required to achieve the union's goals.

"We have to be methodical about it—this could be a long haul," he said. "It's not going to be easy—we're going to need all your support."

The company's abrupt change of strategy, only three days into the

union's "Understand THIS" campaign, is the clearest evidence yet that an energized and united membership can make itself heard.

"The company shouldn't sell their employees short," said Zimmerman. "This isn't the end of what the employees have to say—this is just the beginning."

The union has scheduled steward conferences, with a special focus on contract negotiations, throughout the PG&E system. All conferences will be held on March 8, except for two. Those two—San Francisco, and a General Construction conference in Walnut Creek—will be held on March 15.





# Tree Trimmers respond

Local 1245 Line Clearance Tree Trimmers throughout northern and central California played a critical role in the response to winter storms that slammed into California in December.

Tree trimmers contended with high winds, heavy rain and saturated soil as they labored to clear away trees that in many cases had knocked out electric service.

Those responding included Local 1245 members at Asplundh Tree Expert Co., Utility Tree Service, Inc., Trees, Inc., Arbor Tree Surgery Co., Davey Tree Surgery Co., EPA PROVCO, Modesto Irrigation District, Sacramento Utility District and the City of Redding.

“Line clearance work is dangerous enough under normal conditions,” said Senior Business Rep. Ray Thomas. “You add in the wind, rain and soil conditions and you begin to see why these highly skilled line clearance tree trimmers are indispensable.”



One danger of working with large trees during storms is the possibility that one of them will uproot at any time. This PG&E customer's home was hit by a large Ponderosa Pine and an Oak tree prior to the arrival of the tree crew. The tree crew kept a close eye on surrounding trees during this job!

## LINE CLEARANCE TREE TRIMMERS



Working to clear away a wind-topped Ponderosa Pine from a driveway to help PG&E line crews get to downed power lines are, above, Davey Tree Top Climber Dave Hundley, and, right, Davey Tree Crew Foreman Mark Gilliam. The work took place in Lake Head, about 25 miles north of Redding.



# Bargaining for Davey Tree employees at Turlock ID, Santa Clara



Negotiating for the union in talks with Davey Tree over work performed at Turlock Irrigation District and the City of Santa Clara are, from left: Senior Business Rep. Ray Thomas, Rosario Garcia (working on Turlock properties), Marco Hernandez (Working on City of Santa Clara properties), and Business Rep. Junior Ornelas.

Local 1245 is attempting to negotiate a first labor agreement for Line Clearance Tree Trimmers employed by Davey Tree to perform work at Turlock Irrigation District and the City of Santa Clara.

Davey and Local 1245 negotiators have met three times in an effort to bargain a labor agreement for both properties, according to Senior Business Rep. Ray Thomas.

“To date, the parties have been unable to produce a contract worthy of taking out to the future members at these properties,” Thomas said.

A first agreement is not an easy task. It requires strong support from the employees themselves.

Foremen and climbers at both properties make approximately \$2 an hour less—depending on classification—than their counterparts already working under labor agreements.

Medical is currently not affordable for these employees, who are presently required to pay 40% of plan premiums.



# First contract with Utility Tree

**L**ine Clearance Tree Trimmers at Utility Tree began enjoying the benefit of a company-paid Money Purchase Pension Plan effective Jan. 4, 2003, a provision of the union's first labor agreement with the formerly non-union company.

Under the new agreement Utility Tree will contribute 3% of all wages into the plan on behalf of all employees.

Utility Tree employees ratified the three-year agreement with a 90% affirmative vote, counted at Local 1245's Walnut Creek headquarters last July. Significantly, the agreement delivers wage and medical coverage parity with other union tree trimmers by Independence Day 2004.

Bringing all tree trimmer contractors under a labor agreement has been a long-sought objective for Local 1245. The presence of low-paying non-union contractors exerts downward pressure on wages and benefits. Organizing Utility Tree has brought nearly all Line Clearance Tree Trimmers in the union's jurisdiction under the protection of a labor agreement.

Utility Tree employees received immediate wage improvements under the new agreement. Foremen received a 4.3% wage increase upon ratification, and a 6.4% increase effective one year later. Top Climbers received a 5% increase upon ratification, and a 7.8% wage increase effective one year later.

All classifications will reach parity with the Asplundh Tree Expert union wages in 2004. Utility Tree was recently acquired by Asplundh.

Prior to ratification, employees paid \$159.08 per month for family medical premiums. Local 1245 negotiated a 5% reduction of this cost sharing effective upon ratification. Effective July 4, 2004, employees will pay only \$25 per month for family coverage and \$10

per month for individual coverage.

Even without including the inevitable increase in medical premium costs between now and July 4, 2004, the negotiated reductions in the employee's share of the premium represents a savings of at least 85% on the employee's contribution for the family medical premium.

Vision care will also be added to the medical benefits at Utility Tree effective July 4, 2004.

A union contract also means that Utility Tree employees will have the benefits of seniority and a grievance procedure that includes binding arbitration.

The agreement will cover crew Foremen, a particularly important achievement for the union, given that Utility Tree for many years

had maintained that Foremen were supervisors and therefore ineligible for union protection.

Wages were not improved as much for Utility Tree employees working on the Trinity County Public Utility District properties due to the structure of the Utility Tree bid with the District. These individuals received a 3% wage increase effective Jan. 5, 2003 with a wage opener set for October of 2003. But these employees did achieve the same terms for pension plan and medical contribution levels.

Negotiating this important first agreement for the union were Top Climber Robert "Casey" Burtch, Foreman Fermin Alvarado, Senior Business Rep. Ray Thomas, and Business Rep. Junior Ornelas.



## CLEARING AN OAK

Utility Tree Crew Foreman Jeremiah Sparacio clears an oak tree in a rear easement in the City of Redding. Not pictured are Sparacio's crew: Groundman Rick Munday and Apprentice Climber Larry Fowler.

# Arbor employees ratify agreement

**L**ine Clearance Tree Trimmers at Arbor Tree ratified a new one-year agreement that boosts wages and enhances retention rights.

The one-year agreement, which received a 96% favorable vote, provides a 3.8% general wage hike for Line Clearance Tree Trimming classifications, effective Jan. 1, 2003.

The agreement also provides general wage increases for Vegetation Specialists: 7.7% retroactive to June 1, 2002, and 7.1% effective June 1, 2003.

Local 1245 negotiated a union seniority provision for purposes of determining retention by another Local 1245 signatory contractor.

Meal allowance was increased from \$12 to \$15 per meal.

The agreement increases the Money Purchase Pension contribution from 2% to 3% effective Jan. 1, 2003.

The agreement requires employee medical premium contributions of \$10 per month for an employee, \$10 per month for spouse, and \$10 per month for each dependent, but with no combination to exceed \$25 per month.

Negotiating for the union were Arbor Foreman Will Soza, Senior Business Rep. Ray Thomas, and Business Rep. Junior Ornelas.



## BALLOT COMMITTEE

Serving on the Ballot Committee for the Arbor Tree ratification vote are Austin Lea II, Judge (left), Enrique Hernandez, Teller, and Senior Business Rep. Ray Thomas (not pictured).



# Wayne Greer

## A union career



Unions have been a part of Wayne Greer's life since he was old enough to ride a tricycle.

"I used to go to union meetings with my dad when I was 4 years old," Greer remembers. "The cigar smoke was so thick you could cut it with a knife. A lot of ideas passed back and forth, especially at contract time."

Greer, who retired Feb. 1 after 23 years on the staff of IBEW Local 1245, always figured he'd belong to a union. In 1966 he got the chance.

Bringing a bit of line construction experience from the military, he was considered for a position in the line department at PG&E. But there weren't any openings.

"The company asked if I knew how to use a shovel," Greer recalls.



"Time to go to the union meeting, Dad?"

An army veteran, Greer assured the company he was experienced.

First day of work, assigned to the Gas T&D Department in Oakport, Greer made up

his mind to join the union. Membership wasn't required in those days, but for Greer unionism was a matter of family values. It wasn't just those cigar-smoking Teamsters his father Clyde had introduced him to; Greer's mother, Lena, was also a union activist—with the retail clerks' union at Montgomery Ward in Oakland.

Greer asked his foreman, Jim Lydon, how he could join. Unbeknownst to Greer, Lydon was treasurer for Local 1245 and only too happy to sign up a new recruit.

### Truck Got Shot At

Greer went to the Gas Service Department in 1967, becoming a Serviceman a couple of years later. He didn't hesitate to call the union when his truck got shot at. Business Reps Pete Dutton and Jack McNally came out to investigate.

"Dutton took a grease pen out of my pocket, made circles around the bullet holes, gave me back the pen," Greer recalls. "They said, 'We'll get back to you.'"

Greer wasn't shy about check-



Childhood fondness for animals.

ing up on his union, seeing what it was up to. In 1969 he went to all 4 unit meetings in his area.

"McNally wanted to know why," recalls Greer. "I said I wanted to know if the union was telling the same story at all the meetings."

McNally responded to Greer's inquisitiveness by recruiting him as a shop steward.

Gas Servicemen had plenty of safety concerns in those days, a lot of them involving potentially hazardous duties after dark, like going into vacant buildings, collecting cash, and performing non-pay turnoffs. Assistant Business Manager John Wilder decided Greer ought to have a chance to apply his energy to some of these issues and placed him on the Gas Serviceman labor-management committee.

Greer, it was a fact, had his share of hazardous experiences. Or maybe a little more than his share.

◆ He once fell into an elevator shaft while removing a meter on Telegraph Ave. in Oakland. He might be there still except that four hours later the police noticed his unattended PG&E truck double-parked outside the building and notified his supervisor.

◆ Then there was the time he was locked up in a cage in a dog kennel "by someone robbing the place."

◆ And let's not forget the bedroom window that came up while Wayne was performing a turn-on after dark. The man had a gun pointed



Wayne's first set of wheels.

## Wayne's early vehicles



"Hey guys, I got candy in the trunk!"





Wayne saddles up.

right at Wayne's head. "I'm turning it on," Wayne said. "You're turning it off," the man replied, still pointing the gun. "No," Wayne insisted, "I'm the turn-on man." The turn-on man made a safe get-away.

Wayne took a break from PG&E in 1972. He tried his hand at "hobby farming." And he worked—now in the Machinists union—at White Freight Liner near Portland, Ore., but in early 1975 he got laid off. By May he was back at PG&E working in the Gas Meter shop at 18<sup>th</sup> and Shotwell in San Francisco.

### 'Just Fun to Be Around'

In 1976 he got a chance to return to his old position of Gas Serviceman, in Oakland.

For a while he served as helper to Frank Saxsenmeier, another Gas Department employee destined for a position on the union staff.

"He knew more than I did," recalls Saxsenmeier. "He was a good helper. He knew the work because he had been a Gas Serviceman before."

The two of them "ran around in a two-man rig, laughing the whole time," says Saxsenmeier. "He was just fun to be around."

In February 1980, Greer was brought on staff by then-Business Manager Dean Cofer. He served in the San Jose Division until mid-1982, the East Bay Mission District until 1984, and then settled in as the PG&E representative in Sacramento through 1999, when he took on his final union assignment: representing members at the Sacramento Municipal

Utility District.

Greer gained a reputation as a rep who could recruit and develop stewards.

"He is such an organizer that he can take a group of shop stewards and organize them in such a way that he can get them doing everything," says Saxsenmeier. Five of Greer's stewards have gone on to serve on the union staff: Business Reps Sam Glero, Kit Stice, Arlene, and Darryl Norris, and former Assistant Business Manager Art Murray, now on the IBEW's International staff.

Greer's diligence as a rep flowed easily from a long-standing desire to help people. Greer credits his childhood fondness for animals with helping him develop empathy for others.

But there are limits to anyone's empathy. Greer ran into his limits when dealing with management during his early days on staff in San Jose.

"PG&E's HR rep was not very labor-friendly," says Greer. "He was so paranoid of the union he had a map on his wall in his office" that he used to track the minute-by-minute presence of union reps on the property.

This changed considerably when Greer got a new assignment.

"When I came to East Bay, I had a lot of respect for the HR people there," Greer recalls. The parties found a more amicable way of dealing with disputes, and Greer's grievance load dropped dramatically. "We had the same number of issues, but we found we could deal with them by getting the facts," Greer recalls.

When Greer was assigned to Sacramento—"I didn't know one person

there"—he sometimes had to improvise. To add some extra depth to a stewards conference, he invited someone he had previously walked with on the picketlines: Cesar Chavez.

"I called Cesar and asked him if he'd be available to come to my shop steward conference. He said he'd do it for free if I'd pick him up at the airport."

Greer asked Cesar to talk about organizing. Cesar opened his presentation to the stewards by saying, "The first guy I ever heard about who organized wore sandals and walked on water," Greer recalls. "He went on to talk about nonviolence and how to make change, develop unity."

Greer understands that building the power of workers is an on-going mission, not a one-shot affair.

"Most people who come to work at a place think everything there is a given. You have to inform them that these are things that were fought for through collective bargaining, everything from wages to working conditions," says Greer.

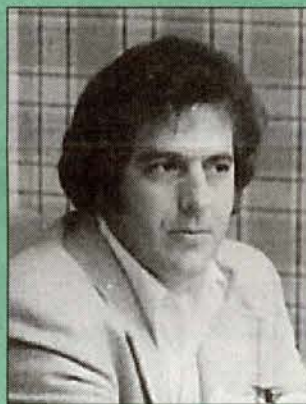
"The Serviceman who comes in now thinks his wages and benefits are the way it's always been, but it hasn't always been that way."

Greer's looking forward to the usual retirement activities. He plans to continue his interest in auto racing (as a spectator), fishing, flea markets, gardening, and grandparenting—he's got 11 by his four kids and four step-kids.

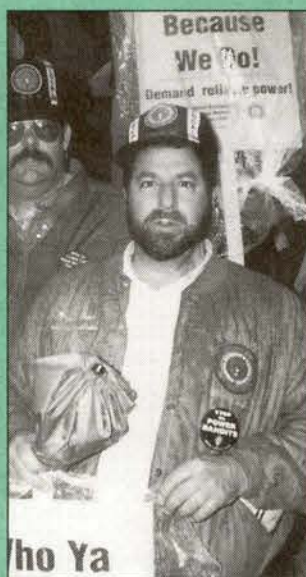
But don't be surprised if you see him on the occasional picket-line.



Wayne in his blue suede shoes.



Business Rep. Greer at a Stewards Conference.



On the line during 1994 demonstration against PG&E downsizing.

"Elvis Presley was my idol. The only time I ever got expelled from school, some guy stepped on my blue suede shoes and I knocked him on his a--. When the dean called my mom and said, 'I have to expel your son,' she said, 'I suppose it has something to do with his shoes,' and he said, 'Yeah'. She said, 'Send him home.'"





NEW ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

President Ed Mallory (left) swears in new Advisory Council members Ron McDowell (center), representing Line Clearance Tree Trimmers, and Dan Mayo, representing PG&E San Joaquin, at the Feb. 1 Advisory Council meeting in Concord, CA.

## Bush Medicare reform may force seniors into private plans

Tommy Thompson, the secretary of health and human services, said on Feb. 7 that he could not guarantee that President Bush's Medicare proposal would include prescription drug benefits for elderly people who remain in the traditional fee-for-service Medicare program, the San Francisco Chronicle reported.

Thompson said that the elderly would not be forced to join health maintenance organizations, but left open the possibility that they might need to join some type of private health plan to get drug benefits.

Thompson offered his views in testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee. But when it came to Bush's proposal to revamp Medicare and offer drug coverage to the elderly, Thompson was vague.

"The final decisions have not been made," Thompson said, in a formulation that he repeated more than a dozen times. "The proposal is still being worked on."

Thompson said he could not answer one of the biggest questions about the Bush proposal: whether Medicare beneficiaries would have to leave the traditional program to obtain drug coverage.

More than 85% of the 40 million Medicare beneficiaries are in the fee-

for-service program.

Thompson said he saw "a big distinction" between HMOs and less restrictive private plans, like preferred provider organizations. His carefully worded answers left open the possibility that Medicare beneficiaries might have to join private plans, not necessarily HMOs, to get drug benefits.

The same ambiguity existed in Bush's recent State of the Union address. "All seniors should have the choice of a health care plan that provides prescription drugs," Bush said.

The secretary refused to say what drug benefits, if any, would be offered to the 35 million people in the original fee-for-service Medicare program. He refused to rule out the possibility that the new drug benefits might be available only through private health plans.

Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones of Ohio, said she and her elderly constituents were nervous about relying on private plans to supply drug benefits. "HMOs have run out on Medicare recipients," Tubbs Jones said. In the last five years, 2.4 million beneficiaries have been dropped by health maintenance organizations, which say they are paid too little by Medicare.

By the Local 1245  
Safety Committee



## Mischief of age

I hurt a little more these days, a result of age and a few bad choices. At 11 years old you are invincible, and jumping off garage roofs was done for the thrill.

This could be why the hip is a little stiff.

I move a little slower, the spring in my step has faded. I try to think that I am more cautious now, more aware of my surroundings, needing to avoid slips and falls at all costs.

I used to "just do it." Now I plan to ensure successful completion.

Items slide from my grip and I need glasses to read.

I don't think I could avoid these icons of aging, but I must acknowledge them and make plans for their mischief.

All in all I have made good use of my time on the Safety Committee and it has made me more aware of what I can do to help myself and others become safety conscious.

Don't take any unnecessary risks. Look after your health. Work safe.

*Ralph Muraca*

## Appropriate clothing

The seasons change a little everyday—sometimes hot, cold, rainy, snowy, dry.

We cannot control the weather. In order to keep our bodies comfortable, we normally adjust our clothing needs to whatever activity we intend to do.

If you are swimming, wear appropriate attire. If you are in the snow country, wear appropriate attire.

There are many clothing manufacturers. New ideas come along all the time as they try to come up with better products. Some companies have new clothing requirements for lineworkers, such as TY-VEX clothing designed to prevent electrical burns to the body.

Some people find certain clothes

uncomfortable. But when looked at from a safety standpoint—if it offers more protection, it's probably better for electrical workers.

Aside from the burn protection issue, because of the present winterlike conditions, we are wearing more clothing to keep our bodies warm in the elements. Whatever you wear, do not wear any loose clothing around pulling machines, PTOs, capson wheels, butterflies, or other machine-driven equipment. Loose clothing or loose gloves can get caught very easily in machinery, and can cause severe damage to our bodies.

Be very careful to wear the appropriate clothing, and proper gloves, to perform our jobs safely.

*Stoney Burk*

Current members of the Local 1245 Safety Committee: Stoney Burk, Alameda Power & Telecomm.; Keith Hopp, Pacific Gas & Electric; Ralph Muraca, City of Santa Clara; Al White, Pacific Gas & Electric; David Vipond, Citizens Communications; Rich Lane, Turlock Irrigation District; Art Torres, Sacramento Municipal Utility District; and Assistant Business Manager Jim McCauley.