



# THE DISPATCHER

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**First Blood martyrs:** ILWU Local 13 President Ramon Ponce De Leon (left) remembers Dickie Parker and John Knudsen, the first martyrs of the 1934 strike, at a small graveside memorial. The Bloody Thursday remembrance in Southern California also included a car caravan. Pictured next to Ponce De Leon from left to right are: PCPA President Greg Mitre, Local 13 member Angel Blanco, SoCal pensioner Jerry Garretson, and PCPA Poet Laureate Jerry Brady.

## ILWU members find ways to honor Bloody Thursday sacrifices under COVID-19 restrictions

Picnics were canceled this July 5 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but ILWU members and pensioners along the West Coast organized socially-distanced Bloody Thursday remembrances to honor the sacrifices of workers killed during the 1934 West Coast strike that led to the establishment of the ILWU. (Read ILWU historian Harvey Schwartz's history of the "Big Strike" on page 4.)

### SoCal caravan

Southern California ILWU members, pensioners, and family gathered on Sunday, July 5, to mark Bloody Thursday with a car procession that concluded with a graveside memorial at Roosevelt Memorial Park in Gardena, where the first two martyrs of the 1934 strike, San Pedro High

graduate Dickie Parker and Lomita resident John Knudsen, are buried.

This year's memorial was scaled down to observe proper social distancing protocols and ensure everyone's safety. There were over 100 cars in the procession, including several beautifully restored classic cars. Most people remained in their vehicles while a small number conducted the service.

Among those in attendance for the graveside memorial were Local 13 President Ramon Ponce De Leon, Local 63 President Mike Podue, Local 94 President Danny Miranda, Local 13 Vice President Jesse "Nacho" Enriquez, Local 13 member and event coordinator, Angel Blanco, Pacific Coast Pensioner Association (PCPA) President Greg Mitre, Southern California Pensioner President Jerry Garretson, and PCPA Poet Laureate Jerry

Brady who opened the memorial with a poem about the 1934 strike.

"There is no greater love than this—for one to lay down their life for their friends," Ponce De Leon said of Parker and Knudsen. "We wouldn't have the lives that we have if it wasn't for these men to start it off. The fight is not over. We still have issues that we need to deal with and we're still fighting every day."

"The most important thing we do all year is to pay tribute to these men who gave their lives so we could have this union," said Blanco. "They did what they had to do for us, so this is the least we can do for them."

### Bay Area Bloody Thursday featured new and old

The official Bloody Thursday ceremony sponsored each year by the Bay Area Longshoremen's Memorial

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# ILWU mourns the passing of Civil Rights icon and Congressman John Lewis

**T**he International Longshore and Warehouse Union joins millions of people across the country in mourning the death of Civil Rights icon and United States Congressman John Lewis. Our deepest condolences go out to his family, friends, and all of those whose lives were touched by Congressman Lewis' life and work. Lewis passed away on July 17 at the age of 80 after a long battle with pancreatic cancer. He was one of the few surviving members of Dr. Martin Luther King's inner circle.

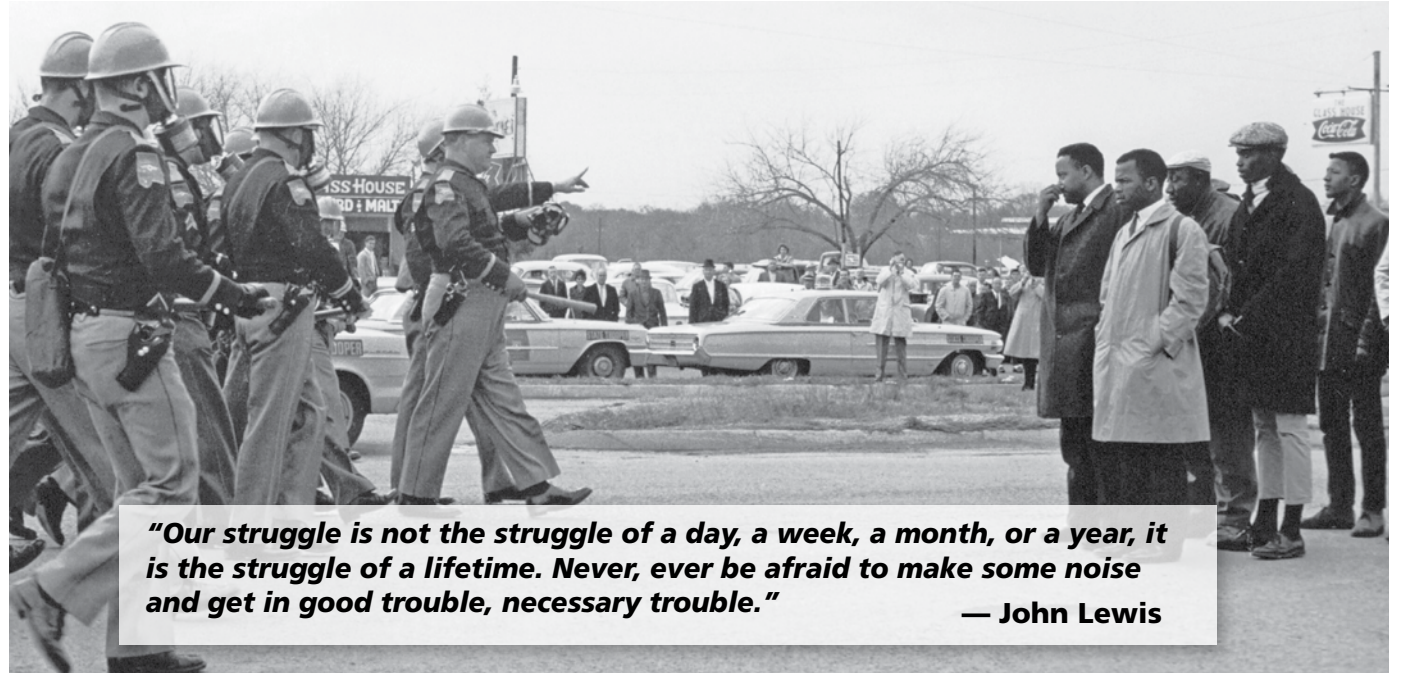
The loss of Congressman Lewis was especially hard because it came at a time when the issues that he championed his entire life—civil rights, opposition to police brutality, voting rights, and economic justice—are once again front and center of the current national debate.

"John Lewis was a true hero and warrior for the working class," said ILWU International President Willie Adams in a statement released shortly after Lewis' death. "He was fearless, committed, and unwavering in his dedication to racial and economic justice. In the streets of Selma and the halls of Congress, John Lewis fought for us all. The torch has truly been passed to a new generation of activists who today are continuing the fight for civil rights. May the memory of his life-long dedication and commitment to social justice and the struggle for freedom be a light that guides us through these challenging times."

## Coming of age in the "King years"

Lewis was born into a sharecropping family in 1940 in Troy, Alabama. His life was shaped by his lived experience in the segregated Jim Crow South and his coming of age during the early years of the Civil Rights movement.

"I grew up about 50 miles from Montgomery. Growing up there as a young child, I tasted the bitter fruits of racism. I saw the signs that said white men, colored men; white women, colored women; white waiting, colored waiting," Lewis said. "And I would ask my mother, my father, my grandparents, and my



**"Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble."**

**— John Lewis**

**Standoff on the Edmund Pettus Bridge:** On March 7, 1965, civil rights protesters attempted to march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, the state capital, to draw attention to the issue of voting rights for African-Americans. Led by Hosea Williams (at left front in the dark raincoat) and John Lewis (at right front in the light raincoat), the marchers crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge. There they encountered Alabama state troopers and local police officers who ordered them to turn back. When the protesters refused, the police tear-gassed and beat them. Over 50 people, including Lewis, were hospitalized.

great-grandparents why. They would say, 'That's the way it is. Don't go getting in trouble.'"

Lewis was 14 years-old when years of organizing and legal work by the NAACP culminated in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that declared segregation in public schools unconstitutional. He was only one year older than Emmett Till when Till was lynched in Mississippi in 1955 and the shocking photos of his desecrated body appeared in the Black magazines *Jet* and the *Chicago Defender*. As a young man, Lewis was inspired by Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-56 and he spent hours listening to the speeches of Dr. King on the radio.

Lewis was an unfailing supporter of the rights and dignity of working-class Americans and a fearless champion for liberty and civil rights throughout his entire life. He was one of the original Freedom Riders in the summer of 1960 during which he faced violent attacks by angry racists.

## March on Washington

Lewis helped to organize and also spoke at the historic 1963 March on Washington where Dr. Martin Luther King delivered the "I Have A Dream" speech. Lewis was not only the youngest speaker at the March; as a leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), he also represented the most radical organization.

"To those who have said, 'Be patient and wait,' we have long said that we cannot be patient," Lewis said that day. "We do not want our freedom gradually, but we want to be free now!"

Lewis challenged not only racists and segregationists but also liberal allies who he believed did not go far enough in eradicating injustice. In an early draft of his speech for the March on Washington, Lewis criticized the Kennedy Administration's civil rights bill because it was "too little and too late. There's not one thing in the bill that will protect our people from police brutality" the draft said. The language was later changed to lukewarm support for the bill out of respect for more conservative Civil Rights elders who asked for the change.

Lewis courageously put his body on the line in pursuit of racial justice and equality. He and Reverend Hosea Williams from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference led a nonviolent march in 1965 across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, headed toward Montgomery. The pair led over 500 peaceful marchers into a line of violent racist police who attacked the group with clubs, bullwhips, and tear gas while Lewis urged everyone to kneel and pray. Lewis was so severely beaten in the "Bloody Sunday" incident

that he had to be hospitalized with skull fractures and nearly died from his injuries.

## ILWU family

John Lewis had longstanding connections with the ILWU that were forged over many decades because of a shared dedication to racial and economic justice, lifelong support for unions and workers, and the fact that his youngest sister, Rosa Tyner, was a member of ILWU Locals 10 and 91 for 23 years.

As a member of Congress, Representative Lewis was a champion of working people and a strong supporter of collective bargaining rights. He advocated for a living wage, called for raising the minimum wage and supported Davis-Bacon and other prevailing wage laws. He called for and strengthened workplace safety standards. Rep. Lewis was in all ways a true friend to longshore, maritime, and warehouse workers.

"There is a lot to learn from the life of John Lewis," said ILWU International Vice President Bobby Olvera. "He fought against the forces of segregation at a time when civil rights were unpopular with white Americans. He responded to hate and violence with courage and hope and the belief that working-class people, united, could make America a better place for us all."

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## DISPATCHER

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# U.S. Senators on Agriculture Committee urge foreign grain companies to reach ILWU agreement

Attacks on ILWU pensions, health care threaten America's farmers and stability of industry, say sponsors of Grain Standards Reauthorization Act

Two U.S. Senators directed harsh words at foreign-owned grain company officials during the Agriculture Committee's markup of the Grain Standards Reauthorization Act in Washington, D.C. on June 24.

The grain companies – Marubeni, Mitsui and Louis Dreyfus – are failing to negotiate in good faith with ILWU grainhandler locals in the Northwest, while U.S.-based TEMCO reached an ILWU agreement more than two years ago.

Ranking Democratic Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) said, "I have heard troubling reports that certain foreign-owned grain companies may be failing to make good-faith efforts to reach an agreement with their workers. These protracted and contentious negotiations ultimately harm the workers, the American farmers who want certainty, and the American company that has already put in the work to come to an agreement. I would urge all parties to engage in the process in good faith. If left unresolved, these negotiations will undermine certainty for everyone involved in the grain trade, which is the purpose of our meeting today."

Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) echoed Sen. Stabenow's comments, adding, "I am deeply concerned by what is happening to the workers at some of our nation's largest grain export terminals in the Pacific Northwest. It is my understanding that six terminals, owned either by Louis Dreyfus, a Dutch firm, and two Japanese conglomerates, have refused to negotiate in good faith with the men and women who have worked at these ports for 70 years."

### American company reaches agreement

The grain multinationals that Brown called out in fact allowed their collective bargaining agreement with ILWU grain locals to expire in May of 2018, while U.S.-based TEMCO broke away from their fellow employers to reach an agreement with the ILWU at its three export terminals in Tacoma, Kalama and Portland. The foreign companies include Louis Dreyfus, operating in Portland and Seattle; Mitsui-owned United Grain in Vancouver, and Marubeni-owned Columbia Grain in Portland.

"These companies, with annual revenue in the tens of billions, are asking skilled workers to give up their pensions and their healthcare," said Sen. Brown. "As this Committee knows, the value of the Grain Standards Act is that our trading partners can count on the quality and integrity of U.S. grains. If we allow this Act to be undermined, whether by future privatization of inspectors or by the undermining of the skilled workforce at these terminals, we will ultimately hurt the very farmers that count on us."

### Attacks on benefits

"All three of the foreign grain companies began the bargaining process by demanding ILWU workers forfeit long-standing health and welfare benefits and work rules that took decades and much sacrifice to negotiate," said Coast Committeeman Cam Williams. "Company officials have refused to budge on their takeaway demands while remaining profitable and putting the stability of the entire grain export industry at risk."

Concessionary demands from the grain conglomerates include:

**"We won't allow big foreign corporations to bully workers into giving away long-established pension and healthcare benefits earned by 3,000 American workers in Oregon and Washington,"**  
— ILWU International President Willie Adams

- Removing ILWU members from a healthy "green zone" pension plan with over 100% funding and trying to force workers into an inferior retirement plan.
- Cutting health benefits and shifting cost onto workers and family members.

"Our families cannot and will not give up living standards that American workers have fought so hard to win," said Jared Smith, a grainhandler at the United Grain terminal and President of ILWU Local 4. "Our families deserve a secure present and future from these foreign-owned companies that are highly profitable and control much of the world's grain supply. They're supposed to negotiate, not dictate."



Grainhandlers from ILWU Locals 4, 8, 19, 21 and 23 have been united for decades in their fight for good jobs in the Pacific Northwest's export terminals, and ILWU solidarity remains strong as we continue to fight for a fair contract.

### A Christmas lump of coal

The foreign companies' "take-it-or-leave-it" approach has effectively ended meaningful negotiations since the spring of 2019.

Marubeni tried and failed to use

### ILWU stands in good faith

ILWU grainhandlers remain committed to reaching a fair agreement with the companies, noting that the TEMCO agreement they reached in 2018 protects working families, assures no disruptions in grain exports, and maintains a highly skilled workforce in export terminals that benefit farmers, workers and the U.S. economy.

"We won't allow big foreign corporations to bully workers into giving away long-established pension and healthcare benefits earned by 3,000 American workers in Oregon and Washington," said ILWU International President Willie Adams. "We're committed to working with America's farmers to ensure that grain exports get the government inspections needed by overseas customers. But we can't allow foreign corporations to attack the health, welfare and pensions of American workers and then receive a government seal of approval for their exports. It's time for these 'big three' conglomerates to bargain in good faith for the benefit of American workers and farmers."

"These workers have been on the job without a contract for the past two years," said Sen. Brown. "It's past time for these terminal operators to come back to the negotiating table and hash out a fair and amicable agreement with workers. It is my hope that my colleagues will join me in prioritizing these workers over the profits of these foreign owned corporations."



**All of Us:** ILWU International President Willie Adams joined labor and community leaders including UCLA Labor Center Director Kent Wong, Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) National President Monica Thammarath, International President of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA Sara Nelson and others for a video conference to discuss Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) workers and the labor movement. The discussion was broadcast live on the AFL-CIO's Facebook page. The discussion was titled: All of Us: The Untapped Power of Asian American Pacific Islander Working People. President Adams spoke about the ILWU organizing campaign in Hawaii in the 1940s and then touched on the history of IBU Region 37 including the martyred Filipino American reform activists Silme Domingo and Gene Viernes. Adams also spoke about the recent eight-hour, coastwise port stand down on Juneteenth in the context of the ILWU's long-standing commitment to civil rights and social justice in the US and across the globe.

"We believe in speaking truth to power without apology or permission," Adams said.



# Remembering Bloody Thursday July 5, 1934 on the San Francisco waterfront

The following history is based on a brief talk given by Harvey Schwartz at the Bloody Thursday Memorial presentations, Local 10, ILWU, San Francisco, July 5, 2019.



Photo courtesy of the ILWU Library and Archives.

Violence by San Francisco police injured scores of strikers in 1934.

**B**loody Thursday—July 5, 1934—marked the turning point of the great West Coast maritime strike of 1934. The reasons for this “Big Strike” had been seething for many years. For starters, an old San Francisco longshore union had been broken in 1919. The long nonunion period that followed lasted until 1934. These were the pre-container years of heavy, hand-worked cargo. Even when workers could get jobs handling “break bulk” cargo, as it was called, hiring was discriminatory, the pace of labor was inhumanely fast and unsafe, and work shifts sometimes lasted 12 to 16 or more hours.

The waterfront employers created and maintained divisions among longshore workers when it served their purposes. To speed up longshore operations and increase productivity, they frequently goaded work gangs of different nationalities or races to compete against each other at a reckless pace. The accident rate on San Francisco’s waterfront was notorious, with three to six serious injuries for every eight-

hour shift of 2,000 workers. The San Francisco employers even sponsored a company-controlled “union,” known as “The Blue Book,” but it existed only to keep real unionism out. You had to join The Blue Book to get most jobs. Its control was enforced by intimidation.

In recorded interviews from the large Oral History Collection housed at the ILWU International, union founder Harry Bridges and others described the corrupt “shape-up” in pre-1934 hiring. At the shape-up each morning, men gathered in front of the Ferry Building to beg for jobs or to pay bribes, called “kickbacks,” just to get a day’s work—a jug of wine, a bottle of whiskey, and sometimes even sexual favors from a wife or woman friend. Things got significantly worse when the Great Depression started in 1929. Jobs were scarce and people were desperate.

If you got hurt on the job, you didn’t apply for workmen’s compensation for fear of being “blacklisted,” or denied future employment. This was because compensation claims could increase an employer’s insurance rate. When Bridges broke his foot in 1929, he limped around on the job for two or three days instead of making a claim for injury. Workers worried, too, that if you took time off for illness or injury,

another hungry worker might take your place on the waterfront for good.

Bridges also recalled how San Francisco longshoremen had to go to waterfront bootleggers during Prohibition (1919–1933), when liquor was illegal, to cash company-issued payroll medallions called “brass checks.” Bridges said:

“Near the shape-up, there were bootleg joints, bookmaking joints, and poolrooms. We used to cash payroll brass checks at Paddy Hurley’s. Hurley did business with the company union, cashing brass checks. There were other guys that used to cash in brass checks and take a 20% payment.”

Bridges added that at Hurley’s you had to buy drinks before the bootlegger would cash your brass check. The many grievances reached a boiling point by 1934. When the Big Strike began on May 9, the union made several demands. Bridges listed them in his recorded interview:

“We’d deal only as a district. We wanted a six-hour day, a thirty-hour week, one dollar an hour, and the union hiring hall. We wanted the union hiring hall because of the shape-up.”

The union won the six-hour day to share the work during the Depression but gave it up years later in contract negotiations. Bridges’ condition regarding a “district” deal referred to the 1934 demand for a coast-wide contract. As he explained:

“When one port is on strike, and the ship can move a few miles away and be worked by members of the same union, it’s ridiculous. That’s why we wanted to have an agreement covering all ports.”

The union achieved its demand for a hiring hall through a decision by the strike’s federal arbitration board that each hiring hall dispatcher must be a union member. The union also won the all-important coast-wide contract.

The strike arbitration board awarded longshore workers a ten-cent increase in wages to ninety-five cents an hour. This was the equivalent of eighteen dollars an hour in 2019. But wages were a secondary consideration compared to the issues of dignity on

the job and union control in hiring.

During the strike, Bridges bid successfully for the support of San Francisco’s African American community. In return, he promised that the union would adopt a policy of “no discrimination” in hiring if it won the strike. The San Francisco African American community agreed. Employers were unable to recruit African American community members to cross the union’s picket lines, and Bridges kept his promise when the strike ended.

The Big Strike lasted for 82 days, from May 9 to July 30. The Sailors’ Union of the Pacific (SUP) and several smaller marine crafts joined the walk-out. In an effort to defeat the strike, the employers used “scabs,” or strikebreakers; they baited leftists for being “red”; and they formed alliances with coastal police to suppress the strike. Bridges described the situation in San Francisco: We’d get out there with our flag, our union banner, and I think we had a couple of drums to march along. Then the cops would move in and beat the shit out of us.

On July 5, Bloody Thursday, the employers tried to force open the San Francisco port by running scab trucks with police escorts through the longshoremen’s picket line at Pier 38. A great battle followed. The police used tear gas, clubs, and guns on the unarmed strikers. At least 100 strikers and their supporters were injured.

Three workers were shot by plainclothes police outside the union’s headquarters at Mission and Steuart Streets. One worker, Charles Olsen, survived. Two others, Howard Sperry, a longshoreman and a World War I veteran, and Nick Bordoise, a union cook and strike supporter, were shot in the back and killed.

Along the Pacific coast, four more workers were killed during the strike: longshoremen Dick Parker and John Knudsen in Los Angeles and longshoreman Shelly Daffron and SUP member Olaf Helland in Seattle. SUP member Bruce Lindberg was killed by a scab in Hong Kong.

A massive, dignified funeral parade for Sperry and Bordoise marched up

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Photo courtesy of the ILWU Library and Archives.

Longshore Local 10 hiring hall, San Francisco, 1946. Winning a union dispatch was one the great gains of the 1934 strike,



Photo courtesy of the ILWU Library and Archives.

Harry Bridges (center) talking to reporters, San Francisco, 1934.



# ILWU No. 23 Young Workers Committee marks Bloody Thursday with online video call

Each summer, in honor of Bloody Thursday and the union's founding generation, the ILWU No. 23 Young Workers Committee (YWC) hosts an annual event where we retell the history of 1934 to the ILWU's current and upcoming members.

As part of our "Passing the Torch" education series, we gather in our union hall just down the road from our port to tell this story and remind those in attendance that the worker-controlled hiring they are sitting in at that very moment was the principal demand of the "Big Strike" — and a cause, for some, worth dying for.

But in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we were not able to meet in person this year, for either this event or our picnic on the 86th anniversary of Bloody Thursday. Instead, we tried something new, using Zoom video conferencing to meet online.

While we missed the company of our friends and families on this important day, holding an online event was the silver lining that opened up new opportunities for our annual event, such as bringing in members from other ILWU locals — including both the Longshore and Warehouse Divisions.

We had members in attendance from ILWU Canada and a few friends

from other unions even, whose own young worker organizers were interested in both our union's incredible history and learning how to run a member-led education program.

The program featured four speakers each taking turns to tell a different part of the story: Nyef Mohamed and Levi Cohen, both Local 23 longshore casuals, Brianna Bonham from Local 5 at Powell's Books, and Viri Gomez from Local 519 in Canada. They recounted the rise and fall of longshore unionism before 1934, the Industrial Workers of the World (or, the "Wobblies,") the "shape-up" and "speed-up," conditions during the Great Depression, and the lead up to the "Big Strike."

We covered in detail the course of the strike, the anti-racist efforts of young leaders like Harry Bridges and Henry Schmidt to build multiracial unity and win, the intense redbaiting and violence used by the employers and the police, the events of Bloody Thursday itself, Sperry and Bordoise's funeral, the San Francisco General Strike, and the strike's resolve after 82 days out.

Our story concluded with the lasting impacts of 1934, such as the 1936-37 strike, building the Maritime Federation of the Pacific, the "March Inland" and the origins of the Warehouse Division, and joining the Con-



**Passing the Torch:** ILWU Local 23 Young Workers Committee members meeting via Zoom to discuss the history of 1934.

gress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) to become a new union: the ILWU.

This is the fifth summer we've told the history of Bloody Thursday and 1934. We've been hosting these and other "Passing the Torch" events — in various forms: lectures, panels, discussion groups, workshops — since early 2016.

When we formed the YWC in late 2015, we did it by working alongside our Pensioners. Our goal was to study and celebrate the history of the ILWU in order to bring a new generation of

longshore workers in as active participants in the life of the union.

In the spirit of rank-and-file unionism and decision-making, our program is bottom-up: led by members and casuals themselves, sharing information and discussing ideas peer-to-peer, as equals. With an emphasis on the ILWU's *Ten Guiding Principles*, we study our history in order to understand what makes the ILWU such a unique and powerful union.

— Zack Pattin, ILWU No. 23 YWC

# ILWU members find ways to honor Bloody Thursday sacrifices under COVID-19 restrictions



**Rally for racial justice:** Local 10 President Trent Willis (left) and Local 34 President Keith Shanklin organized a Bloody Thursday rally outside the SSA terminal at the Port of Oakland. The event connected current struggles for racial and economic justice with the "Big Strike" of 1934.

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Association (BALMA) at the Local 10 hall usually attracts a large crowd with many pensioners and families. That kind of event was too dangerous this year, so BALMA organizers had to search for a different way of honoring the union's founding events in 1934.

### Video celebration

BALMA leaders brainstormed and came up with a new way to honor past sacrifices and educate a new generation — by producing a video that celebrates and educates a new generation of ILWU members about the meaning of Bloody Thursday.

The home-made video draws on commentary from current BALMA leaders, including BALMA President John Castanho, who introduces the video. He's followed by BALMA Treasurer Mike Villeggiante, and cameos by International Secretary-Treasurer Ed Ferris, Local 10 President Trent Willis, and Local 34 President Keith Shanklin.

The production borrows heavily from existing footage to explain the 1934 strike that gave rise to the ILWU — at the expense of seven men who were killed in the struggle.

"We produced this video on a shoestring," said John Castanho, who thanked the entire BALMA team for get-

ting the project done ahead of schedule, despite the COVID-19 crisis. It has already attracted nearly 2500 viewers on YouTube. The video can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/v78lk8Ix4kQ>

"We realized that a video is no substitute for our annual ceremony that brings together so many pensioners and families with their kids," said Villeggiante, "but it was a great alternative when the 'usual' was impossible because of COVID-19."

### Modest memorial in Seattle

ILWU Local 19 President Rich Austin, Jr. said ILWU members and pensioners in the Seattle area held a modest memorial at the gravesite of Shelly Daffron. Shelly was shot in the back on June 30th while checking on a rumor that non-union crews were about to sail

two oil tankers in Point Wells just north of Seattle. The names of the other 1934 martyrs were read by Carl Woeck of the Seattle Pensioners Club.

### Rally at the Port of Oakland

Leaders from Locals 10 and 34 decided to go forward with another way to celebrate Bloody Thursday—with a protest at the Port of Oakland on July 5. The four-hour event connected current struggles for racial and economic justice with the "Big Strike" of 1934.

"Eighty-six years ago, workers in the Bay Area were struggling to overcome racism used by employers to divide waterfront workers and weaken the strike," said Local 10's Willis. "Employers failed because workers

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**Bloody Thursday caravan:** This year's Bloody Thursday picnic in Southern California was replaced with a car caravan to Roosevelt Memorial cemetery where the First Blood martyrs are buried. The procession included over 100 vehicles, including many beautifully restored classic cars.



# ILWU members find ways to honor Bloody Thursday sacrifices under COVID-19 restrictions

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rejected racism and built a powerful alliance with the Black community that strengthened the union then and now,” he said.

Willis and Shanklin planned an action that reduced the risk of COVID-19. It was a relatively small event, with all participants expected to wear masks and observe social distancing. Another risk-reducer called for holding a car caravan instead of a march.

The modest rally at the Port of Oakland was held in front of the SSA Terminal. Shanklin served as the emcee, working closely with Willis to keep the crowded agenda of speakers moving through the two-and-a-half-hour program. ILWU Secretary-Treasurer Ed Ferris attended the event.

While the crowd of 50 was smaller and younger than most Bloody Thursday events, this one had no less passion and featured a diverse array of speakers, including many community members. It was billed as a rally against racism, police violence, and the need for social justice.

Speakers tended to be young, and the majority were people of color. One



**Seattle memorial:** ILWU members and pensioners in Seattle held a modest memorial at the gravesite of Shelvy Daffron who was shot in the back on June 30 during the West Coast strike near Seattle.

## Remembering Bloody Thursday July 5, 1934 on the San Francisco waterfront

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Market Street in San Francisco on July 9. Henry Schmidt, an early longshore activist, reported that 50,000 people lined the street to watch. That day, public opinion turned in favor of the strikers. The massive shift in support following the death of the two workers may well explain why the board arbitrating the longshore strike eventually conceded to the union’s key demands.

Between July 16 and 19, city and regional workers participated in the historic 1934 San Francisco General Strike to protest the killings. More than 40,000 Bay Area unionists walked out that July. Sam Kagel, who worked for the longshore union in 1934 and later became the longshore industry’s long-serving coast arbitrator, described the General Strike in his oral history:

“I can still see it and feel it. It was an exhilarating moment. I looked up Market Street and there was nothing moving.”

of the speakers was Chicago bus driver Erek Slater, who, in his capacity as a union representative for Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 241, was disciplined after raising concerns about Chicago Transit Authority bus drivers shuttling police around during the protests of the murder of George Floyd. Slater and his union are fighting back against efforts by the employer to discipline him.

Veteran Local 10 activist Clarence Thomas, now a pensioner, made the case against efforts to build a luxury condo and commercial complex in the Port of Oakland, something Local 10 members are opposing with a coalition of business and community groups.

“The Fisher family, who owns the clothing retailer GAP and has backed anti-union candidates around the country, wants to build a playground for the rich at the Port of Oakland. If anyone wants to invest, it should benefit the people of West Oakland. The Fisher plan is like someone who wants to build an amusement park on an assembly line – it’s just nuts,” said Thomas.

After the rally, dozens of cars lined up for the ten-mile ride to the Oakland Coliseum – the home of the Oakland A’s baseball team – which Fisher wants relocated to the Port of Oakland property on the docks. Fisher owns the ball team and has hired a troupe of lobbyists to win support from politicians and community leaders – an effort that now faces resistance from the ILWU and the coalition to save the Port.

“Our rally and car caravan were a good way to combine important issues of today with important history from the past,” said Shanklin. “Each generation has to keep moving the ball forward,” he said.

Ultimately, winning a coast-wide longshore contract and a union dispatcher in 1934 provided the foundation for the Longshore Division and guaranteed the entire union’s long-term security.

Bordoise and Sperry and the other five workers killed in 1934 died as martyrs to a great cause. That is the legacy we commemorate on July 5 in San Francisco and wherever there are ILWU members and supporters.

– Harvey Schwartz

Author Harvey Schwartz is Curator of the ILWU Oral History Collection, which consists of more than 300 interviews conducted since 1981. The collection is housed at the international headquarters of the ILWU. He is the author of *The March Inland: Origins of the ILWU Warehouse Division, 1934–1938* (1975; reprint, 2000); *Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU* (2009); and *Building the Golden Gate Bridge: A Workers’ Oral History* (2015).

## One man’s effort to honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice

Every year on Bloody Thursday, July 5th, a beautiful wreath of remembrance and gratitude is placed on the grave of ILWU martyr Howard Sperry in San Francisco’s Presidio. Also every year, pensioner Terry Taylor brings a bouquet of flowers to Sperry’s gravesite. “I always wondered where the other martyr, Nick Bordoie, was buried,” said Taylor who joined the ILWU in 1959. Taylor knew that Bordoie was not a veteran of WWI, so he wouldn’t be with Sperry at the Presidio’s National Military Cemetery near the Golden Gate Bridge.

Determined to honor Nick’s sacrifice, Terry finally located his gravesite with the help of ILWU historian Harvey Schwartz, who has written several books about the ILWU, including “Solidarity Stories,” which based on dozens of oral interviews that Schwartz has conducted with union members.

In 1934, Nick Bordoie was a member of the Cooks & Stewards Union who came to protect picket lines along San Francisco’s Embarcadero on July 5. Like hundreds of other strikers that day, he was attacked and wounded by police and company thugs armed with shotguns, machine guns, rifles and pistols. Many were injured; he was one of the two who died as maritime industry workers defended their strike to improve working conditions along the west coast.

“Now I plan to visit both graves on July 5th,” says Taylor, who is now 85 years old. “It’s the least we can do for these men who gave everything for the union.”

Longshore workers honored Bordoie’s ultimate sacrifice with a beautiful monument that marks his grave at the Cypress Lawn cemetery in Colma. This year flowers were placed there by an ever grateful ILWU retiree to honor this other labor hero.



## Local 23 hosts virtual walk to benefit research for MS



Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, ILWU Local 23 was able to hold its annual MS Walk fundraiser to support research efforts to treat multiple sclerosis.

Local 23 MS Walk co-captains Holly Hulscher and Lisa Cole said the “virtual MS Walk” looked very different this year. Because of the need for social distancing, participants weren’t able to have the raffle in person, hold the fundraisers at the hall, or do the traditional group MS Walk. Despite these limitations, Local 23 members

and pensioners still stepped up to donate to help fight MS.

Our Local 23 brother Mike Mitchell joined the Longshore team this year and was able to raise over \$1,600 for the cause with the help of his fellow ILWU workers. Holly and Lisa said they would like to give a special thank you to Auxiliary 35 and members of Local 98 for their generous donations as well.

In total, the Longshore team was able to raise over \$11,400 this year, which isn’t far behind what they raised last year!



# ITF fights to secure return for seafarers stranded by COVID-19 restrictions

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is sounding the alarm about the impact of governmental Covid-19 travel restrictions on seafarers around the globe. The ITF estimates that there are now approximately 300,000 seafarers trapped working aboard ships because pandemic-related government border and travel restrictions in multiple countries are preventing ship crew changes.

An equal number of unemployed seafarers waiting to board vessels remain ashore and are prevented from working. That makes 600,000 seafarers affected by this crisis. The crew change crisis raises safety concerns for the world fleet as ships are operating with an increasingly fatigued crew.

The ITF is calling on governments to take action on visas, quarantining, and flights to see a return towards functioning crew changes for the global seafarer workforce.

### Not enough progress

ITF General Secretary Stephen Cotton says that since July 15, there has been some positive movement to address the crisis, but not enough progress has been made by governments to establish the protocols needed for functioning crew changes across the world.

The ITF has called on the governments to act swiftly to give seafarers visa, border, and quarantine exemptions in order to make crew changes possible and resolve the present crisis.

"300,000 seafarers are trapped working aboard these vessels, and another 300,000 are facing financial ruin at home, desperate to relieve these ships and start earning wages again. Governments are the biggest barrier to resolving the growing crew change crisis," said Cotton.

### Urgent action required

Cotton warned of the dangers of world's shipping fleet operating with fatigued and tired seafarers.

"Governments must wake up and realize that without a return to successful crew changes, it is simply not sustainable or acceptable to have a growing number of tired and fatigued seafarers trapped working aboard the world's ships endangering themselves, their vessels and our maritime environment," Cotton said. "Seafarers and their unions are deeply concerned about the risk to life, property and the environment as the chances of a major catastrophe or catastrophes rises daily. Government's must act before we see more people die, or worse – a major maritime disaster. Urgent action is required."

### ITF assisting thousands of seafarers

Since 16 June the ITF has been assisting seafarers to get off and get home. This has included assisting and advising thousands of seafarers as part of 645 cases/inspections. The largest group of seafarers assisted by nationality has been from the Philippines, the ITF said.

"We put a line in the sand last month to make it clear that the ITF and our affiliates are prepared to support seafarers in exercising their right to stop working, get off, and return home to their families, once their contract has finished and it is safe to do so. In the last month, we have provided advice and assisted thousands of seafarers on how they can enforce this fundamental right," said Cotton.

### West Coast ITF Inspectors on the job

ITF Coordinator Jeff Engels said that that team of West Coast ITF Inspectors have been very busy handling cases of seafarers who are trying to get home but remain stuck on ships. Engels said that in addition to working on individual cases of stranded seafarers, West Coast ITF inspectors are attempting to work with local and national elected officials as well as the US Coast Guard and US CBP on policy changes to ensure adequate crew changes in US ports. "

Engels said lobbying efforts were assisted by the Puget Sound District Council and ILWU Legislative Direc-

tor Lindsay McLaughlin. Canadian ITF Coordinator Peter Lahay and ITF Inspector Nathan Smith are also working hard to address the crisis.

"It is important to put pressure on our government after the recent International Summit on July 9th where the US and 12 other countries discussed the crew change crisis," said Engels. "The US sent Admiral Mark Buzby, the head of the United States Maritime Administration (MARAD) to the summit. We are trying to get assurances that more action will now be taken to resolve this crisis."

"Overall, we are making slow progress. We have a long way to go to help clear the back-up of seafarers that are stuck on ships," Engels said. He added that for the ITF Inspectors, the biggest problem seems to be the lack of coordination between the ship owners, their agents, and US Customs and the US Coast Guard (USCG).

Engels said that federal lobbying efforts are focusing on loosening up USCG and Customs and Border Patrol regulations to make crew change outs easier.

"Unless a seafarer contacts an inspector at least a week in advance of arrival, the responsible parties sometimes do nothing. Ship owners and their agents are either overwhelmed, lazy, or just don't understand the proper procedures. As a result, seafarers are not allowed to change out and are stuck until the next country or maybe longer," Engels said "But when ship owners and their local agents are pro-active in arranging crew changes with the local US Customs representatives crew changes are possible."

Engels also said that longshore workers can help by asking crew members how things are going in regard to crew changes and report any problems to their local area ITF Inspector.

[See box right for the contact information for your local ITF Inspector]

"This crisis highlights the inherent problems with the flag of convenience system by which everyone from gov-

ernment agencies to shipping corporations and ship's agents engage in a shell game of passing off responsibility for the welfare and rights of seafarers," said Northern California ITF Inspector Sam Levens.

"The ITF has said that enough is enough. But in order for these human rights abuses to end we must coordinate and act in solidarity with seafarers worldwide."

### Finding practical solutions

Chair of the ITF Seafarers Section, Dave Heindel, said the ITF and its partners have been doing everything possible to raise the alarm and push for the practical changes that would enable crew changes.

"We commend the governments which have brought in options for seafarers to disembark and be relieved by fresh crew, such as visas on arrival and visa waivers, but the sad fact is that globally governments aren't doing near what is needed and some governments have even gone backwards," said Heindel.

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# Craig Merrilees retires as ILWU Communications Director

ILWU's longtime Communications Director, Craig Merrilees, is retiring after 13 years with the union.

"This extraordinary organization graciously welcomed me 13 years ago, and it's been a privilege to work here ever since," said Merrilees in his letter to the ILWU's International Officers.

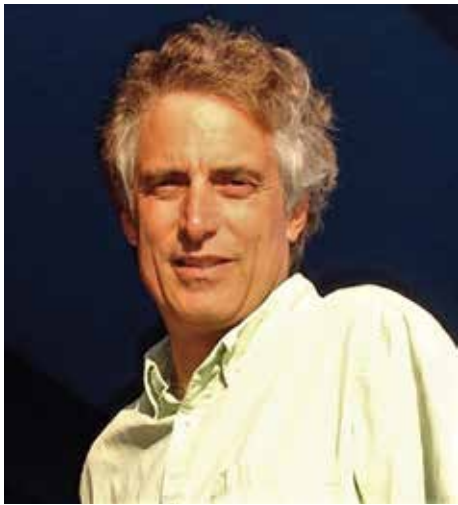
"The ILWU is one of America's greatest labor unions because it promotes progressive values and encourages rank-and-file democracy – inside the union and within the broader society. The ILWU's willingness to challenge injustice on the job, in the community and around the world is a

legacy that I will continue to admire because it's so sadly missing in many unions today," he said.

Merrilees began at the ILWU with almost four decades of union and community organizing experience under his belt, including stints with television news and political campaigns – all focused on social change. He arrived at the ILWU in 2007 after concluding a six-year assignment to rebuild and reform a 16,000-member statewide AFSCME unit, Local 3299, that continues to grow and win improvements. During the mid-90's he worked with the Teamster reform movement, spending five years in Washington, DC as a Communication Coordinator. Thirty years

ago, he co-directed field operations for the campaign to stop the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), working with labor unions across the country, including the ILWU.

At the ILWU, Merrilees worked with his colleague Roy San Filippo to publish 145 monthly issues of *The Dispatcher*, along with countless press releases, reports, flyers and briefing papers. He assisted International and local officers with strikes, lockouts, job actions and organizing campaigns. In late 2009 and 2010, he was assigned to Boron during the 100-day lockout in the Mojave, helping Local 30 members to organize support in their community and region. He worked closely



with the ILWU Organizing Department throughout his tenure, helping 500 Rite Aid warehouse workers win their 5-year fight in Lancaster and providing support for Bay Area Recycling workers to win dramatic wage and benefit improvements.

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# ILWU mourns the passing of Civil Rights icon and Congressman John Lewis

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“Civil rights are labor rights and labor rights are civil rights,” said ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer Ed Ferris. “John Lewis shared the same values upon which our union was built: The right of workers to collectively organize for better wages and conditions, and the right of all workers to be free from discrimination under the law and in the workplace. His leadership will be missed.”

### Black Lives Matter

In an essay published in the Atlantic in 2014 in the aftermath of the 2013 killing of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman and the police killings of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and Eric Garner in New York, Congressman Lewis tried to explain the emergence of the Black Lives Matter Movement and the unrest that erupted in Ferguson and other cities at the time. His essay also illuminates the current crisis.

“Many Americans find themselves at a loss to understand the depth of the anger and frustration of the protestors. It might be worthwhile for them to read a speech Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered on April 14, 1967, at Stanford University,” Lewis wrote. “King describes what he calls the ‘other America,’ one of two starkly different American experiences that exist side-by-side. One people ‘experience the opportunity of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in all its dimensions,’ and the other a ‘daily ugliness’ that spoils the purest hopes of the young and old, leaving only ‘the fatigue of despair.’ The Brown and Garner cases themselves are not the only focus of the protestors’ grievances, but they represent a glimpse of a different America most Americans have found it inconvenient to confront.

“One group of people in this country can expect the institutions of government to bend in their favor, no matter that they are supposedly regulated by impartial law. In the other, children, fathers, mothers, uncles, grandfathers,

whole families, and many generations are swept up like rubbish by the hard, unforgiving hand of the law.”

### Honoring Lewis’ legacy

To honor Congressman Lewis’ life and work, there have been calls and online petitions to rename the Edmund Pettus Bridge after Lewis. Edmund Pettus was a Confederate general and leader of the Ku Klux Klan in Alabama. The bridge has become synonymous with Congressman Lewis and the Civil Rights movement and the “Bloody Sunday” incident.

Others would also like to see concrete policies enacted, not just a symbolic change.

The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, sponsored by 47 Democrats and one Republican, was introduced in the House days after Lewis passed away. The Act would require that any state with a history of voting discrimination within the past 25 years seek federal approval before making any changes to its voting procedures. It would also mandate that any state obtain clearance from the Justice Department or a federal court before making any changes that would burden voters of color, such as strict voter ID laws or closing polling places in areas with large numbers of minority voters.

The Act is identical to legislation that was introduced by Lewis last year to restore the Voting Rights Act and passed by the House in December. Republicans refused to take up the bill in the Senate. It has now been re-introduced and the name changed in honor of John Lewis

Reverend William Barber, the civil-rights activist and a co-chair of the Poor People’s Campaign, said in a recent interview, “Imagine if we had listened to John Lewis? What if, instead of simply mourning, people chose to live the life that he lived? It’s time we start to emulate their lives, not just in some memorial fashion, but in actual policy and political evolution and transformation.”

## TRANSITIONS

### NEW PENSIONERS:

**Local 8:** Timothy Madden;  
**Local 10:** Oscar A. Mayorga; Odis Rucker; Charlie B. Hill; Oscar M. Gomez; **Local 13:** Osvaldo Munoz, Jr; Eric R. Gonzales; Atonio Luafalemana; Charles D. Lilly; Eva G. Miramontes; Manuel F. Bilbao; Jerry C. Millard; Eugene L. Rasmussen; Philip C. Mladinich; Julius A. Walker, Jr.; Orlando Alas; Martin A. Nunes Jr.; Michael A. Uglesich; Tagumpay M. Vela; John M. Flanigan; Marie-Christine Aguirre-Zambrano;  
**Local 19:** Albert L. Johnson;  
**Local 21:** John A. Seidl; Tim D.

Preheim; **Local 23:** Richard D. Bicheray; Francis M. Guyton; Wayne L. Wallace; **Local 25:** Michael J. Hardy; **Local 29:** Victor A. Dominguez; **Local 52:** Dennis J. Sorentino; **Local 63:** Brad L. Grosz; Peter Svorinic; Timothy D. Thompson; John L. Hudson; Melvin E. Anderson; Michael R. Johnson; Curtis R. Carter; Deanna M. Oberg;  
**Local 92:** Thomas R. Love;  
**Local 94:** Robert A. Sandoval; Larry W. Thompson;

## A Helping Hand...

...when you need it most. That’s what we’re all about. We are the representatives of the ILWU- sponsored recovery programs. We provide professional and confidential assistance to you and your family for alcoholism, drug abuse and other problems—and we’re just a phone call away.

### ILWU LONGSHORE DIVISION

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**ADRP—Oregon**  
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Portland, OR 97221  
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**ADRP—Washington**  
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### ILWU CANADA

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## Craig Merrilees retires as ILWU Communications Director

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“It’s been an honor and pleasure to work with each of you,” said Merrilees at the union’s International Executive Board meeting on July 17. President Willie Adams joined others who thanked Merrilees for his work, “You’ll be hard to replace and we thank you for all the work and people you’ve helped through your work at the ILWU,” said Adams.

### Roy San Filippo expands communications duties at International

ILWU International Officers have expanded the role of *Dispatcher* Editor, Roy San Filippo in the ILWU Communications Department. He has been responsible for producing *The Dispatcher*, creating videos and an array of social media responsibilities. San Filippo came to the ILWU 10 years ago after working with unions in Southern California. He previously taught history, focusing on labor, racial justice, and other social movements during the 19th and 20th Century. “I feel honored to take on new

responsibilities and continue to work for such a great union,” he said.

### Jennifer Sargent Bokaie resumes Longshore Division Communications Director work

Jennifer Sargent Bokaie began her work as Communications Director at the Coast Longshore Division in 2008. She researches industry developments and delivers the union’s message to lawmakers, port commissioners, community members, and other networks where the union’s message needs to be heard. “Growing up in a union home gave me opportunities and a better life,” she said, “and I’m proud to fight alongside Longshore workers who are giving their all to protect good jobs for the next generation.”

Also at the July 17 International Executive Board meeting, ILWU Legislative Director Lindsay McLaughlin announced his decision to retire in August. *The Dispatcher* will run an article in the next issue about his 30 years at the ILWU.

### DECEASED PENSIONERS:

**Local 8:** Frank L. Whitlock;  
**Local 10:** Ignatius Pizzo; Drew Mister; **Local 12:** Stephen M. Erickson (Kay); **Local 13:** Ben R. Street; John R. Ortiz Jr.; (Nancy); Leon J. Ayers (Terrell);  
**Local 19:** Isaac P. Kona;  
**Local 21:** Louis A. Kloewer;  
**Local 26:** Henry B. Alderette;  
**Local 27:** Charles Dougherty;  
**Local 34a:** Albert L. Keller;  
**Local 63:** Maureen C. Meadows;  
**Local 75:** Shirley D. Babino;  
**Local 91:** Joseph S. Amyes;  
**Local 94:** Jack M. Bjazevich;  
**Local 98:** Heike J. Meyer;

### DECEASED SURVIVOR:

**Local 8:** Miriam Wolfe; Lillian Mary Mullen; Patricia L. Boryer; Diane E. Ek; **Local 12:** Dalene Potts;  
**Local 13:** Guadalupe S. Torres; Ivanka Matura; Gwendolyn Touchard; **Local 14:** Rose Mary Sepulveda; **Local 19:** Alice B. Wikene; Awilda E. Jeffries;  
**Local 25:** Jacqueline J. Bohn;  
**Local 26:** Linda D. Roland;  
**Local 40:** Wilma P. Graham;  
**Local 63:** Beatrice Panis;