

Let me say this about that

...More on G. Brown

(From Page 2)

political operator Bill Sizemore. The jury found that Sizemore's organizations, the Oregon Taxpayers United political action committee and its educational foundation used forgery and fraud to qualify several petition initiatives as ballot measures. Sizemore's anti-union ballot measures caused labor organizations to spend thousands of dollars to fight them.

Valeria Molinda Meistrell was born on Aug. 23, 1942, in Hood River and grew up in several Columbia River Gorge communities including Cascade Locks and Mosier. After graduating from The Dalles High School, she moved to Portland.

She and her husband, Everett Jack, make their home in Scappoose in Columbia County. They have a daughter, Sorena Dibble, who is following in her mother's footsteps by working as an office secretary at Portsmouth Middle School in Portland; a son, Everett Jack Jr., who is an attorney in Portland; and three grandchildren.

VAL'S LEISURE PURSUITS include sewing, knitting, crocheting and reading.

★ ★ ★

(Continued from Last Issue)

IN THE JUNE 2, 2006 issue, this column contained the start of a Labor Honor Roll article on George Brown, who was the first director of legislation and political education for the Oregon AFL-CIO. Prior to the 1956 merger in Oregon of the state organizations of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations, Brown had been the executive secretary-treasurer of the CIO State Council. The last article ended by reporting that Brown had served on a committee appointed by Portland Mayor Terry D. Schunk that started the ball rolling toward formation of the TriMet Transit System as a public agency to replace a privately-owned bus line in the Rose City.

Legislation to create the Tri-County Metropolitan Transit District was passed by the 1969 Oregon Legislature at the Capitol in Salem at the urging of a team of labor lobbyists whose key members were Brown, Oregon AFL-CIO President Edward J. Whelan and Mel Schoppert, the leader of Portland-based Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757. ATU Local 757 represented employees of the private bus company and continues to be the bargaining agent for TriMet workers.

GOV. TOM McCALL signed the TriMet legislation into law and appointed George Brown to the new transit agency's board of directors. At a 1970 retirement dinner for Brown, Gov. McCall described him as: "The square-shooter that God ever made ... a man without conceit or deceit."

Brown was the first recipient of the labor movement's Kelley Loe Memorial Award, which he received at a ceremonial dinner in 1958. The award to Brown was given by the Oregon AFL-CIO Community Service Activities Committee. Kelley Loe had been a lobbyist and research and education director of the AFL Oregon Federation of Labor for more than two decades. He was a printer-editor member of Multnomah Typographical Union No. 58 and had earlier worked for the Labor Press. Brown was presented the award in recognition of his many years of service to the Community Chest, Community Council, United Fund, Salvation Army, Child Guidance Clinic, Society for Crippled Children & Adults, and for his leadership in forming the AFL CIO Community Services Committee. That committee evolved into today's Labor Community Service Agency. The Loe awards were discontinued many years ago.

LIFE WAS NOT all work and no play for Brown. He enjoyed duck hunting, fishing, poker with cronies at the Legislature and at labor conventions, and lifting a convivial glass with friends — all the while smoking his favorite brand of non-filtered cigarettes.

George Brown died of lung cancer at age 71 on April 17, 1974 at his home near Milwaukie. He had returned home from an Oregon City hospital the day before. More than 400 mourners attended his funeral. He was survived by his wife, Alma, to whom he'd been married for 49 years; their son and a grandson.

AMONG THE TRIBUTES paid to Brown were these words by then-State Treasurer James A. Redden, who wrote: "With George Brown's passing, all of Oregon, every working person and every citizen of this state, lost a friend. He fought hard for the working person and for that he deserves the title 'Mr. Labor' in Oregon. But his concern went far beyond just labor issues. George fought hard for what was good for the State. Honesty and integrity were his trademarks. We are going to miss him more than words can say..."

In his own distinguished career, Jim Redden has served as a state legislator, state treasurer, state attorney general and presides as a senior federal judge in the U.S. District Court in Portland.

PDC uses tax funds to undermine workers

By TOM CHAMBERLAIN and BOB SHIPRACK

The Portland Development Commission should be ashamed of the battle it's chosen: using taxpayer funds to undermine local family-wage jobs.

The PDC's legal fight to find a loophole in the state's prevailing-wage law will affect our community far beyond the hard-hat areas, and the Portland City Council would be doing the city a favor by reining in the PDC and ensuring that taxpayer funds produce community benefits in the way they were intended.

The problem is this: The PDC spends a quarter-billion dollars a year on construction projects. Because this is taxpayer money, the commission must comply with several standards that meet the community's priorities — including fair wages and benefits as determined by the state's prevailing-wage law. This law simply assures that developers who get public contracts pay the community's average market wage for a given trade.

The prevailing-wage law is a common-sense way to create family-wage jobs, keep dollars within a community and ensure that taxpayers get quality work done by skilled workers. It's a fair and reasonable law that results in in-

creased productivity and accountability.

But instead of better prioritizing its list of projects, the PDC has decided to balance its budget on the backs of working families. It has used ambiguous language in the law to circumvent it when the commission tangoes with private developers.

But partnering with private interests isn't a valid excuse to allow the PDC to ignore its responsibility as the steward of taxpayer money. If the PDC succeeds in undermining the prevailing-wage law, here's what Portland stands to lose:

- Return on our investment: Portland taxpayers invest in the roads, sewers and other infrastructure that make urban renewal possible. Low-ball contractors often are driven to import low-wage workers from other states and countries. These workers will not pay local taxes. That's not fair.

- Family-wage jobs: Portland needs more middle-class jobs, not fewer. The prevailing-wage law ensures that workers are paid enough to contribute to society rather than rely on public services. It's ironic that the city's development arm is leading the race to the bottom.

- Responsible business: We don't waive the state's minimum wage for

OPEN FORUM

businesses that say they can't afford it. We say they need to improve their product, service or business model. In this case, the PDC is saying that it wants to build lots of cool stuff, but since it can't pay for it all, wages should shrink. Rather than improve efficiency, budget accurately (remember the aerial tram?) and prioritize construction spending, the PDC is trying to bankroll its billion-dollar dreams on the backs of working families.

The solution? We suggest that the PDC decide its choices on what, when and how to build, rather than using tax dollars to pay lawyers, cut workers' wages and further reduce Portland's middle class. Since the developer-heavy PDC isn't likely to do this voluntarily, the Portland City Council should make the PDC follow the prevailing-wage law, and show that in Portland, public development should reflect our community's values.

(Editor's Note: Tom Chamberlain is the president of the Oregon AFL-CIO. Bob Shiprack is executive secretary of the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council.)

Unionists need to be active in politics

To The Editor:

The first thing I noticed at the Oregon Democratic Party convention June 3-5 was the absence of union members. It became really obvious in a couple of platform workshops that I attended.

In the labor platform workshop, a few of us union members had to explain not only the purpose and advantages of card-check recognition, but also what a card-check was. One young delegate actually thought it had something to do with playing cards on the job. I guess union members are so familiar with the issue that we assume everyone understands it. Well, they don't, and it's up to us to explain it.

This lack of understanding of labor issues by the general public is disturbing. A future state administration, unfriendly to unions, could take advantage of this, and we could wind up with a right-to-work-for-less law ... or even something worse. We've got to reach out to the public and let them know who we are and what we do. We've got to let them know that we are the good guys.

I found out in the energy and transportation platform workshop that most people don't have a clue about the damage done by deregulation in the transportation industries, especially trucking and airlines. Deregulation has led directly to the loss of wages, pensions and benefits by workers in those industries. But most people don't seem to make that connection. One connection they do make, though, is the effect deregulation has had on energy costs.

Labor must participate on all levels of the Democratic Party so that our message of providing jobs with decent wages, hours, and working conditions once again becomes the "hue and cry" of the Democratic Party. A good start would be for union members to fill the 800 open seats as precinct committeepersons in their respective districts.

But all of us were rewarded for the hard work put in on developing a platform when Gov. Ted Kulongoski addressed the delegates on June 4. I've heard the governor speak many times and this was one of his best. He threw

away his notes and spoke from his heart. He demonstrated his fighting spirit and made all of us proud to be Democrats.

The Democrats developed a labor-friendly platform and Gov. Kulongoski demonstrated again that he is the man to sell it to the voting public. We need to re-elect Gov. Kulongoski and give him a Democratic House instead of the obstructionist Republican House he has had to contend with. If we do that, the sky is the limit for Oregon.

Lynn Lehrbach
Joint Council of Teamsters #37
Portland

Oregon Tradeswomen group thanks NW Labor Press for Career Fair help

To The Editor:

Thank you so much for your support of the 14th Annual Women in Trades Career Fair as both a media reporter/photographer, as well as one of our advertising exchange partners. Together, we reached 1,350 students and 540 adult female jobseekers who attended this unique career fair.

As you know, the fair is produced by Oregon Tradeswomen, with assistance from a wide range of industry stakeholders. Its \$110,000 budget is provided 100 percent from industry supporters. Donations and in-kind support, such as the advertising exchange arrangement with the Northwest Labor Press, cover the costs of producing the event, including coordinating school attendance,

funding student transportation, printing posters and brochures, extensive volunteer recruitment, and much more.

Through our advertising and media efforts you have helped us reach a targeted recruitment of female jobseekers. We will be placing these strong candidates into entry-level positions, accepting them into our Pathways to Success pre-apprenticeship program, and supporting them as they embark into apprenticeships and professional careers.

Thank you again for being part of the Women in Trades Career Fair.

Terri Wiley
Communications Director
Oregon Tradeswomen Inc.
Portland