

Let me say this about that

—By Gene Klare



Fame for Herb Waits

HERB WAITS JR., 83, a retired member of Tualatin-based United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 290, steps into Labor's Hall of Fame in this issue of the Northwest Labor Press. The NW Oregon Labor Retirees Council, sponsor of the Labor Hall of Fame, conferred the honor on Waits by a door-opening vote at a meeting in the NW Oregon Labor Council boardroom in the Scandia Building at 1125 SW Madison St. in Portland.



HERB WAITS

The Retirees Council inaugurated the Hall of Fame in 1997 to bestow recognition on retired unionists for their contributions to their unions and to the broader labor movement. John Klein of the Teamsters is president of the Retirees Council, and Harold King of the Western Pulp and Paper Workers is secretary-treasurer.

HERBERT WILLIAM WAITS JR. was born on Sept. 15, 1922 in Klamath Falls in Southern Oregon. His father, Herb Waits Sr., was a skilled pipe trades craftsman who in 1929 was elected as the business agent of UA Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 191 and also was elected to the same office in the Klamath Falls Building Trades Council. The Great Depression of the 1930s, which caused widespread and massive unemployment, resulted in a

cessation of the two labor organizations headed by Herb Waits Sr. But in 1939, as economic conditions began improving, Herb Sr. was able to restart Local 191 and the Building Trades Council. He also organized UA Local 418 in Medford. Herb Sr. served as business agent of Local 191 until illness forced him to retire in 1952.

Herb Waits Jr. joined the United Association early in World War II on June 30, 1942, when he began working as a steamfitter in the Northern California city of Redding, not too far from his hometown in Southern Oregon. However, within a year he was training in a U.S. Army Combat Engineers battalion, the Army's construction counterpart of the Navy's Seabees.

AS THE WAR in Europe was winding down in 1945, the Combat Engineers unit in which Waits was serving was dispatched to Reims, France, to rebuild a church damaged by the ravages of war. The Army unit's next assignment took Waits to the Philippines in the South Pacific, where war with the Japanese was still ongoing. After Japan surrendered in August 1945, Waits' duties took him to Osaka, Japan. After WWII, Waits returned to Klamath Falls but stayed in the Army Reserve. Following the start of the Korean War in 1950, Waits was recalled to active duty and sent to a boatyard at Port Townsend, Washington, to repair military vessels.

When he was honorably discharged, he was wearing the five stripes of a technical sergeant, one grade below the six stripes of a master sergeant.

Herb Waits Jr. succeeded his father as business agent of Local 191 in 1952. The job's title was later changed to business manager. In that job, Waits Jr. handled all the duties involved in running a local union. He organized new members, negotiated and enforced the union's labor contracts with employers and served as a trustee on health and welfare and pension trust funds, plus other duties. He served on the executive board of the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council and was the council's representative in Southern Oregon. He was president of the Central Labor Council at Klamath Falls, which covered Klamath and Lake counties. He also held the presidency of the Oregon State Pipe Trades Association.

AFTER THE MERGER that produced UA Plumbers and Steamfitters

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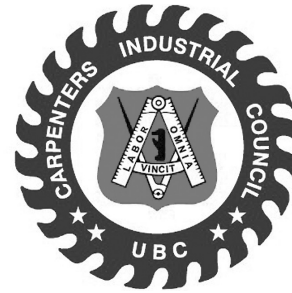
Portland-based Carpenters Industrial Council formed by national mergers

The Portland-based Western Council of Industrial Workers has merged with three other councils to form the national Carpenters Industrial Council.

The name change was effective July 1. The founding convention of the organization — which consolidates the Southern Council of Industrial Workers in Mississippi, the Carpenters East Coast Industrial Council in Marion, Virginia, and the Midwestern Council of Industrial Workers in Oshkosh, Wisconsin — is set for May 17-24, 2007.

The council is a division of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, an affiliate of the Change to Win labor federation.

The newly consolidated council will be headquartered in Portland at 12788 SE Stark St., and Mike Pieti, executive secretary of the former Western Council,



will serve in that capacity for the new council.

"The national Carpenters Industrial Council is being formed with a focus on structuring a union that can withstand and meet challenges of the future," said Pieti. The building blocks, he said, are a "dynamic organizing program to bring union representation to more workers in our industry sectors whether it's lumber, panel products, cabinets, windows or

doors."

The Carpenters Industrial Council will represent approximately 26,000 workers in 15 states.

The Western Council of Industrial Workers was chartered in 1985. Its predecessor was the Lumber Production and Industrial Workers, which was chartered in 1937. The Southern Council of Industrial Workers was chartered in 1967 and represented 4,400 workers. The Carpenters East Coast Industrial Council was chartered in 1996 with the merger of the Mid-Eastern and Mid-Atlantic councils and represented 3,000 workers in seven states. And the Midwestern Council was chartered in 2002 with the merging of the Midwestern Industrial Council and the Great Lakes Regional Council. It has more than 11,000 members.

Court reinstates retiree benefits at Rexam

A California District Court gave a group of Rexam retirees a major victory when it ordered Rexam, the giant consumer packaging and beverage can manufacturer, to reinstate retiree medical and prescription drug benefits that Rexam unilaterally terminated effective Jan. 1, 2006.

Rexam is one of many corporations across America pushing to drop retiree health benefits.

The court's decision applies to Machinist Union retirees from now shuttered can plants in Vancouver and Kent,

Washington. The Vancouver plant was represented by Local Lodge 1374, an affiliate of Machinists District Lodge 24.

The Vancouver plant operated as the National Can Company, then changed to American National Can in 1989 following a buyout. American National was purchased by Silgan Can in 1996 and the plant was shut down in 1999. Rexam acquired American National Can in 2000. Most of the retired Machinists Union members were covered under the American National Can retiree insurance plan, which was assumed by

Silgan and later by Rexam.

The court cited language in the union contracts and benefit plan documents that promised retirees lifetime coverage.

District Court Judge Claudia Wilken granted a request for a preliminary injunction against Rexam, ordered the company to "reinstate all medical and prescription drug benefit plans provided before Jan. 1, 2006" and declared "Rexam is also enjoined from terminating the health benefits of any class member receiving or entitled to receive benefits under these plans."

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