

Let me say this about that

—By Gene Klare



Cusma in Hall of Fame

THE NORTHWEST Oregon Labor Retirees Council welcomes Frank Cusma into its Labor Hall of Fame. Cusma served as the apprenticeship coordinator of Portland-based Iron Workers Local 29 and held other offices and assignments in the union. He retired at age 61 in 2005.

Frank Cusma was born on Sept. 14, 1944 in Trieste, Italy. His father was killed while serving in the Italian Army in World War II. Later, Frank and his mother, Lidia, migrated to the United States and settled in Brooklyn in New York. In 1963, at age 18, Frank enlisted in the U. S. Navy. After boot camp at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station, he trained in San Diego as a diver and was sent to Vietnam where he was attached to a Marine Corps Division. Cusma served two tours of duty in Vietnam as a diver with the Marines.



FRANK CUSMA

AFTER HIS WAR SERVICE and return to a West Coast base for his honorable discharge as a petty officer second class, Cusma decided to check out Portland as a place to live. He applied for and was accepted for the three-year apprenticeship program in Iron Workers Local 29. He first received training at Beech School and later at Benson High. Along the way, he encountered two former Marines with whom he'd served in

Vietnam.

While working construction in Local 29, Cusma helped erect a number of high-rise structures, including the First Interstate Bank, the Georgia-Pacific Building, the Federal Building, the Benjamin Franklin Building and others; the names listed are those given the buildings when they were built. He also worked on the construction of the soaring Fremont Bridge.

IN 1976, Cusma began teaching Local 29 apprenticeship classes at the Sylvania Campus of Portland Community College and at another classroom in a building on W. Burnside Street and 18th Avenue. In 1979, Cusma was appointed as Local 29's apprenticeship coordinator by LeRoy Worley, who was then the union's business manager and later became an international officer. In 1989, Cusma was asked to re-start the apprenticeship program of Portland-based Iron Workers Shopmen's Local 516, in addition to his job at Local 29.

ADDED RESPONSIBILITIES were later given to Cusma when he was appointed as the administrative apprenticeship coordinator for the Iron Workers Northwest District Council. That assignment gave him oversight of Iron Workers apprenticeship programs throughout the region.

CUSMA ALSO HELD elected offices in Local 29. Members elected him to the Executive Board in 1978, as president in 1985, and later as recording secretary.

When LeRoy Worley started IPAL, the Ironworkers Political Action League, in 1981, he named Cusma as its treasurer. As part of his political duties he also lobbied at the Oregon Legislature with Lyle Eller, who served the union as president and assistant business representative.

STILL MORE responsibilities were given Cusma when he was appointed as the collection coordinator for all of Local 29's negotiated trust funds — health & welfare, pension, annuity and vacation. Later, when Local 29 started the Iron Workers Drug-Free Program, Cusma was put in charge of handling it.

THE INTERNATIONAL Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers and the AFL-CIO sent Cusma to Warsaw in 1990 to help set up a welding shop for Poland's apprenticeship program. In another assignment for the Iron Workers International, in addition to his duties with Local 29, Cusma helped set up and certify welding shops for local unions in Las Vegas, Atlanta, Boston, Providence, Seattle, Sacramento, San Francisco, Oakland, San Diego, Denver, New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

Looking back on his career, Cusma noted that in 1985 he and Tom Worley col-

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Union wants to put stop to college shift to part-time, lower-paid faculty

By **DON MCINTOSH**
Associate Editor

Backed by their union, college teaching faculty are pushing a political fix that they hope will halt decades of downward mobility.

Members of American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Higher Education Division say the the ivory tower of popular legend is turning into an academic factory that exploits its workforce. To cope with tight budgets, public colleges and universities around the country have shifted much of their class load to lower-paid part-time faculty who work without benefits on term-by-term, credit-by-credit contracts.

To turn that around, AFT, an affiliate of the AFL-CIO, has launched a campaign called FACE — Faculty and College Excellence — which is promoting a bill in 10 state legislatures this year.

The Oregon version is House Bill 2578. HB 2578 would require that at least 75 percent of classes be taught by full-time tenure-track faculty, and that part-timers be paid the same prorated

salary and benefits as full-timers — to eliminate schools' economic incentive to favor part-time instructors. HB 2578 would also give existing part-time teachers first crack at permanent full-time positions when they open up. And it would make staffing levels a mandatory subject of collective bargaining.

AFT-Oregon lobbyist Rob Wagner acknowledges the union is shooting for the moon the first time out, but if even part of HB 2578 passes, it will make a difference for members.

Some parts of the bill were contained in a bill introduced by then-State Rep. Dan Gardner, (D-Portland), in the late 1990s, but his union-backed bill didn't go far in Republican-controlled House.

This time, the bill was introduced by Rep. Peter Buckley, (D-Ashland), assigned to the House Education Subcommittee on Higher Education and got a public hearing March 28.

At the hearing, college teachers and union leaders told lawmakers what's been happening. In 1970, 80 percent of classes were taught by full time per-

manent faculty members, testified Bill Scheuerman, chair of the AFT Higher Ed Policy Council. Today, the figure is 54 percent. And as part-time instructors shuttle from school to school to cobble together a full-time job, students can lose out, Scheuerman said: It becomes harder for students to meet with instructors or get a letter of recommendation, or find out what classes favorite teachers will teach the next term in a timely way.

Sociology instructor Stephanie Blackman is one such "road scholar," teaching six classes at four Portland-area colleges. Blackman told lawmakers she's too busy flying down freeways to attend faculty meetings or mentor students. And, Blackman said, it's not fair that people teaching the same class get less pay and benefits.

It's not clear what chance HB 2578 has of passage this year.

The independent Oregon Education Association, the other large teachers union in Oregon, supports it. But college administrators oppose it, saying it would tie their hands and limit their flexibility in meeting students' needs.

At the very least, Wagner said, AFT's campaign is energizing AFT members — and raising awareness among lawmakers.

NOLC endorses board candidates for 2 Fire Districts

The Northwest Oregon Labor Council, at the request of Tualatin Fire Fighters Local 1660, has endorsed Sandi Jabs for Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue Board of Directors, Position 4; and Aaron Baker for the Woodburn Fire and Rescue Board of Directors, Position 3.

Jabs is a retired Lake Oswego school teacher who is challenging incumbent Carol Gearin, who serves as the Board's secretary-treasurer.



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