

Let me say this about that

## ...Member of 7 unions

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Clay and Columbia Streets. He worked for the Library for five years, but retired in 1999 prior to its move back to the refurbished main building.

For several of his years at the Library, Per made extra money by working in his off-duty hours driving a school bus for the Oregon Episcopal School.

Three of Fagereng's seven union jobs provide him with pensions, thanks to the union contracts under which he worked. One pension comes from his Newspaper Guild membership in the nearly 15 years he toiled on San Francisco newspapers. The Guild is now part of the Communications Workers of America. A second pension derives from the contracts of the Letter Carriers and Postal Workers unions with the Postal Service where he was employed for 15 years. The third pension is from PERS, the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System, and results from the AFSCME-negotiated contract covering his five years at the Multnomah County Library as a member of Local 88. Per said his pensions are not large individually but taken together provide a relatively comfortable retirement income.

**HE KEEPS BUSY** with volunteer activities. Since 1987 he has been a musical member of General Strike, a band of musicians and singers that performs at labor rallies and makes morale-boosting appearances at picket lines. General Strike's members are workers and retirees from various unions. Per's contributions to General Strike include singing and playing an Irish drum called a "Bodhran," a musical instrument which he made. Since 1985 he's been one of the many volunteers at the non-profit community radio station KBOO. At KBOO, which is in inner Southeast Portland, Fagereng co-hosts the "Radio Free Ireland" show featuring Irish music and news from "The Shamrock Isle." Per also handles call-in and interview programs.

Per and his wife, Franchesca, were married in Portland in 1980. He has two sons from his first marriage. They are Daniel and John; both are artists. A third son, Ivar, died of a heart problem at age 17.

★★★

**INFORMATION FROM** "The Portland Red Guide: Sites and Stories from Our Radical Past" was published in the May 4 issue of the Northwest Labor Press. In the space remaining in this issue comes more from author Michael Munk's book.

Historian Munk wrote that Jesse and Lois Stranahan "were active in almost every political and labor struggle..." Portlander Jess (he pronounced his name with the "e" silent) met Lois Redding while attending a 1940 labor summer school at Commonwealth College in Mena, Arkansas, where she was a student at the school in her hometown. They were married and made their home in Portland. Jess, then 21, was a member of Supercargoes and Checkers Local 40 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. He also was a journalist for the Labor New Dealer published by the Oregon State Council of the CIO, the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Lois Stranahan became active in the ILWU Auxiliary and in liberal political groups. Jess served in the U.S. Army in Europe in World War II and after the war returned to his career on the Portland docks, becoming a leader in Local 40. After he retired, he was active in starting the Northwest Oregon Labor Retirees Council, which is affiliated with the NW Oregon Labor Council, AFL-CIO. In 1997, the Retirees Council established the Labor Hall of Fame and later that year selected Jess and Lois to be honored as members. Jess died at age 79 on March 4, 1998 in his home. He had suffered a debilitating illness resulting from heart attacks months earlier. The First United Methodist Church was filled with mourners at his funeral.

**FRANCIS J. MURNANE**, a leader in ILWU Local 8, receives special mention in Munk's book, which says that a wharf at the Willamette River seawall is named for him. Murnane was sometimes called "The Conscience of the City" because he attended official meetings at City Hall and other venues to tell officeholders of things that he thought they should be doing. He worked nights on the docks so that he'd be able to attend daytime public meetings. U.S. Senator Wayne Morse was among the mourners who packed a Northwest Portland Catholic Church for his funeral. Munk said Murnane spoke up in defense of radicals who were being targeted for abuse in the McCarthy witch-hunt era.

**HANK AND MARTINA CURL** operated one of the bookstores that gave space to radical books, The Red Guide reports. The Curls ran the John Reed Bookstore on SE Hawthorne Street, author Munk says. The store closed in 1993. "The 1936 Rose Festival parade featured the Oregon Workers Alliance float, with Martina Gangle Curl as the Statue of Liberty," Red Guide reported. Martina Curl was a noteworthy artist.

(A personal note: In his working years as a carpenter, Henry Curl was a delegate to the Multnomah County Labor Council from Carpenters Local 226. His wife sometimes accompanied him. Henry and I usually chatted after the meetings. The Curls participated in many labor picket lines. I remember walking with them at a Machinists picket line on the sidewalk outside the PDX Airport Terminal. The picketing called attention to one airline's use of nonunion mechanics.)

## Nurses Local 5017 asks unionists to attend Worker Rights meeting

**To The Editor:**

I am currently working with the American Federation of Teachers, Oregon Federation of Nurses and Healthcare Professionals Local 5017, the union, which represents Kaiser Permanente and Providence Milwaukie RNs and health care professionals, as well as teaching and education workers throughout the state.

I am part of the United Nurses of Legacy campaign which is working to gain union representation for 3,000 RNs in the five Legacy hospitals: Emanuel, Good Samaritan, Meridian Park, Mt. Hood, and Salmon Creek in Vancouver.

We are having a Jobs with Justice-sponsored Workers' Rights Board hearing on safe staffing on May 31. In preparation, I have been going out to many union meetings to let people know about our campaign and to ask for support and attendance.

It has been so gratifying to attend Longshore workers, Teamsters, Fire

Fighters, Communication Workers and Machinists meetings (ILWU had over 100 people).

Everyone has been so supportive. We have all been or had family members who have been hospital patients. Nurses are the backbone of health care today. Yet, like so many workers, they too are experiencing basic speed ups to save the company money. They are taking care of more patients — patients who are sicker than in previous years — with complex new technology to monitor, and volumes of paper and computer reports to complete. They are often forced to work 12-hour shifts with NO breaks!

"Your patients need you" is the guilt trip they are fed on a daily basis.

Our best organizing leaders have spouses/partners who are proud union members. Our established unions have much to teach the nurses. Nurses want to organize primarily to have a real voice in affecting patient care — and yes, these speed ups are very very dan-

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gerous for all of us.

It is vital that we fight to ensure nurses do have a strong voice in setting standards for patient care. But we also have to help nurses to understand that caring for themselves is as important as caring for others. And sometimes kicking a little behind is not only OK, but necessary.

Unions are alive and well despite what the Bushies would have us believe. I want to express my gratitude to the Portland labor community for being an ongoing voice for fairness and strength.

If you can come to the Workers Rights' Board hearing on Thursday, May 31, at 7 p.m. at the Portland Community College Cascade Campus, 705 N. Killingsworth St., Portland, it would mean a lot to the Legacy RNs.

**Marcia Suttnerberg**  
Lead Organizer  
AFT/Healthcare  
Portland

## Poor decisions by PPS victimized custodians, taxpayers

**To The Editor:**

As a former Portland Public School custodian involved in the class-action lawsuit, I would like to remind everyone that the custodians did not create this problem. We are the victims, as is every taxpayer, when we have to carry the burden of poorly-made decisions and excess spending by the actions of a few people in power.

This situation could have been avoided. Back in 2002, before our jobs had been contracted out, during negotiations with Portland Public Schools, we had offered to take more than a 10 percent cut in our wages, plus other concessions. This would have saved the district and taxpayers over \$3 million!

Even after they contracted out our jobs they could have recalled us within a two-year period and it would have been classified as a layoff. At that time the district was no longer hurting for money, with the passage of the Multnomah County I-Tax in May of 2003. They could have avoided this mess and done the right thing by recalling us at that time. Once the district passed the two-year layoff mark, they were totally in violation of the Civil Service law.

The Portland School District surrounds themselves with attorneys to do their bidding. For years they have had three full-time in-house attorneys, but they continue to spend millions and millions of taxpayers' dollars on the outside law firm Miller Nash to go up against its employees and their unions.

More recently, the School District has appointed all new members to the Civil Service Board — all of which are attorneys! With all these legal minds, the district is looking for any way it can find to rewrite or eliminate the Civil

Service laws. The bottom line is back in 2002 they knew the law, challenged it, gambled and lost.

The \$14.5 million settlement, if approved by all parties, once attorney fees and taxes are taken out, is small compensation for the destruction I've seen in the lives of many of my sister and brother custodians — many of whom were second and even a few third-gen-

eration custodians.

I have great respect and admiration of those who have been brave enough to return to their former jobs with the School District during a time of such uncertainty and turmoil.

**Elaine Smith**  
SEIU 503  
Portland

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