

## Let me say this about that

—By Gene Klare



## Fame for Per Fagereng

**THE LABOR HALL OF FAME** has a new member: Per (pronounced Pear) Fagereng, 73, of Portland, who in the course of his working career belonged to seven labor unions. He was voted into the Hall of Fame by the sponsoring Northwest Oregon Labor Retirees Council. The Retirees are affiliated with the NW Oregon Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

Per Daniel Fagereng was born on Feb. 7, 1934 in New York City. His parents were immigrants from Norway. After his father, Edvard, became a certified public accountant, the family moved to suburban Long Island. Per's mother, Lily, was a nurse. Per went to grade school and high school on Long Island.



PER FAGERENG

**PER JOINED** his first union at age 15 when he worked in a summer job as a mess boy on a Norwegian freighter and joined a Norwegian maritime union. After high school, he attended Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, from which he graduated with a bachelor's degree in philosophy. A summer job in college took him to Alaska where he worked for a gold mining company. After college came service in the United States Army from 1956 to 1959. Following basic training at Fort Ord in California, he was assigned to a base in Germany where he served as a mail clerk and played

soccer on an Army team against German teams. He finished his Army service at Fort Benning in Georgia and was honorably discharged with the two stripes of a specialist-fourth.

**AFTER THE ARMY**, Fagereng went to San Francisco, which he became interested in while at nearby Fort Ord. There he joined his second union, the Teamsters, while working as a taxi driver. He also worked as a stock clerk in an I. Magnin store. He next got a job in the circulation department of the San Francisco News Call-Bulletin, a newspaper that was the product of a merger of the News and the Call-Bulletin. The Call-Bulletin was the product of an earlier merger. Next came a job as a copyboy in the paper's newsroom, which led to a copy editing job wearing a green-visored eyeshade on the copydesk. Newspaper work put Fagereng in his third union, The Newspaper Guild. "I liked that job," he said. "I stayed nearly 15 years." He walked the picket line during a strike in the 1960s. He went through a merger when the S.F. Examiner took over the News Call-Bulletin. He also got married and started a family.

Fagereng and his wife, Susan and their sons moved to the Oregon Coast in 1976 and built a house at Nehalem in Tillamook County. He worked at odd jobs there before deciding to move to Portland in 1977. He and Susan were later divorced.

**IN THE ROSE CITY**, Per joined his fourth union, the National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 82, working for the United States Postal Service delivering mail. A transfer to a clerk's job put him in his fifth union, American Postal Workers Union Local 128. He worked for the USPS about 15 years, which he said was about evenly divided between outdoor and inside jobs. His next job was driving a Laidlaw school bus for Portland Public Schools as a member of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757, which was his sixth union. He left that job after a year in the early 1990s.

The Multnomah County Library was Per Fagereng's next employer. He worked at the main facility in downtown Portland and joined his seventh union, Multnomah County Employees Local 88 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Much of his time was spent mailing books to library patrons.

**FAGERENG WAS EMPLOYED** at the Central Library at SW 10th and Yamhill when it was vacated for a remodeling project and relocated in the old multi-story State Office Building situated between SW 4th and 5th Avenues and

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## Washington Congressman Brian Baird explains positions on union issues

VANCOUVER — Washington Congressman Brian Baird wants to set the record straight.

He supports unions. He supports a workers' right to form a union without being harassed by their bosses. He supports project labor agreements, state and federal prevailing wage laws, and buying American-made goods.

The national AFL-CIO's Committee on Political Education (COPE) ranks Baird among the top members in the U.S. House of Representatives, with a lifetime COPE voting record of 89 percent on issues it deems important to working men and women. The Change to Win Labor Federation doesn't track voting records, but its affiliates have always endorsed the five-term Democrat from Vancouver.

"There's a lot we agree on — definitely more than we disagree on," Baird told the Northwest Labor Press in an hour-long interview May 4 arranged by the congressman.

Baird has been getting a lot of heat from organized labor — especially building trades unions. It started late more than a year ago when he let go his labor liaison, longtime Teamster



REP. BRIAN BAIRD

Harry Glaus. Most recently it's over positions he has taken on proposed construction projects and global trade. It reached a breaking point a month ago when a union member chastised him for supporting fast-track trade negotiating authority, the Central America Free Trade Agreement and the North American Free Trade Agreement.

"I didn't support any of those. I wasn't even there (in Congress) when

NAFTA passed," he said.

It's true. Baird voted against fast-track trade authority, and against free-trade agreements with Central America and Chile. He did support labor-opposed trade deals with Oman, Bahrain, Morocco, Australia and Singapore, and he voted for permanent normal trade relations with China and Vietnam.

Fast track (now called trade promotion authority) slipped through Congress in the middle of the night in 2002 by only two votes. Under fast track, the president is authorized to negotiate trade agreements with foreign countries without consulting lawmakers. After the terms of the deal are negotiated it is presented to Congress, which is only permitted a yes or no vote on the agreement within 90 days of its submission.

Fast-track trade promotion authority is set to expire in June and it faces renewal by Congress. Baird told the Labor Press that he probably will vote against it.

He says he has a "fundamental constitutional concern" about fast-track trade promotion authority. He cited Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution that states, "Congress shall have power to regulate commerce with foreign nations..." Baird says fast-track authority takes that responsibility out of Congress' hands.

He reminded the Labor Press of his early support for the Employee Free Choice Act. "This might be the most significant bill out there (for labor)," he said. EFCA, a bill designed to level the playing field between workers and employers in union organizing and collective bargaining, passed the House earlier this year 241 to 185.

A member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Baird led the way in getting a bill introduced to help strengthen enforcement of the Buy America Act. The federal law stipulates that American-made steel and iron be used on federal transportation bridge projects unless

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