

Let me say this about that

—By Gene Klare



Thompson in spotlight

JOE THOMPSON, 77, founder of the Labor Roundtable of Southwest Washington, stands in the spotlight as a new member of the Labor Hall of Fame, which is sponsored by the Northwest Oregon Labor Retirees Council. The Retirees Council is affiliated with the Northwest Oregon Labor Council, AFL-CIO, and meets monthly in the NOLC boardroom at 1125 SE Madison St., Portland

THOMPSON RETIRED 21 years ago at age 56 from the Aluminum, Brick and Glass Workers International Union. He took early retirement as a vice president of the Aluminum Workers after a merger necessitated a staff reduction. The ABGWIU later merged with the United Steelworkers of America.



JOE THOMPSON

Joseph Eugene Thompson was born on May 16, 1930 in East St. Louis, Illinois, across the Mississippi River from St. Louis, Missouri. After attending grade school and high school in his hometown, he enlisted in the United States Air Force. After two years of active duty he entered the Air Force Reserve and went to work in the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa) plant in East St. Louis. Thompson said "no sooner than I'd settled down to civilian life, the Air Force called me back to active duty in the Korean War." He served in Korea as an airplane mechanic. After his second tour of duty, he returned to his job at Alcoa.

HE BECAME ACTIVE in Aluminum Workers Local 100 as a shop steward at the Alcoa plant. In 1956, Thompson moved to Gramercy, Louisiana, to work in a Kaiser Aluminum plant. His next move took him to Duffy, Ohio, near the West Virginia state line, where he worked at an Olin Mathieson Aluminum plant and helped organize it. In March 1959 he went to Terre Haute, Indiana, to organize an Anaconda Aluminum Co. plant. There, he served for five and a half years as president of Local 103.

Thompson was elected an international vice president of the Aluminum Workers at a 1969 convention held in Vancouver, Wash. In that capacity, he provided service to local unions in the Midwest while based in Terre Haute. In 1976 he was transferred to Denver, Colorado, where he organized the Robinson Brick plant and the Schaffer Seating factory. Later, he was transferred to Vancouver, Wash., from where he worked in the Northwest organizing, negotiating contracts and handling other duties for local unions.

AFTER HIS RETIREMENT in 1986, Thompson was instrumental in forming the Labor Roundtable of Southwest Washington, and was its chairman for nearly a decade. He is still active in that organization, which meets for breakfast at a Vancouver restaurant every other Friday, and he also still attends meetings of the Vancouver-based Clark, Skamania and West Klickitat Counties Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

Political campaigning for labor-endorsed candidates occupied a goodly amount of Thompson's time when he worked for the Aluminum Workers Union, and in retirement he is still active in politics. When he was in Indiana, he helped Birch Bayh get elected to the U.S. Senate. In Vancouver he's worked on campaigns of Patty Murray for U.S. senator, Jolene Unsoeld for U.S. representative, Maria Cantwell for U.S. senator, and Brian Baird for U.S. representative, and he's also helped Washington State Senator Al Bauer and State Representative Val Ogden.

THOMPSON SERVED as co-chairman, with Jim DeLong of Kaiser Permanente, on a committee that he said "was able to erect a monument in Vancouver to Henry J. Kaiser and to the union workers who built World War II Liberty Ships at the Kaiser Shipyard." Many union volunteers participated in the monument project. The monument was erected and dedicated in the mid-1990s at the site of the old shipyard along the Columbia River.

Thompson and his wife, the former Carolett Frey, were married in Terre Haute in 1960. They have a daughter, Elana, and a grand-daughter, Aspen, age 5.

Governor could do more to aid injured workers

To The Editor:

Being a Machinists Union member for over 38 years, now retired and having a daughter killed on the job, I was appalled to read the article "Remembering workers killed on the job" in the April 20 edition of the NW Labor Press.

I couldn't believe that Gov. Ted Kulongoski was even asked to speak at such a solemn occasion. This is the same man who, when he was the insurance commissioner under Gov. Neil Goldschmidt, helped Goldschmidt and Kevin Mannix and others change our workers' compensation system so it would benefit employers, insurance companies and the state's own SAIF

Corporation.

Kulongoski loves to tell everyone that we have one of the lowest workers' compensation rates in the country. The only problem with that is you only get low rates by not paying the injured workers what they deserve, are entitled to, and need to keep on living.

Then he shows up and turns this special moment into a political ploy to complain about George Bush and his administration and blaming them for all of our safety issues. This was supposed to be a solemn moment when we remember our fellow workers who were killed on the job; not a moment for our governor to try and make political hay.

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Meanwhile, here in Oregon I haven't seen him doing anything to help get any of the numerous bills passed that would have made workers' compensation more worker-friendly, doubled OSHA penalties, changed the makeup of the Management-Labor Advisory Committee or anything else that would have actually helped Oregon workers.

Most of the things he was blaming the feds about could be handled right here in our own Legislature and/or by executive order.

Barrett Behurst Sr.
IAM Lodge 63
Portland

Support beleaguered Iraqi oil industry workers

To The Editor:

As of May 14, oil workers in Iraq are on strike to protest proposed legislation that would privatize the country's oil. The new oil law would give 30-year leases to companies like Chevron, Exxon and Mobil with a guaranteed 75 percent of oil revenue until infrastructure investments are recouped.

Thereafter, these companies would keep 20 percent of the profits. What is not widely reported is the origin of this legislation. It was drafted by the Vir-

ginia firm Bearing Point, sent to the oil companies for review, then to the U.S. Government and the International Monetary Fund; and finally, it was presented to the Iraqi Parliament to rubber stamp.

Currently, Iraqi oil is a national resource that should be used to rebuild the country after decades of devastating sanctions, war and occupation. It is criminal that multinational corporations are expecting to make lucrative profits off of rebuilding an infrastructure that existed prior to the U.S. led coalition's

invasion of Iraq. It is imperative that U.S. workers and labor unions stand in solidarity with the valiant workers of the Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions as they strike for better living conditions for all Iraqis.

Solidarity e-mails and faxes can be sent to: Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki Minister of Oil, Dr. Hussein Al Sharastani C/O Embassy of the Republic of Iraq, 169 Knightsbridge, London SW7 1DW; Fax: (020) 7589 3356.

Please send a copy of correspondence to the General Union of Oil Employees at info@basraoilunion.org

Glenn Kirkindall
UFCW Local 555
Portland

Labor appreciation dinner June 2

The Northwest Oregon Labor Council will host the 10th annual Labor Appreciation and Recognition Night Saturday, June 2, at Westmoreland Union Manor starting at 6 p.m. This year's theme is "Hat Madness," so don your favorite lid for the dinner and awards ceremony, which serves as a fundraiser for Labor's Community Service Agency's Emergency Fund. The fund helps union members who have been laid off, are on strike, or experiencing some type of financial difficulty.

Dinner tickets are \$10 per person. Raffle tickets also will be on sale. For more information, call 503-235-9444.

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