

# Union leaders from Oregon paper mill travel to Minnesota, denied a meeting with new owners

**Investment firm buys bankrupt Pope & Talbot, forces workers to 're-apply' for jobs, then cuts wages and benefits**

By STEVE SHARE

WAYZATA — Oregon's Willamette Valley is a long way from the shores of Lake Minnetonka, lined by the palatial homes of Minnesota's wealthiest business leaders. Nonetheless, two union leaders from United Steelworkers Local 1189 from Halsey, Oregon traveled all the way to Minnesota last week seeking a meeting with Patrick C. Halloran, head of Wayzata Investment Partners, a private equity firm that purchased their plant in June.

"Do they have any idea what's going on out there?" asked Leon C. Harlson, president of Local 1189.

USW Local 1189 represents about 120 workers at Cascade Pacific Pulp.

Previous owner Pope & Talbot filed for bankruptcy last November and shut down the mill May 9, 2008. The plant — and workers — sat idle for seven weeks until Minnesota-based Wayzata Investment Partners, a private equity group, purchased the paper mill for \$31.2 million and resumed operations under a new name.

Restarting the plant should have been good news for the workers, but the mill's new Minnesota owners fired all the workers. Workers who wanted to return to the plant had to "re-apply" for their jobs — and take pay cuts of 12-28 percent. The new owners also eliminated pensions and tripled health care costs.

Wayzata Investment Partners has dragged out negotiations for a new contract with USW Local 1189, bringing Harlson and Local 1189 negotiator Randy Besaw to Minnesota to request a meeting in-person with managing partner Halloran.

Harlson has worked at the plant for 20 years, Besaw for 25 years.

"The mill started in 1969 and there are some people who started there who are still working there," Besaw said.

"The workers are devastated by the rehiring process they've put everyone through," Harlson reported.

A certified letter that Local 1189 sent Aug. 15 to Wayzata Investment Partners was signed for but never answered, so Harlson and Besaw made the trip to Minnesota.

Sept. 8 they found themselves on the sidewalk outside the offices of Wayzata Investment Partners in downtown Wayzata — joined by 50 Minnesota union members who turned out in a show of solidarity, chanting and waving signs.

To be sure, a union demonstration on Lake Street in posh downtown Wayzata is not your everyday sight: Traffic slowed to observe, curious bystanders inquired about what was go-

**A rally supporting workers at the Halsey mill will be held Sunday, Sept. 21, at 1 p.m. at the Steelworkers Local 1189 union hall, 1125 W. First Street, Halsey, Oregon. For more information, contact Jim Gourley at 541-206-9544.**

ing on, horns honked from a passing U.S. Postal Service letter carrier's truck and from a semi-trailer truck. A reporter and photographer from the Lakeshore Weekly News were on the scene. A dozen police stood watch.

Despite the fact that Harlson and Besaw had come all the way from Oregon, no one from Wayzata Investment Partners would meet with them. In fact, the door to the building was locked, with a local police officer standing guard, and the two visiting union leaders weren't allowed inside to deliver a letter requesting a meeting.

As Harlson, Besaw and supporters waited, Lt. Mike Murphy of the Wayzata Police Department offered to help and took the letter inside. He returned to announce that he had "served" the letter, presenting it to Wayzata Investment Partners' corpo-

rate attorney.

Satisfied that at least the letter was delivered, Harlson, Besaw and their supporters dispersed, as the chant "we'll be back" echoed in downtown Wayzata.

Backed by their international union, USW Local 1189 promises a continuing campaign to seek justice for the workers at Cascade Pacific Pulp.

USW Local 1189 is asking Minnesota union members to contact Wayzata Investment Partners to urge them to settle a fair contract at Cascade Pacific Pulp. Contact: Patrick C. Halloran, Wayzata Investment Partners, 701 East Lake Street, Suite 300, Wayzata, MN 55391. Phone: (952) 345-0700. Fax: (952) 345-8901.

*(Editor's Note: Steve Share is editor of the Minneapolis Labor Review.)*

## IN MEMORIAM

**Leo G. Lyman**, a 55-year member and retired business agent of Sheet Metal Workers Local 16, died Aug. 22, at age 81.



Lyman joined Local 16 as an apprentice in November of 1953. He completed his apprenticeship in December of 1957. He worked at several union shops and taught apprenticeship classes until he was elected as a business representative in June of 1982. He served in that post until July of 1989.

Lyman was born April 8, 1927, in Garner, Iowa. He served in the Navy during World War II. He lived in Salem before moving to Portland.

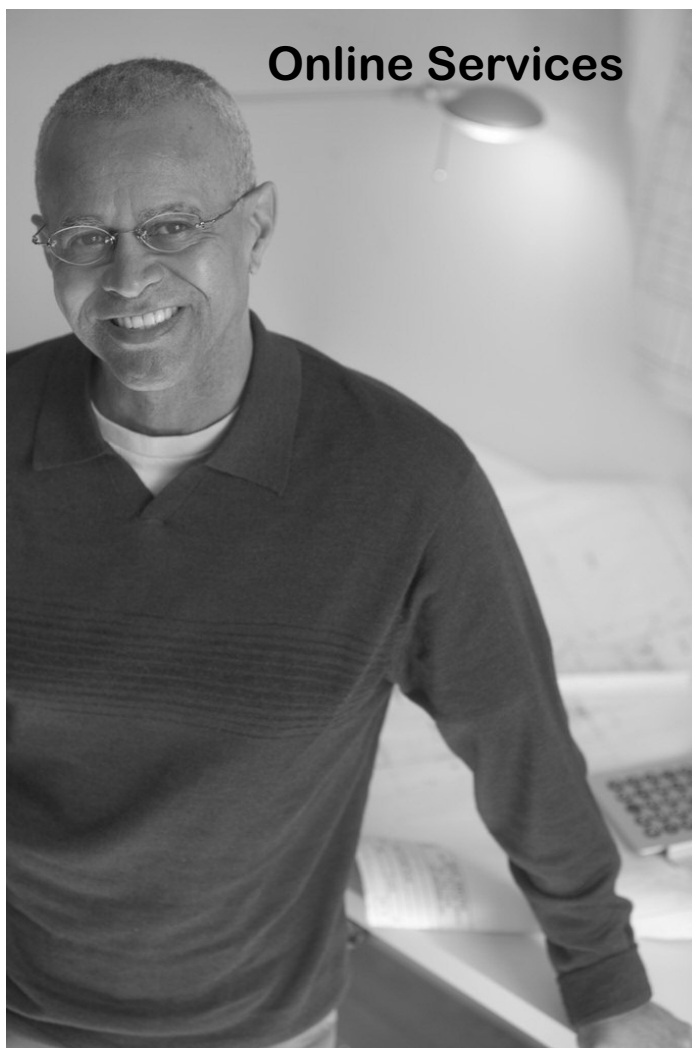
In 1972, he married Patricia Hayward.

Survivors include his wife; daughters Cindy Lyman and Georgia

Howard; son Jim; and six grandchildren.

Remembrances can be sent to the American Heart Association.

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