

PSU students help preserve Transit Union #757's history

Students at Portland State University (PSU), along with the Oregon Historical Society, helped Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757 complete a pair of oral history interviews.

Jim Kelsheimer-Sevick and Jeff Baker, students in a Public History class at PSU taught by Professor Bill Lang, interviewed Local 757 retirees Paul Headley of Eugene and Ken Richins of Salem over a six-week period. The Public History class offers expertise in oral history, publications, public programs, and the uses of technology in historical projects that range from archives to exhibits.

Additionally, Kelsheimer-Sevick and Baker received guidance from Jim Strassmaier, a longtime oral historian at the Oregon Historical Society. OHS is the repository for the interviews. OHS currently has a collection of some two dozen oral history interviews with Oregon trade unionists.

Strassmaier would like to see the complete history of organized labor in Oregon — written and oral — on file at the historical society.

"Some day, hopefully not too far off, when the complete history of organized labor in Oregon will be written, much of its truth and power will owe a debt to the oral histories we create," Strassmaier said.

Following previous interviews with early ATU leaders Gene Watson and Mel Schoppert, Strassmaier said the latest recordings "have widened the perspective to include the similarly dramatic story of transit history in other Oregon towns. The fullness of biographical detail in all of these accounts is calculated to bring historians down to the real level of individual human experience."

Kelsheimer-Sevick and Baker, who have no previous labor background,

conducted extensive interviews after researching the subjects and listening to oral histories on file at OHS, and receiving guidance from Strassmaier. Together, they completed 18 hours of interviews.

ATU Local 757 funds a history program through a contribution of two cents per member per month from their regular union dues. The union paid the students a stipend of \$500.

"This can be a model for other unions determined to preserve their history," Strassmaier said.

Union leaders and members interested in learning more about how to preserve your union's history, or those wishing to take part in the oral history effort (interviewing, research, transcribing), can contact Strassmaier at 503-236-1094, or by e-mail at strassj@spiritone.com.

Toys needed for annual Yule party

Labor's Community Service Agency and the Northwest Oregon Labor Council will hold its 14th annual "Presents from Partners" holiday toy drive. The annual event culminates in a toy distribution party for underprivileged children.

To participate, drop off a new, unwrapped toy to the Northwest Oregon Labor Council or Labor's Community Service Agency between now and Dec. 17. The offices are located at 1125 SE Madison St., Suites 110-D or 103-B, Portland.

The Presents from Partners Holiday Toy Party will be held at the event hall at 1125 SE Madison on Sunday, Dec. 19, from 1 to 4 p.m.



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