

Who's On Our Side?

By Tom Chamberlain



Every Workers Memorial Day we read the list of names of Oregonians who died on the job, at war, or in industrial accidents in the past year. Every year we say we hope next year's list will be shorter.

Oregon's list is not getting shorter. We saw dramatic decreases in workplace deaths as our economy changed 20 and 30 years ago.

We saw decreases more recently as safety measures were stepped up. But for the last few years, our numbers have not decreased dramatically.

On April 28, we will hear the names of 46 workers read. Last year we remembered 52. We have sent condolences to 40 to 50 families a year for quite some time now. That is too many families every year.

There are measures we can take to protect more of our fellow workers. We know that good training, a culture that prioritizes safety, and ensuring workers have access to safety equip-

ment, all help.

That's where our unions come in.

The morning of Workers Memorial Day, I'll be at a groundbreaking for a new apartment building in Portland that will be built with 100 percent union labor. Our unions provide some of the best training programs around. We demand a culture of safety. We bargain for the equipment that will keep our members — and in many cases the people we serve — safe. And we try to make sure workers know that they can say something if working conditions aren't safe.

Accidents still happen. We tragically lost a few of our members on the job this year. But we can, and we must, do more to lower Oregon's number of names read.

I recently heard someone say that business owners may take on the financial risk of starting a company, but every single day workers take on the physical risk. Whatever your job,

there is physical risk involved. You take on risk in exchange for a paycheck that may or may not fully compensate you for the physical toll of the work you do. Most days, we leave work intact. The risk paid off.

In 2013, though, the risk wasn't worth it to 46 families.

We must recommit to making our workplaces safer — via the Legislature, through demanding the training we need, at the bargaining table, and every day when we show up to work by reminding our bosses that we are the ones who take on the physical risk of making a profit, and no profit is worth the cost of our lives.

Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO.

IN MEMORIAM



Longtime International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 48 member **PHILIP PARKER** died of a heart attack April 2. He was 67.

Parker joined Local 48 in 1978. He was an active member, serving on the Executive Board, as vice president, as an apprenticeship instructor, and as chair and later treasurer of the Washington IBEW Political Action Committee. Parker "retired" (started collecting his pensions) in 2009, but never retired from the IBEW, remaining an active dues-paying member.

At the time of his death he was serving as president of the Labor Roundtable of Southwest Washington, and he had recently been reappointed by Gov. Jay Inslee to a second, four-year term on the Washington State Transportation Commission.

Parker also was currently serving on the boards of the Clark County Public Facilities District, the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council, the Columbia River Economic Development Council, and he was a member of the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce.

He previously served as a member of the Washington State Electrical Board, the Washington State University-Vancouver Advisory Board, the Tech Prep Advisory Committee for Clark College, and on the Clark County Planning Commission for 14 years. In his spare time, he volunteered with the local Boy Scouts and coached youth soccer (one of his players was Vancouver Mayor Tim Leavitt).

In 2012 he ran unsuccessfully for Clark County Public Utility District commissioner.

PHILIP ARTHUR PARKER was born Oct. 27, 1946, in Providence, Rhode Island. His family moved to Orlando, Fla., where he was raised with two sisters and a younger brother.

He graduated from Colonial High School in Orlando in 1964 and later attended local community college there.

He served and was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army Reserves.

Parker met his wife of 44 years, Sherry Waltz, on a blind date in Florida, where she was a student at the University of South Florida. They were married on July, 19, 1969.

In 1970, at age 23, Parker was accepted into the union electricians apprenticeship training program and became a member of IBEW Local 606. When worked slowed down in Florida, Parker moved his family to Houston, Texas, then to San Diego, and finally to Portland, where he dispatched out of IBEW Local 48.

His wife and two sons settled in Vancouver, Wash. In 2007 the Parkers moved to Battle Ground.

Parker is survived by his wife, Sherry, a former county clerk and current Clark College trustee; sons Jeffrey of Sammamish, Wash., and David of Ridgefield, Wash.; and four grandchildren. David is a member of Local 48.

About 75 people — union members, politicians and business leaders — attended the April 11 meeting of the Labor Roundtable, of which Parker was chairman. Attendees described Parker as a humble man — a giant with an undying commitment to jobs, the infrastructure, and all workers. "Phil's influence is felt all over the state," said state Sen. Annette Cleveland.

A celebration of life will be held Tuesday, April 22, from 4:30 to 6 p.m. at Luepke Community Center, 1009 E. McLoughlin Blvd., Vancouver.

Oregon renewable energy initiative withdrawn

The ballot initiative that aimed to gut Oregon's "renewable portfolio" requirement was withdrawn by its sponsors this month.

Oregon passed a law in 2007 requiring big utilities to have 25 percent

of their power from new renewables by 2015. The initiative would have let utilities count old hydroelectric dams as new renewables. Oregon already gets more than 25 percent of its power from existing hydro dams, so it would have

removed most of the incentive for building wind, solar and other renewables.

That's one less defensive battle this fall for the Oregon AFL-CIO, which opposed the initiative.

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NW Oregon Labor Council to relocate

The Northwest Oregon Labor Council will move to a new office on April 23. The space is located in the building owned by the IBEW and United Workers Federal Credit Union at 9955 SE Washington Street, Portland, Ore. 97216.

NOLC will be on third floor in Suite 305. Their phone and fax numbers will remain the same, 503-235-9444 and 503-233-8259.

Starting April 28, Executive Board meetings will be held in the second floor meeting room (Suite 201) in the building.

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