

Guest Column

By Norm Diamond, Pacific Northwest Labor History Association

Return of the Loyal Legion?

A SE Portland beer hall takes its name from an early 20th century union-busting group

Members of the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association were astonished last year to discover a new Portland bar named after the notorious Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen (4Ls). The bar's website characterized the 4Ls as a labor union and seemed to identify with its dubious heritage.

The 4Ls was far from a union in any meaningful sense. It was a World War I-era organization specifically created by the U.S. War Department to undermine labor organizing in the woods (Industrial Workers of the World — IWW) and mills (American Federation of Labor — AFL). Its initial leadership consisted of 100 assigned military officers. Its membership included approximately 25,000 soldiers under military discipline as the Army Spruce Production Division. The 4Ls enrolled employers as well as workers.

It was founded in 1917 in response to a strike wave in the Pacific Northwest. Especially in the timber camps, living and working conditions were abominable: no showers, no latrines, no laundries and no way to dry clothes after 10 to 16 hours of sweaty work.

The loggers called themselves "bundle-stiffs" after the bedding they were forced to carry in the absence of any mattresses or springs. The overcrowded, fetid shacks where they slept were designed to be moved every year or two and had no windows. Bedbugs and lice were rampant.

Wages were paid irregularly and hiring happened through agencies the loggers called "sharks," located in towns far from the camps. It was common for workers to pay agency fees, then discover days later that the promised jobs didn't exist.

Key demands in the strike were for an eight-hour day, regular paydays, furnished bedding, access to showers, and hiring to occur through a union hall. Lumber mill workers joined the strike, also demanding an eight-hour workday, making the IWW and AFL de facto allies.

The strike was effective in cutting profits and slowing production. The military needed lumber for building barracks and ships. They especially

needed Northwest spruce for the new Army Air Force planes. After meeting with employers, they intervened.

The Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen broke the strike. They recruited through pressure and intimidation, forcing workers to sign pledges of allegiance both to the war effort and to the duty they owed employers. Their constitution explicitly banned strikes.

To keep their workforce, the 4Ls also introduced reforms. One year after the strike wave, they granted the eight-hour day. Later they mandated that employers in the timber camps would have to provide bedding. The reforms didn't always last, however, as the organization had no means of enforcing them once the war ended other than by expelling employers who didn't comply.

The 4Ls pretty much petered out in the 1920s. One of its legacies, though, was a large sign left in its Chinatown offices, the sign the bar owner moved across the river, giving its name to the new Loyal Legion bar.

Hyung Nam, a teacher at Portland's Wilson High School, initially contacted the bar about mounting a plaque that would set the story straight. After conversations with the author of this article, the owner agreed on specific wording to give a more accurate website account. That was in January, however, and the website has yet to change. Perhaps an accurate version would undermine the bar's flannel-shirt, Portland Timbers "branding."

It is important to hold onto our heritage and not let it be distorted. That history is all around us. As a coincidental example, the building in which the bar is located hosted Ku Klux Klan rallies when the KKK was a Portland political power in the 1920s. Our buildings, parks and streets all have working class stories to tell. For a labor historian, the past never entirely disappears.

Norm Diamond is a former president of Pacific Northwest Labor College and co-author of *The Power In Our Hands: A Curriculum on the History of Work and Workers in the United States*. He serves as Oregon trustee to the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association, which will hold its annual conference at Portland State University May 20-22. Check pnha.org for more details.



Clark County Sheriff seeks help from Portland shipyard workers

Cold Case Unit asks for help to solve a 1974 murder

VANCOUVER, WA — The Clark County Sheriff's Office Cold Case Unit is seeking the public's help in locating a man who was the boyfriend of a 17-year-old Portland girl whose body was found in rural Clark County in late 1974.

In particular, the department hopes that someone from the Metal Trades Council of Portland and Vicinity who worked at the Portland shipyards during that time might be able to help.

Detectives looking into the 41-year-old murder think the man could have information that could help them piece together the last days and hours of Martha Marie Morrison's life. The man is not a suspect, said Special Deputy Dennis Hunter. Morrison family members told authorities the young man visited them in Eugene, Ore., hoping to find Martha just after she disappeared.

Detectives are asking for the public's help because Martha's family members cannot remember the young man's name; they met him only briefly in the summer of 1974 and several weeks later when he was looking for

her. They say he was slender, between 5'7" and 5'10" tall, and might have been African American. He said he was going to work as a welder in a Portland shipyard or dock.

Martha met the young man at a job-training program in or near Phoenix, Ariz., when she was living with relatives there. The two drove through Eugene on their way to Portland that summer, but family members did not know where they lived in Portland.

The couple had an argument, and after he went to work, Martha was seen leaving their apartment with some belongings. Her body was found about two months later in a shallow grave in the Dole Valley area of east Clark County.

Martha was about 5'4" tall and weighed about 140 pounds. She had thick, long brown hair and bad psoriasis everywhere except her face. She frequented coffee houses, where she would sing or play guitar. She was proficient in American Sign Language.

If you have any information about the former boyfriend or couple, contact Detective Craig Marler at 360-397-2108 or craig.marler@clark.wa.gov, or the Cold Case Tip Line at 360-397-2036.

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Portland-area ADT workers stay nonunion

At group of workers who install and service home and business security systems at ADT Security Systems in Beaverton voted 14 to 10 on March 4 to remain nonunion — rejecting a call to join International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 48.

Nearly half the workforce there had signed a petition in favor of unionizing when ADT workers first contacted Local 48 to talk about unionizing, and Local 48 asked the National Labor Relations on Jan. 21 to schedule an election. But in the weeks leading up to the vote, an

in-house attorney who specializes in union avoidance was brought in to lead four anti-union meetings.

The attorney told them about a group of 19 ADT workers in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, who voted to join IBEW Local 342 in 2013. ADT dragged out negotiations over a first contract for nearly two years. It then locked the workers out in February 2015, and replaced them with outside contractors.

Local 48 lead organizer Tim Foster says that spooked some of the workers in Beaverton — despite the fact that IBEW has

collective bargaining agreements covering about 1,000 ADT workers at 38 locations, including Seattle and Tacoma.

ADT, based in Boca Raton, Florida, has 17,000 employees. In 2014, its CEO Naren Gursahaney received \$5.5 million in compensation. In February, ADT announced it's being acquired by the private equity firm Apollo Global Management in a \$6.9 billion leveraged buyout. Apollo intends to merge ADT with Protection 1 and ASG Security, two other security companies it owns.