While bad news abounds, members share some good news

John Hogue
MV Transportation
“…”

Richard Jones
San Francisco Chronicle
“I’m alive. You can quote me on that!”

Frank Yuen
Cemex
“I have seven grandkids. That makes my day—to be able to do something for them. And I always steer them to go union.”

Pam Gaskill
Rock Transport
“Our company’s still afloat and we have a lot of the drivers working every day. And I have great friends at work.”

David Brown
Hanson Ag West
“It’s time to enjoy your family. I’ve got four kids at home and we’re having a blast. Having a good attitude can get you by these tough times!”

For up-do-date Teamster news, check your Local website:
www.teamsters853.org

Benefits and Announcements

Monthly Union Meetings
Local 853’s membership meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the West Bay and East Bay (call 510-895-8853 to confirm location):
- 2100 Merced Street, San Leandro
- 151 West 20th Avenue, San Mateo.

Bakery Division Meeting
The Bakery Division Quarterly meeting will be held June 9, 4 p.m. at 2100 Merced Street, San Leandro.

WCT Pension Plan Q&A
On the second Wednesday of every month, a representative from the Western Conference of Teamsters Pension Administrator comes to Local 853’s San Leandro office to answer your pension questions. Call 510-895-8853 or 800-400-1250 for an appointment.

SIP 401(k) Enrollment
Most Local 853 members are eligible for the SIP 401(k) Plan. If you are not yet enrolled, or wish to increase your pre-tax deferred amounts—check with your business agent, your company’s HR department, or call 1-800-4-PRETEX [1-800-477-3829].

Support your Teamsters Local 853 brothers and sisters!

As the wheels of a plane touch down at the destination, a flight attendant will come on the speaker and say, “We know you have a choice of airlines, and we’re glad you chose ours.” As consumers, we have many choices; if you can choose a union company, you can help ensure that they are in a better position to offer good union wages and benefits to their employees. Here are a few Local 853 companies to patronize:
- If you buy bottled water, buy Alhambra—it’s bottled and delivered by Local 853 members! So is Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Miller and Budweiser.
- If you’re buying dairy, go for Berkeley Farms, Foster Farms and Challenge Dairy. And Dreyer’s Ice Cream is delivered by Bay Area Teamster drivers.
- For many of your shopping needs, go to Costco. The stores in Fairfield, Hayward, Redwood City, San Jose South San Francisco, and Sunnyvale are union shops. Also, check out Cost Plus stores in San Jose (Almaden), San Jose, Marin, Santa Rosa, Concord, San Mateo (Hillsdale), Mountain View, Oakland, San Francisco and Colma.
- Go for Nabisco bakery products like Orowheat and Wonder Bread. Our members also work at Sara Lee, Svenhard’s and Earthgrains.
- The drivers and mailers at the San Jose Mercury News and SF Chronicle are still union—at least for now.
More than offering to water the lawn, Jim McEvoy offered his kidney to the woman across the street, raising the bar for neighbors everywhere.

McEvoy has worked at Right-Away Redi Mix for 20 years. A strong union supporter, he was instrumental in the Teamsters Local 853 organizing drive 10 years ago and has been an active member ever since.

Kim Mendes, a lifelong San Leandro resident who lives across the street from McEvoy, required a kidney transplant last year when she began to experience the side-effects of her Type 1 diabetes. Once McEvoy learned she was going on the donor list and beginning dialysis, he offered to help.

“I’m not Lance Armstrong, and you don’t have to be,” said McEvoy. “I’m just a normal healthy guy with two kids and a mortgage.”

When the tests came back and McEvoy and Mendes were a match, they began their journey. UCSF Medical Center, where the screenings and operations took place, is the nation’s leading center for kidney transplants. “I probably received some of the most in-depth medical examinations I’ll ever have in my life,” said McEvoy.

The pair originally planned to undergo surgery in September but their plans hit a snag when Jim broke his ankle. The surgery was re-scheduled for Oct. 17, but on Oct. 13, during a routine check-up, Kim learned she needed a triple bypass. The two say it was almost a blessing in disguise that they had to overcome so many setbacks. Had Jim not broken his ankle there might not have been time for Kim’s heart condition to be diagnosed.

Finally, just before Thanksgiving, Jim and Kim received the all-clear from their doctors, and scheduled the surgery date. On Dec. 19 the neighbors carpooled to UCSF together, and a short three days later, they carpooled home together.

“I still have a lot of recovery ahead,” says Mendes. “But Jim saved me when none of my own family members were eligible to donate.”

McEvoy is back to work while Mendes faces more recovery and possibly a pancreas transplant; but the pair check up on one another on their daily walks with their dogs.

“I’m aware that I donated my kidney,” says McEvoy. “But I’m unaware that I’m missing anything.”
On May 1, 2009—International Workers Day—1,200 union officials, business agents and organizers attending the International Brotherhood of Teamsters’ (IBT) annual Unity Conference in Las Vegas, rose to their feet in a thunderous ovation to welcome the newest member of the IBT’s General Executive Board (GEB), Local 853 Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise.

Aloise was officially sworn in as Western Region Vice President by IBT General President James P. Hoffa in a bold move that will have an immediate and lasting impact on the policies and practices of the IBT. One-and-a-half million members of the most powerful union in the country are about to find out what those of us in Local 853 have known for a long time: Rome Aloise gets things done.

According to the IBT Constitution, “The General Executive Board shall have governing authority over the International Union and its subordinate bodies to the end of upholding the laws and policies of the Brotherhood as expressed in this Constitution.” An awesome responsibility, to say the least.

Rome is replacing popular Teamster leader Chuck Mack, who is stepping down as Vice President to become the Union Chair of the Western Conference of Teamsters Pension Trust. Brother Mack’s long and distinguished career as Secretary-Treasurer of Local 70, President of Joint Council 7 and International Vice President will be a hard act to follow, but there is little doubt that Rome can do it.

Responsibilities shift

As Western Region VP, Rome’s area of responsibility includes Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, Hawaii, Nevada and California and will be shared with Western Region VP’s Jim Santangelo (Local 848 in Covina, CA) and J. Allen Hobart (Joint Council 28 in Washington). Ironically, Rome has been flying all over the country in his role as Personal Assistant to Hoffa. Being “restricted” to the western portion of the country might be a welcomed relief for Rome—and for a few employers who won’t have to deal with him anymore!

Rome will also assume Mack’s position as President of Joint Council 7. As such, he’ll be charged with overseeing Teamster contracts, initiating and supporting organizing campaigns, representing Bay Area Teamsters politically, promoting the IBT through community relations and, when necessary, resolving jurisdictional and internal disputes for 70,000 Teamsters in 12 Northern California Locals.

Rome will continue to chair the National Costco Committee and the statewide liquor negotiations. He’ll also maintain his positions on the Western Conference of Teamsters Pension Trust, the Teamsters Benefit Trust (TBT) and the SIP-401(k) fund as he assumes additional Trustee positions on other IBT plans. Most importantly for those of us in Local 853, Rome will continue as our Secretary-Treasurer.

Needless to say, Rome’s plate is full. But if history tells us anything, Rome will just find a larger plate. For Local 853 members concerned that the affairs of the Local might suffer under Rome’s expanded workload, you can rest assured that we have not been forgotten. Local 853 officials, business agents and staff are well-qualified to carry on the affairs of the local in Rome’s absence. More significantly, Local 853 will benefit enormously from having Rome at the very top of the Teamsters hierarchy.

Well-deserved appointment

For the vast majority of us, Rome’s appointment to the GEB was long overdue. Throughout his 33-plus years as a Teamster leader, Rome has consistently provided Teamster members with the best contracts, the best health coverage, the best pensions and the best representation. As a result of Rome’s ability to produce, Local 853 has grown dramatically—through organizing and mergers—to become one of the premier locals in the country.

One element of Rome’s development as a Teamster leader that rarely appears on his resume is the influence of his father, Vince Aloise. Vince, who passed away in 2007, was a highly respected Teamster who built Local 315 and Joint Council 7 into Bay Area forces. No doubt Vince is looking down on all this with great pride.

One has to admit that “International Vice President Rome Aloise” has a nice ring to it. Congratulations and good luck.
New leadership for nation and Teamsters

By ROME ALOISE

The first quarter of 2009 was plenty busy for all of us at Local 853.

Barack Obama took office as President on January 20, and many members came to our new meeting room to watch the inauguration on our big screen. It was both emotional and inspiring for all of us, as this was the moment that we hoped and campaigned for. Given all of the problems that our nation is facing, that morning I had fleeting thoughts that President Obama was hoping for a re-count!

The President is moving quickly to correct many of his inherited problems and to move forward. The wreckage left by Wall Street, the corporations that cooked their books, and the mortgage industry will take years to repair. Credit markets are absolutely necessary for our economy to function, and for many of our employers to operate. Many of our members’ jobs depend on their employers’ ability to borrow operating capital. The new administration understands this; their efforts to kick-start the banks with huge infusions of money may be starting to work.

While it’s hard to see how infusing banks with capital directly helps our members who are out of work or suffering through foreclosures, some of Obama’s initiatives have already aided those of us on “Main Street.” Unemployment insurance has been extended, COBRA subsidies will help with some of our laid-off members maintain health care, and the banks should begin to work with our members who are at risk of losing their homes.

One thing is for sure, what has already happened shows us the importance of getting the right person elected. None of the “worker friendly” assistance happened under the Bush administration, nor would it have happened under a McCain administration. We elected the right person!

Remembering Tony Lock

Until he died in March, Tony Lock was the chairman of the Western Conference of Teamsters (WCT) Pension Trust Fund for the last 15 years.

Tony was a close and true friend. I first met him when he was the young, smart, principal officer of Local 104 in Arizona. He was a huge and imposing man who could have used his size to get many things done. However, while his size mattered, his overwhelming intellect was even more extraordinary and impressive. His knowledge and expertise were quickly recognized and he moved first to the Western Conference of Teamsters, and then to the International Union, as the National Warehouse Director.

We spent days and weeks together during grocery negotiations. Watching Tony negotiate, with the employers as well as with our very militant members, was a true learning experience.

I want to assure you that Local 853 will always be my first priority. I will continue to work as hard as I can for you and your families.

After the Carey administration fired him for political reasons, Tony was asked to become the union chairman of the WCT Pension Plan. This is where he did his greatest work for the membership. With nearly 500,000 members either receiving a pension or participating in the plan, this is the largest multi-employer plan in the world. Tony led us through the good times and the bad and was always working to protect the members’ pension. Here too, he taught me a lot.

Tony had been ill for an extended period of time, but he was at all of the meetings and never missed a beat. Right up to the end, his concern was for the Plan and the participants, wanting to make sure that everything was running right. I will miss Tony. If you are retired or when you retire, you owe thanks to Tony for a safe, secure pension.

Mack to chair pension plan

This brings me to a few changes that have happened as a result of Tony’s untimely death. The union pension plan trustees selected Chuck Mack to serve as the Union Chair. As a result, Chuck will step down from all his Teamster-related duties after 43 years as a Teamster officer and official in order to assume the chairmanship of the Pension Plan.

Chuck is a great choice, as he has been a trustee longer than any other union trustee. And, through his long career with Local 70, his distinguished leadership of Joint Council 7, and his service as Western Region Vice President, he certainly understands the needs of our participants.

This year, all pension plans are facing challenges, and the WCT pension trust is no exception. Chuck is especially capable to handle these problems going forward. He will do a great job for all of us.

My new responsibilities

With all of this happening, I have been elected by the Joint Council 7 Executive Board to replace Chuck Mack as President, and also have been appointed to the Teamsters General Executive Board as Western Region Vice President. Both are great honors, and I have humbly accepted both positions.

While this may sound like the piling on of more work, I will be able to concentrate more on issues in the western states and will not be handling so many issues elsewhere. I believe these appointments bring honor to our local union. I want to assure you that Local 853 will always be my first priority. I will continue to work as hard as I can for you and your families.

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Members: Send address changes and comments to the above address or e-mail us: connections@teamsters853.org
Union members walk to cure MS

On May 2, 2009, the TeamMSTers gathered at Alameda’s Crown Beach for the 10th year in a row to participate in the MS Walk. Friends, family, and colleagues of Janine Vanier, who works as Executive Assistant to Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise, came together for this special event to raise money and awareness for the debilitating disease that is Multiple Sclerosis.

Janine was diagnosed with MS in 1987. Of course she had emotions of great sadness and anger, but eventually turned those feelings into action. She finally disclosed her illness to Rome and to the office staff, and since then, there has been no stopping her fundraising efforts and support every year.

For the Officers, Business Representatives and staff of Local 853, this day and what it means to Janine and other people suffering with MS, is a no-brainer. Every day, we see the debilitating effects the disease has, but yet the hope in Janine’s eyes and words never fades. It is an extremely empowering feeling to be a part of something so special, and an event that raises money for so many people who benefit from the research and new medications it provides.

The Walk was a great success, especially for the TeamMSTers, with beautiful weather, and a lot of money raised for the cause. But, more importantly, it is the feeling of triumph we get by looking at each other and realizing that together we can beat MS, for Janine, and for everyone who suffers in its grip.

Recording Secretary Antonio Christian named Director of IBT Human Rights Commission

When long-time Human Rights Commission Director Cheryl Johnson retired, it took four and a half people to replace her. One of those taking a piece of her former duties is Local 853 Recording Secretary Antonio Christian.

“My job will be to manage the diversity of the union. We have to do mentoring, especially as baby boomers move on. Also, we have to teach people about community service and how to volunteer and work in their communities effectively, so that when members need community support, they’ll know who the Teamsters are and they’ll know that we’re available to help.”

Christian’s main duties will be to oversee the Hoffa Scholarship program, the IBTs disaster relief efforts, the 40-person Human Rights Commission, and the Helmets to Hardhats program.

In Memoriam

STEVE ZUCKER
August 26, 1943 - June 1, 2009

Steve Zucker, a 49-year member of the Teamsters and employee at the San Francisco Chronicle, died on June 1 after a decade-long battle with cancer.

Steve stepped up to become the “on sight” business representative at the Chronicle when former Local 921 Principal Officer and Local 853 business representative Mike Killean suffered a massive stroke. In classic “Zucker” mode, and always with a Cuban cigar at the ready, Steve took on the job and spared no one his acerbic remarks. Never shy about commenting on management’s lack of ability to run the paper in an efficient, economical fashion, he expected the Chronicle to abide by the contract as much as he expected his fellow members to do a decent day’s work for a decent day’s pay.

“There was nothing shy about Steve, and you always knew where you stood with him,” said Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise. “We will miss him immensely at Local 853. Although he was getting ready to retire, I always knew that if we ever needed him, he would volunteer in a minute. He was a great union member, and more importantly a great and loyal friend.”

Steve is survived by his wife Laurie and his son Jimmy.

Donations may be made to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of America, PO Box 4072, Pittsfield, MA 01202.

In Memoriam

MARVIN MERCER
November 17, 1927 - March 22, 2008

When the Mailers’ Union (Local 15) merged into Teamsters Local 853, the group held onto some unique practices that had existed in Local 15 for years. One of these practices was that the working members contributed a death assessment for any retiree who passed away and the resulting contribution was sent to the retiree’s beneficiary.

Last year, retiree Marvin R. Mercer passed away. Brother Mercer had come to the Bay Area from Florida in 1950 to work for the San Francisco Chronicle. He was a widower for a number of years. When he passed, he named a co-worker as the beneficiary for his Teamster pension, and he left his $1,000 mortuary benefit to something he appreciated and to which he felt proud to belong—his local union.

“Although some do not appreciate what unionism and the union ‘family’ is all about, Marvin Mercer always knew,” said Business Agent Chuck Davis. “Rest in Peace, Brother Mercer.”
Most people think of construction as a man’s world, but women are definitely an active force in that world, too. Teamster Pam Talavera, who works at Rock Transport, joined more than 300 other tradeswomen from a variety of construction crafts, at the Women Building California Conference on May 2-3 in Los Angeles.

The conference, sponsored by the State Building and Construction Trades Council, is for women who work in construction. Because most women in this “non-traditional” field never see other women on the jobsite, this 8th Annual event has proven to be an important opportunity for women to network and learn skills that will enable them to gain leadership on the job and in their unions.

“It was a great event. I really learned a lot. I met and made friends with a lot of great women who also work in construction—especially a great group of pile drivers who are also from the Bay Area.”

Upon making her presentation about the conference at the Local’s May meeting, Pam said: “The main thing is how important it is to be involved in the union. This is my first time at a union meeting, and I’m going to start coming on a regular basis.”

The conference itself is coordinated by Debra Chaplan, who works for the State Building and Construction Trades Council, and is for women who work in construction. Because most women in this “non-traditional” field never see other women on the jobsite, this 8th Annual event has proven to be an important opportunity for women to network and learn skills that will enable them to gain leadership on the job and in their unions.

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**More trouble at SF Chronicle**

By the end of June, the San Francisco Chronicle will close their Union City production facilities, and subcontract all that work to Transcontinental in CITY. This Canadian-based company says that they aren’t anti-union, but to date, none of the current Chronicle drivers or mailers who have applied for jobs doing what they’ve done so well for years, have been hired.

Local 853 plans to file charges of unfair labor practices with the National Labor Relations Board over what appears to be the company’s pattern of discrimination against union members.

Business Agent Chuck Davis has also heard the San Jose Mercury News may also be moving their production to Transcom, no doubt provoking another fight.