

GUEST EDITOR

Guest Commentary —Catherine O’Connell-Cahill

This article is adapted from one that appeared in the April 2006 issue of U.S. Catholic magazine, which is published by the Claretians (www.uscatholic.org).

The Way to Dusty Death

My dad—a man who never went to college, who worked in the building trades and wore work boots and overalls—was a thinking man, as many working men are. Dave O’Connell read books. He loved to listen to opera. He learned to paint in oils. He used to ponder what was the best form of government: “Don’t you think it’s the philosopher king?” He loved poetry, most of all Shakespeare, and knew many soliloquies by heart; his buddies on the job site would often prod him to recite one or another of them. Being of the brooding Irish persuasion, he favored and best understood the tragedies: *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth* - All guys with family troubles.

Dad’s particular trade was pipe covering. As members of Local 17 will doubtless know, until the 1970s pipe coverers insulated heating and hot water pipes with asbestos, the stuff that guys in moon suits will now scrape off your basement pipes for a fee. Of course they didn’t use moon suits back in Dad’s day. So the pipe coverers’ lungs filled up with asbestos fibers instead.

Asbestos in the human lung causes a variety of horrors: lung scarring and disease, for one, which finally did in my dad at 79, a true Methuselah among asbestos workers, who almost never make it that long. Or it can so compromise your lung capacity that when you come down with pneumonia it kills you, as it did my uncle Ray Carmody, another Local 17 stalwart, at age 52. Or maybe it sits in your lungs for a few decades and then spawns a practically incurable cancer called mesothelioma. Actor Steve McQueen, exposed to asbestos in the Marines and also in car racing, died this way. So did most of my father’s friends from Local 17: Jack Friday, Bud O’Brien, and many, many others, all before their times. And so did my brother Dave, at age 35.

You see, my dad got my brother a summer job pipe covering when he was in high school. The cancer didn’t show up until almost twenty years later. I can’t imagine what it must have been like to drive your son to chemo and watch him die, leaving a wife and 3-year-old son, all because 20 years back you wanted to teach him your trade and help him earn a few bucks over the summer. Dad’s Shakespearean heroes stood by him, though. “And all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death,” grieves Macbeth. Indeed.

Company documents have since indicated that asbestos manufacturers knew the horrible risks as early as the 1930s but hid them for decades. So I tend to be skeptical when people wax eloquent about the free market and how we can't hamstring big corporations with too many of those terribly stringent worker safety standards or those unions that can kick up such a fuss.

Last year at the Catholic magazine where I work, we interviewed Kristin Shrader-Frechette, a Notre Dame professor who said that not only is this a pro-life issue, but it's an issue of social justice. "Environmental justice," she calls it, pointing out that our poor and working class endure the worst of our pollution and other environmental dangers such as asbestos. But don't whine, she says: Instead, hold your public officials accountable. To this, Shakespeare adds, "Action is eloquence." Dad would second that.

HARD HATS OFF TO JAN LEVITON

As this year comes to an end, Local 17 will have another retiree. After more than 25 years of dedicated service, Jan Leviton has decided to join the ranks of retiree's. Jan worked in our Health, Welfare and Annuity Fund office since 1989. She was appointed Administrator for the funds in 1989. She has worked hard to help improve our funds for the betterment of all members and families of Local 17. We all wish her well in the years ahead, to enjoy retirement. Congratulations to Jan for a job well done.

William Mangin has been appointed by the Trustee's to serve as our new Administrator of our Health, Welfare and Annuity Plans. William has tremendous knowledge of the funds and brings a hard working attitude with experience that will benefit all of us. The Trustee's have asked Jan to stay on as necessary to insure a smooth transition.

BUILDING TRADES COUNCILS

Submitted by Dominick J. Byrne

One of the major reasons Unions have stayed strong in Illinois and northwest Indiana is the strong commitment by all crafts to the many building trades councils in our area. Local 17 currently belongs to building trade councils in Kankakee, Will County, Lake County, Peoria, Fox Valley, McHenry, DuPage, Illinois Valley, Bloomington, DeKalb, Northwest Indiana and Chicago/Cook County.

Building trades councils are made up of a president, vice president, financial secretary, treasurer, sergeant-at-arms and trustees. These individuals are business managers and agents.

The main purpose of the building trades councils is to leave no county in Illinois and northwest Indiana without union representation. Is it necessary to have this many councils? Yes, it is. Unlike Local 17, the mechanical trades, operating engineers, trowel crafts, carpenters, electricians and ironworkers have agents who might work only one or two counties. Consequently, they keep abreast of all activity before ground is broken.

Problems are addressed immediately and corrective action is taken in favor of unions. So how does Local 17 cover 23 counties in Illinois and three in northwest Indiana, participate in all building trades councils, and also stay aware of all our work? Great question! One significant reason is the rapport that our previous leaders have built with all crafts in our jurisdiction. We have continued to build on those friendships and secured them for generations to come. There is not a business manager or agent with any craft in our jurisdiction that does not know we exist. We carry our weight in all councils, and we are always there to help our brothers and sisters in all crafts.

Building trades councils do more than stay on top of all the work in our area. They work to elect politicians who help labor and work feverishly to oust those that hurt labor. All building trades councils give to the community and those less fortunate. In times of need, the building trades are on the front line; whether it be the United Way, Habitat for Humanity, blood drives, tornado victims in the town of Utica, Christmas parties for children that otherwise would not have anything at Christmas, and many other projects too numerous to mention.

The business managers, agents and organizers who make up the building trades, along with all organized labor, are, and will always be, the big brother to the communities where they live, work, and raise their families.

RETIREES

Local 17 would like to honor these recent retirees. **CONGRATULATIONS!**

Michael Clemens	R# 39819	11-01-06
Michael R. Gabrione	R# 32231	11-01-06
James Maloney	R# 37231	11-01-06
Frank Mareci	R# 28875	11-01-06
Robert Mosley	R# 40766	11-01-06

CHRISTMAS PARTIES

Local 17 thanks the efforts of Mike & Nancy Autenreith for organizing another successful Christmas Party. A big thanks to all the volunteers. Our apprentices did a fine job of decorating the hall this year. Special thanks to: **KITCHEN HELP** (Officers wives, Neal O'Neil, Tim Ruane, Dave Pfeifer). **FACE PAINTING:** (Rashee Reed, Amy Shine). **GAMES:** (Phil Glynn, Jill Guilfoyle, Meaghan Guilfoyle, Local 17 apprentices). **MISC. HELPERS:** (Bollin Brothers, Bridget Byrne, Colleen Mangin, Wm. Coleman Family, F. Rodriguez, C. Gilbert, A.Garcia, D. Krumrie, R. Bulthuis,) Thanks to Eric Westlund for lining up the Shriner Clowns. **PEORIA PARTY:** (Mike Autenreith, Mike Foster, Rollo the Clown, and all who attended). **TOY COMMITTEE:** Jackie & the Girls.

Any names that were omitted we apologize and say your contribution was appreciated by Local 17 and all the children in attendance.

JOURNEYMAN UPGRADE CLASS

According to the CURT GROUP, The RCA GROUP, and any of the various trade journal magazines, there is a prediction of an increased workload for the next several years. This is certainly good news for us. The economists are predicting a labor shortage. Local 17 is prepared to meet the challenges that lay ahead of us. One of the ways we must prepare is to make sure that we not only have enough workers, but to insure we have enough supervisors, General Foremen, and Foremen.

Local 17 will provide a class called "The Dynamics of Supervision". This class will be given by *Norb Slowikowski*, an expert in the field of supervision. The date is Saturday, January, 20th, 2007 at 8:00 AM. We encourage members who are interested to sign up by calling the Union Hall and securing a reservation for this very motivating seminar.

LAYOFF PROCEDURES

Don't depend solely on the contractor to inform us of your layoff. Please call the union hall and let someone know you are off and want to be put on the "*Out Of Work*" list. When you get employed again, please call to take your name off the list.

DECEASED MEMBERS

These members have served Local 17 well. Our Local will remember them for eternity.

Joe L. Jones	R# 37197	10-12-06
Fred Farias	R# 45070	10-21-06
Robert Sardella	R# 37532	10-27-06

OPT OUT POSTCARD

Enclosed with your *PIPELINE* is an "OPT OUT" postcard. This applies only to our local union elections in May of 2007. If you do not want to receive a phone call from candidates regarding this upcoming election, simply follow the instructions on the postcard and mail back to us. If you don't mind hearing from the candidates and their issues don't mail the postcard.

We want to take this opportunity to wish all of our PIPELINE readers a very Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year!

Editors,
B. Glynn, J. Crinion, J. Caddick, D. Byrne, Donna