



CONNECTIONS

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Holiday edition, 2015

2015—the year the Teamsters punctured Silicon Valley's non-union armor

Most often, these days, the only news reports about unions is how they're facing right-to-work laws and people are grouching because union workers have gone on strike or they "make too much money."

Amazingly, that's not true for Local 853. The Local's numerous campaigns to organize shuttle bus drivers throughout Silicon Valley, raising their living standards, and punching a hole in the previously non-union armor that is Silicon Valley, has been featured in the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Bloomberg News*, and numerous local and national radio programs.

First Loop, then Compass

At the close of 2014, the shuttle bus drivers from Loop Transportation who ferry Facebook employees from across the Bay Area into Menlo Park, voted for union representation.

Inspired by that election, the drivers at Compass Transportation, who shuttle workers to seven major Silicon Valley companies, including Apple, eBay, Yahoo, and Genentech, voted overwhelmingly in February to join Local 853.

The union negotiated great deals for each group. Loop drivers ratified their contract in July, and in November, Compass drivers voted by an overwhelming 95 percent to approve a first contract that provides for industry-leading wages and benefits including 10 paid holidays and nine days of sick leave. The drivers also celebrated their first paid Thanksgiving holiday in 2015.

"This is another big step in bringing middle class wages and benefits to this industry," said Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise. "Under this contract, drivers will be paid between \$24 and \$31.50 an hour,



Drivers at Compass Transportation proudly ratify their first union contract on August 21.

with affordable benefits and a defined contribution pension. This is an industry where, less than a year ago, the drivers were making between \$17 and \$19 an hour with very few benefits, and no paid holidays, overtime or sick leave. It's a life-changing contract."

Next: Google Express

In August, 140 warehouse and shipping workers at Palo Alto-based Google Express Services voted for union representation. Operated by Adecco, Google Express provides products shipped from local businesses to consumers on a same-day or overnight basis. Workers are required to sign short-term employment agreements with Adecco that limit them to two years before the company lets them go. Workers have also alleged being subject to constant harassment to work faster in poor conditions that include damaged equipment, cracked floors and failing electrical systems that have resulted in fires.

"The reports we have received from workers at Google Express paint a bleak picture," said Aloise. "It is surprising that

Google, a company that prides itself on the treatment of its workforce, would allow this behavior to continue at Adecco."

In fact, in a July 17 interview on public radio station KQED, Google human resources executive Laszlo Bock stressed the importance of the company and its contractors recognizing and respecting its workers' right to organize. This is an unusual position for a company to take publicly.

Bock made clear to a caller that the company expects neither Google nor their contractors to interfere in a union drive.

"Folks have a legal right to organize without fear of retaliation," Bock said in the interview. "And that's a critical and important thing and we respect that. I mean, there will not be retaliation."

Then, Clean Harbors

In October, 15 compliance technicians, chemists, in-site technicians and administrative assistants who work at Genentech's South San Francisco campus through contractor Clean Harbors voted

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Local 853—improving and growing stronger each year

By ROME ALOISE

2015 has been another successful year for Teamsters Local 853 and our members. We always try to improve every aspect of our Local from year to year, from handling grievances more quickly and successfully, strengthen our bargaining preparation and techniques, and aggressively organizing new members to get bigger and stronger. I believe we have excelled on all these fronts this year.

Let's look at some examples. We were able to assist Gillig Corporation, the last American bus builder in the U.S. to get tax breaks and environmental waivers to build their new, state-of-the-art plant in Livermore. This work enabled us to save the jobs of each of our 500 members there.

Many states had offered Gillig big incentives, from constructing their facility to incredible tax breaks, to move and relocate. But the factors that kept Gillig local were the quality of our members' work and our Local's ability to deal fairly with the company. Most importantly, we were able to negotiate a seven-year contract extension that contained considerable wage and benefit increases, while guaranteeing the company labor peace while moving and getting started in their new location—a big victory for our members at Gillig!

Also, we were able to negotiate, and the members overwhelmingly ratified, one of the best and most lucrative Liquor agreements ever for our members working at Young's Market and Southern Wine & Spirits.

The members at Berkeley Farms (Dean Foods) ratified their new contract, which is the best agreement negotiated in the dairy industry nationwide in the last several years. Many of our members in other industries also were able to get significant increases in their contracts, but none more than what we have seen in the busing industry.

Bus drivers have traditionally been overworked and underpaid. Due to our organizing victories with the tech shuttle bus drivers (Loop, Compass and WeDriveU), and the extraordinary contracts we negotiated with those companies, we have been able to make significant gains for all of our members who drive buses. Companies like MV, Transdev, and Durham have offered unusual wage increases in order to keep our members working for them, rather than leaving to go to work for the tech companies we organized.

This is what a union is supposed to do—raise the bar for our members and allow them to earn the most they can and have the best benefits that can be afforded by the companies they work for.

As the Principal Officer of Local 853, I have the responsibility to make sure that our Local does the best job possible for our members and your families. I believe that we can improve and get stronger each year, and this year has been no exception.

Going into 2016, we are facing the excitement and bombast of a presidential election. You can assume that we will be pounding away to make sure you understand

the necessity of electing a candidate who will help workers with the struggle that we are always in and, at the very least, not hurt us.

The current crop of Republican candidates are all anti-worker and anti-union. Each one has demonstrated his or her willingness to hurt workers, undermine our power, and destroy collective bargaining as we know it. The frontrunner is a big-mouthed bully who says what he thinks people want to hear, but knows full well that he won't have to act on any of it. He is a billionaire who has no regard for people of color, people with disabilities, or most importantly, for us, the people who work hard for a living and who fight for everything we have.

As union members we need to consider one thing and one thing only: how is the candidate that we vote for going to help our hurt our ability to make a decent living and support our families? Plain and simple! All of the other issues that you may personally support do not come close to your need to have a good job and a strong union. The Republicans are not our friends. Don't be fooled by the rhetoric; vote with your pocket!

Thank you for being a great and supportive membership! Happy Holidays to you and your families, and here's hoping for a successful New Year for all of you!



Puncturing Silicon Valley's non-union armor

Continued from Page 1

to join the Teamsters. These workers collect and package waste and biodegradable materials needing special attention and care.

"We're looking forward to negotiating a contract that will ensure proper wages, respect and working conditions for our newest members," Aloise says.

Closing the year: We Drive U

These Shuttle drivers supplement the drivers who work for Facebook contractor Loop Transportation. In November, they ratified a strong agreement providing for significant wages, benefit improvements and gains mirroring or exceeding the Facebook/Loop Transportation contract already in place.

"This is another step in making extraordinary improvements to the working conditions and overall livelihoods of tech shuttle drivers," said Aloise. "We are moving to bring drivers in the entire shuttle bus industry into the Teamsters Union so that there is a level playing field on costs and so that the richest companies in the world are assured of quality, experienced drivers for the valuable employees they service."

Organizing five companies and contractors in Silicon Valley is just the tip of the iceberg. Local 853, along with other Teamster Locals and other unions, are part of Silicon Valley Rising, working together to bring union power to the thousands of workers who provide services for Silicon Valley's wealthiest companies.

Local 853 got the ball rolling and saw it gather steam in 2015, and has big plans for the coming year.

Thank you, Janine

Janine Vanier, executive assistant to Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise, retired this year after 24 years with the Teamsters. She started at the same time that Rome took over as the Principal officer of Local 853 and served as his right arm all through the years.



Janine became the bookkeeper and office manager, two of the most important jobs in the office. Once the Local grew and was able to hire more people, she became Rome's Executive Assistant.

"If Janine hadn't handled a lot of the daily issues and calls that came in, I could not have had any success," says Rome. "She deserves a lot of credit for making Local 853 as strong and vibrant as it is."

After a couple of years on the job, Janine admitted that she was suffering from Multiple Sclerosis (MS), and she worried that she might lose her job. To the contrary, the members and the officials of the Local rallied to her cause, and over the years Janine became the highest contributing volunteer for MS research, raising more than \$1 million. Janine earned the respect of everyone for working through her disability while doing a difficult job.

"Simply speaking, Janine won the respect of everyone who came into contact with her. She knew her job, treated everyone with respect, and believed in what we do for our members. I could not have survived without her!" says Rome, who wishes her many great and full retirement years.

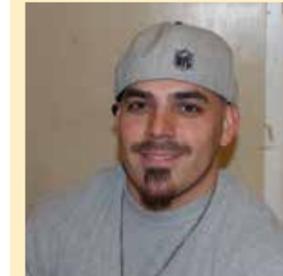
Janine will spend time working for a cure for MS and enjoying her grandson, while living life to the fullest.

Why are you thankful to be a Teamster?



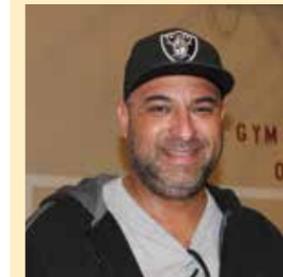
Ramona Brown
MV Transportation
8-year Teamster

"For saving my job, making my job better for me, and holding my employer accountable."



Steven Silva
Southern Wine & Spirits
30-year Teamster

"They back up their brothers. They support us. It's a family. The union helps with my issues, complaints, anything."



Jaime Lorenzana
Ferma Corp.
20-year Teamster

"You don't know what you've got until you need it and then the union is there for you. I'm thankful for the union health benefits."



Noel Ortega
BASF
More than 40-year Teamster

"The union is important to me. It gives me support. I get help when I need it. It's always there."



Guillermo Sanchez
JC Paper
15-year Teamster

"It's a good help for us, to get better benefits."



Charlie Corwell
Granite Rock
42-year Teamster

"Without the union, we wouldn't have anything. We'd be working for peanuts. We have camaraderie. Employers don't give you anything that they don't have to."

Announcements

WCT Pension Plan Q&A

On the second Wednesday of every month, a representative from the WCT Pension Trust Fund 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-PRETAX [1-800-477-3829].

Check out Local 853's website

Go to www.teamsters853.org to see what the Local has been up to between newsletters. Also get business forms and other union resources.

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Charge your union dues

In our continuing effort to make dues payments easier and more convenient, Local 853 is now offering monthly credit card payments for your dues. For more information on this program, please contact the Local Union office at 510-895-8853.

Monthly union meetings

Local 853's membership meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the union hall: 2100 Merced St., San Leandro, **Note:** Sisters in Solidarity (Local 853's Women's Committee) meets at 6:15 every other month.

2015 - Best Membership Appreciation Meeting Ever!



By TERRY POST
Local 853's 2015 Annual Membership Appreciation Meeting was one of the largest and most successful gatherings to date. There were, of course, the big screen TV's, Teamster jackets, t-shirts and hats, flu vaccines, sugary (is there any other kind?) donuts, hot coffee and all the rest we have come to expect after dragging ourselves out of a warm bed on a chilly November morning.

This year, however, expectations were surpassed with the introduction of our newest acquisition; a huge 2-axle, trailer-mounted barbecue (dubbed the "monstrosity" by Local 853 Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise). Of course, as we all know, size matters, exemplified by the new BBQ's capacity (and a dedicated staff) to serve up hundreds of tasty breakfast burritos and similar delights.

Following the hearty breakfast, old timers, new hires and a host of family members were packed into the John Muir Middle School gymnasium (I think we had to actually stop cooking to get people inside). The standing-room-only crowds, as we have seen over the years, are becoming noticeably more diverse with more women and more people of color making up a wider variety of workers from companies we have contracts with.

As always, the gathering was a perfect time for

many of us to re-connect with old friends, former co-workers and all the others whose names we can't recall. This year's meeting was also a time for nearly 1,000 Local 853 members to come together in solidarity, including raising \$1,600 for the Davis Street Family Resource Center and Eastmont Garden of Hope simply by passing the bucket. This amount will be matched by the Local.

As in previous years, Aloise gave his time-honored State of the Union speech, highlighting our victories and pointing out upcoming threats. Rome also talked about our new building off of Hegenberger Road in Oakland that should be ready early in the new year. He noted that delays and increased costs were due primarily to the highly paid union workers doing the renovation. (I think he was kidding ... maybe?)

On a serious note, Aloise took a few minutes to encourage Local 853's senior members to do a better job mentoring the younger members. He was particularly concerned that younger members lack a true understanding of the union and went so far as to note that a number of younger members tend to blame the union when things don't go the way they want. The bottom line: it is the duty of members with an understanding of the union to continually educate those who don't "get it."

Aloise also touched on the current presidential election, (without officially endorsing a specific candidate). He noted, however, that Senator Bernie Sanders was the "working person's candidate" and that former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton— while not perfect— would be a better choice than any Republican. He also asked Local 853's membership to put aside personal issues (abortion, gun control, global warming, and so on) in order to focus on candidates who support unions.

This year's Membership Appreciation Meeting was a huge success. Unfortunately, many members were unable to attend due to work schedules. For those who were there, the "take aways" included great food, prizes for many, gifts for all, a sore arm for those who received the free flu shot and, of course, an opportunity to hear from Secretary-Treasurer Aloise. The most significant "take away" was our collective solidarity; the diversity of jobs, gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation, immigration status and religion that makes us stronger because we are united as proud members of Teamsters Local 853.

As Aloise peered out over the packed gymnasium, he expressed his appreciation simply by saying, "You are my family."



Clockwise from top:

- Nearly 1,000 members attend the annual meeting;
- Local 853's Monster BBQ;
- Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise and President Bob Strela;
- Lining up for breakfast;
- Getting a flu shot;
- The wide array of prizes—from union gear to big and small electronics;
- The winners of the three grand prize TVs;
- Winners choose their union swag;
- Signing in for the morning's activities.

Why are you thankful to be a Teamster?



Tommy Leyva
Compass Transportation
Less than a year Teamster
"Because they got us a raise, better benefits...everything we have now is because of the Teamsters. For all of us bus drivers, it changed what was just a job to a career."



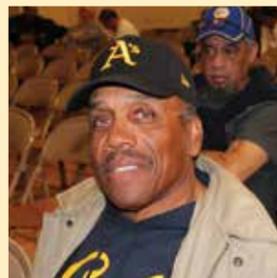
Jose Cueva (and Daniel)
Anixter
13-year Teamster
"We've got job security and it keeps doing good stuff for us. After 13 years, they've been doing good for me. I'm thankful."



Brenda Agers-Lewis (& Perri)
Costco 423 - Sunnyvale
15-year Teamster
"I'm thankful they support us. The union has gotten people's job back after a management mistake. It's great to see that unions are still strong."



Tammy Malate
Costco - Sunnyvale
28 year Teamster
"For our wages, their support for our actions at work. It makes for a friendly atmosphere."



Reginald Jackson
PCA
9-year Teamster
"I would have nothing else. Negotiating for wages and benefits is good. You're protected. I've been in four unions--this is the best!"



Michele Donahue
Cargill Salt
15-year Teamster
"They keep me secure in my job. They help me make more money."

Sisters in Solidarity



SIS members Lynn Door (left) and Business Agent Stacy Alvelais (right) present the check for \$1,500 to Drivers for Survivors, a group in South Alameda County that provides transportation to cancer patients.

Local 853 women's committee in action

For the past three years, a group of Local 853 women have raised funds and volunteered for a variety of community organizations. Activities include spending a day doing home improvement work with Habitat for Humanity in Richmond to raising money to buy, sort and donate toys and gifts to the Davis Street Family Resource Center in San Leandro. They've also sought to get more women active in the Teamsters union.



SIS chair Pam Gaskill (2nd from left) and member Lynn Door (3rd from left) talk to women at the Membership Appreciation meeting about SIS.

Their work in 2015 has been as busy as in the past. This year, the group bought groceries for the Eastmont Garden of Hope in Oakland; they got the Local to make a donation to Drivers for Survivors, a local group that provides free transportation services and companionship for cancer patients in Fremont, Newark and Union City. And, at the Local's membership appreciation meeting in November, they collected toys for the Davis Street Family Resource Center. They also passed a bucket to the crowd. Not only did the members donate \$1,600, but the Local agreed to match it, with the proceeds being split between Davis Street and Eastmont. Their final activity this year will be on December 19, when they will sort toys for the toy give-away at Davis Street.

On the union side, they've met with the women's committee of Local 287; reached out to all the Locals in the joint council to donate a t-shirt for the Teamster quilt, and sent materials and records to the Teamsters Archive Project in Washington, D.C.

All women in Local 853 are encouraged to join Sisters in Solidarity and get involved. For more information, contact Committee Chair Pam Gaskill at pgkjoy@gmail.com and get on the e-mail list.

Getting the Best Contracts

Berkeley Farms

While taking an extensive period to come to an agreement that was worthy of the member's ratification, President Bob Strelo and his bargaining committee negotiated the best dairy agreement in the nation. The contract was delayed as there were rumors of Dean Foods which owns Berkeley Farms purchasing the Safeway Milk Plant, which is also run by Local 853 members. This could have caused seniority and operational issues that would have needed to be addressed in both contracts. Once the deal apparently fell through, the negotiations came back together.

The talks included many starts and stops; at one point, the bargaining committee recommended a strike vote. Once the company got the message that the members were serious about getting what they needed, an agreement was finally reached, almost 18 months after the expiration.

The new agreement contains retroactive wage increases, improvements in the health plan contributions for the members, pension increases and language improvements. The members of Local 853 and four other Northern California Locals overwhelmingly ratified the contract in December.

Young's Market Company Southern Wine & Spirits

The contracts covering the salespersons, drivers, warehouse and clerical members at these two distributorships are the best ever negotiated in the liquor industry. They provided for a \$1.00 per hour increase each year of the agreement, pension increases, and continued fully-paid health and welfare for all of the members covered by the hourly increases. The salespersons, who are members of Local 853, kept all of their job and territory protections and received significant incentives for sales promotions.

There are still contracts to be worked out for the DSD sales and merchandisers and the Cash and Carry stores.

Training the next generation



Many thanks to Juan Lazo, a summer intern with Local 853. He worked for the Local under the tutelage of Organizer Rodney Smith. From Left: Business Agent Stacy Alvelais; Steve Bender, Juan Lazo, and Rodney Smith.

The "Teamster Gauntlet," or, passing a law when everyone said it couldn't be done

by TERRY POST

"If you don't like it," growled the red-faced contractor, "change the law!"

That was 2014. The issue was whether or not ready mix drivers should receive prevailing wages on a publicly-funded, multi-million dollar construction project. The union wanted it, the contractor didn't.

The contractor had thrown down the gauntlet, setting Local 853 Business Representative Stu Helfer in motion.

Once he recruited a group of activists from Local 853, Stu then got Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise involved. Aloise was able to bring in Joint Council 7 Political Director Doug Bloch, Teamster Legislative Representative Barry Broad and friends from the State Building and Construction Trades. These were the people who knew the politicians and the ins-and-outs of the complicated legislative process.

Also joining the team were two friends of labor, Assembly members Tom Daly (D-Anaheim) and Lorena Gonzalez (D-San Diego). They co-authored what became known as AB 219, the bill to expand prevailing wage to cover ready mix drivers.

When AB 219 came before the Assembly Committee on Labor and Employment, anti-union contractors, ready mix bosses and lobbyists came out of the woodwork to stop it. In spite of the opposition's attack, the bill passed 5-2 out of the Labor Committee on April 23 and was sent to the Committee on Appropriations.

About 40 union members filled the halls of the Capitol, lobbying Assembly members the day the bill came before Appropriations. The bill passed 12-5 out of Appropriations on May 28 and was sent to the Assembly floor where it passed 52-27 on June 3. Now, it was on to the Senate Labor Committee.

We packed the hearing room the day the Committee on Labor debated our bill. Aloise was there in the front row. The opposition lined up to condemn AB 219. At one point, when a Senator insinuated that the Committee lacked evidence on a relevant ready mix question, Barry Broad turned to the audience and asked that all the Teamsters stand.

"Ask them," Barry told the committee.

The besieged Committee on Labor passed our bill 4-1 on June 24 and sent it to the Senate Committee on Appropriations where it passed 4-2 on July 6. All of a sudden it was on the floor of the Senate.

On that day, September 1, 60 union members lined the halls of the Capitol. Someone commented that our presence looked like a Teamster "gauntlet."

Yep, the contractor threw down the gauntlet and we formed one.

That afternoon, Senator Tony Mendoza (D - Cerritos) introduced the bill and four minutes later, AB 219 passed 24-13.

Two days later, AB 219 was passed by the Assembly 51-27 and was on Governor Brown's desk on September 16 at 4 p.m. The Governor signed the bill on October 11, 2015.

The nearly year-long effort had paid off. It was a victory for all of labor, particularly for the exceptional teamwork among California Teamsters, the Building Trades, the California Federation of Labor, lobbyists, legislators, lawyers and so many more.

Finally, it was a victory for crazy ideas, long shots, patience, tenacity, doing your homework, and putting boots on the ground. It was an honor to be part of the Teamster Gauntlet.



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Local 853 – organizing and building a stronger union

Happy Holidays
and best wishes for the new year

from the officers & staff of
Teamsters Local 853



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