
Guide to the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), Local 13 Oral History Project Collection

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Contributing Institution: Special Collections & Archives

Title: International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), Local 13 Oral History Project Collection

Creator: International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, Local 13 (Wilmington, Los Angeles, Calif.)

Identifier/Call Number: URB.ILWUOH

Extent: 0.92 linear feet

Extent: 181 Megabytes

Date (inclusive): 1980-1994

Abstract: The International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's (ILWU), Local 13 Oral History Project Collection consists of interviews with various generations of longshoremen that were are part of the Local 13 Union in Los Angeles, California.

Language of Material: English

Historical Note:

In 1892, members of the longshore union met in Detroit, Michigan to christen their organization as the National Longshoremen's Association of the United States. The new union quickly became an official arm of the trade unionist movement by joining with the American Federation of Labor (AFL). With successful expansion into ports on the east and west coasts, including several Canadian ports by 1895, the union changed its name to the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA).

By the end of 1933, West Coast longshoremen voted to suspend local ILA president Lee Holman rather than accept a conservative contract largely supported by the East Coast membership. This was a major setback for ILA president Joe Ryan. Thus, the 1934 West Coast Longshore Strike began.

Union solidarity and commitment to coast-wide bargaining gained during the early days of the 1934 West Coast Strike and the support shown through the San Francisco General Strike gave longshoremen the confidence they needed to turn down the settlement agreed to by Joe Ryan, President of the ILA, and continue the strike. Except for San Pedro longshoremen, whose conservative leadership convinced its membership to abide by the agreement, the rest of the West Coast locals voted in favor of continuing their violent struggle for recognition and a coast wide agreement more favorable to dockworkers.

The 1934, West Coast Strike was the first truly successful attempt by the ILA to gain control of the waterfront. It was also the beginning of the end for the conservative faction within the International to maintain control of the West Coast longshoremen. On October 12, 1934 a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) arbitration ruling awarded the longshoremen increases in base rates of pay, provisions for penalty cargo rates, the establishment of the thirty-hour work week, and, most important, joint operation of the hiring hall whereby dispatchers would be selected by the ILA.

In the coming years, numerous setbacks coupled with the lack of International support for the 1936 West Coast 98-day maritime strike led many of the West Coast locals to form an independent "Waterfront Federation." The final break from the ILA came in May during the 1937 Annual Convention of the ILA's Pacific Coast District, when three resolutions were passed by the membership to leave the AFL to join the newly established Committee of Industrial Organizations (later known as the CIO).

In August 1937, the CIO issued a new charter to the "International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union" (ILWU). Then, in June 1938, the National Labor Relations Board voted in favor of the ILWU as the recognized bargaining agent for the entire Pacific Coast. The ILWU has remained separate from the ILA since these early jurisdictional, political and organizational disputes. In 1950, the ILWU would again face political turmoil with a growing conservatism within the CIO. The longshoremen of the West Coast, along with ten other "left-wing" unions were expelled from the CIO during the early years of the Cold War. The fact that the ILWU was the only union to survive this drastic measure by the national organization attests to the solidarity of its leadership and membership and their continued commitment to union activism.

Scope and Contents

During the early 1980s, Dr. Leonard Pitt, Director of the Urban Archives Center, in cooperation with the ILWU, Local 13 conducted a series of oral history training workshops for the union's membership. An ILWU Oral History Committee was formed and several longshoremen began interviewing former members of the local. The first set of oral history interviews were taken with the "34 men," those retired longshoremen that were on the waterfront prior to and during the 1934 Strike and the forming of the union. A second series of interviews were conducted with those workers who came onto the docks during World War II. Interviews continued to be taken with longshoremen, who joined the union after the war and during the change in the hiring practices of the union and the rapid rise of modernization and mechanization on the docks during the 1950s and 1960s.

Each narrator was asked a series of questions about family life, union affiliation and union history, union leadership and politics, collective bargaining, dispatch hall procedures and job duties, health and safety issues, discrimination in hiring

practices, their participation in strikes, slowdowns and lockouts, jurisdictional disputes with other unions, and union relations with the Waterfront Employers Association and the Pacific Maritime Association.

The collection is divided into two series, **Digital Audio** (1982-1996) and **Transcripts** (1980-1996). Audiocassette recordings of all oral history interviews are located in [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union \(ILWU\), Local 13 Records, Part II.](#)

Arrangement of Materials:

Series I: Digital Audio, 1982-1996

Series II: Transcripts, 1980-1996

Related Materials:

Audio recordings of oral histories in the collection are located in the [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union \(ILWU\), Local 13 Records, Part II.](#)

Conditions Governing Access:

The collection is open for research use.

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Preferred Citation:

For information about citing items in this collection consult the appropriate style manual, or see the [Citing Archival Materials](#) guide.

Processing Information:

Jessica Geiser, 2014

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Audiovisual materials

Documents

Series I: Digital Audio, 1984-1996

Digital Folder **McGee, Willie, Part 1, 1991 February 25**
Digital Folder **McGee, Willie, Part 2, 1991 February 25**
Digital Folder **Walters, Robert T., 1994 July 28**

Series II: Transcripts, 1980-1996

Box 1, Folder 1 **Alvarez, Albert, 1989 April 24**
Box 1, Folder 2 **Dragovich, Pete J., 1983 November 25**
Box 1, Folder 3 **Flint, Frank (Rocky), 1984 January 27**
Box 1, Folder 4 **Gaitan, Henry, 1988 June 16**
Box 1, Folder 5 **Giblin, Gordon W., June-September, 1991**
Box 1, Folder 6 **Grassi, Peter (Pete), March-June, 1990**
Box 1, Folder 7 **ILWU Registration History from Tony Salcido, circa 1989**
Box 1, Folder 8 **Kelley, Elbert, 1996 May 7**
Box 1, Folder 9 **Kuvakus, George Sr., 1992 March 10**
Box 1, Folder 10 **Langely, Alfred E., 1984-1986**
Box 1, Folder 11 **Love, George W., May 1989**
Box 1, Folder 12 **MacDonnell, Robert, 1988-1992**
Box 2, Folder 1 **MacEvoy, John D., October 1989**
Box 2, Folder 2 **Martinez, John, 1980 May 5**
Box 2, Folder 3 **McGee, Willie, 1991 February 25**
Box 2, Folder 4 **Moore, Forest "Pete," 1994 March 10**
Box 2, Folder 5 **Thayne, Edward, October-December 1983**

Box 2, Folder 6

Walters, Robert T., 1994 July 28

Box 2, Folder 7

Ware, Paul, 1980 November 14

Box 2, Folder 8

Williams, Walter E., 1988-1990