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News and Notes

UTU members killed

Two UTU brothers, Henry Salinas and Walter White, were killed recently in separate switching accidents.

Salinas, 43, a member of UTU Local 1381 in Hammond, Ind., was killed Aug. 25 while switching rail cars at the Indiana Harbor Belt's yard in Crown Point, Ind. He died about 6:30 a.m. when he was run over by a rail car.

Salinas, a UTU member since 2003, had been married just two months.

White, of Local 1241 in Richmond, Calif., was killed early on the morning Aug. 30 in a switching accident at the BNSF's yard in Stockton, Calif.

According to Local Chairperson Anthony Bojorques Jr., White was riding the side of a rail car being shoved when he struck a tank car on an adjacent track.

White was 50 years old and had only been railroading about two years.

Members ratify contracts

UTU-represented members on both the White Pass & Yukon Route and the Chicago Rail Link have recently ratified new contracts.

The operating employees on Alaska's White Pass & Yukon Route ratified a four-year agreement that includes a year of retroactivity while leaving major rule changes.

Conductors, trainmen and engineers on the Chicago Rail Link overwhelmingly ratified a new five-year agreement, retroactive to January 2005. The carrier, an OmniTrax-owned short-line, provides switching and terminal services over 72 miles of owned and leased track on Chicago's south side.

The new agreement, affecting some 50 operating employees, provides improved wages, benefits and working conditions, including a guaranteed extra board. The UTU represents both sides of the cab on Chicago Rail Link.

UTU International Vice President Carl Vahldick, who assisted in negotiations, praised "This team really grew to be skillful negotiators, and their efforts resulted in a contract that truly benefits our fellow UTU members, as well as the railroad,” Martin said.

Rail safety update

For the latest developments in rail-safety legislation pending before Congress, including the Federal Railroad Safety Improvement Act of 2007 (H.R. 2095), and to learn how you can assist in the passage of these important measures, log onto www.utu.org.

UTU delegates elect new leadership team

HOLLYWOOD, Fla. – Malcolm B. (Mike) Futhey Jr., Arty Martin and Kim Thompson have been elected to lead the United Transportation Union into its recently ratified merger creating the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation (SMART) Workers.

Futhey was elected president, Martin was elected assistant president and Thompson was elected general secretary and treasurer (GS&T).

They were elected by more than 560 delegates, representing UTU locals, during UTU's 10th quadrennial convention here at the Westin Diplomat Resort.

Futhey and Martin will take office Jan. 1, the merger's effective date, and lead the SMART Transportation Division. Owing to the retirement of current GS&T Dan Johnson, Thompson took office as GS&T on Sept. 1, becoming the SMART Transportation Division's GS&T on Jan. 1.

Futhey received 291 delegate votes, defeating John Hackett (191 votes) and John W.

Sullivan calls creation of SMART ‘a brave new world of opportunity’

Continued on page 10

Calling the merger creating SMART on Jan. 1 “a brave new world of opportunity and reward,” SMWIA General President Mike Sullivan warned also of the “uncomfortable reality that comes with change” and counseled that “no matter how uncomfortable things might be, nothing is as dangerous as doing nothing. In fact, our greatest enemy is the status quo.”

Sullivan spoke at the UTU's 10th quadrennial convention in Hollywood, Fla.

He will become general president of SMART on Jan. 1. SMART's transportation division will be headed by Mike Futhey.

“Far too long, we have stagnated, along with the rest of the labor movement, as we have been slowly overcome by employers who imposed their own version of change upon us,” Sullivan said. “While we remained divided and quarreled over our craft differences, the railroad operators created their own bargaining power by consolidating their operations.

“In that time we have been undermined by predator unions and manipulated by the carriers’ divide and conquer tactics. Brothers and sisters, we must take charge of the future together, before the future takes charge of us.

“With this merger, we have the opportunity to take advantage of the enhanced economies of scale that come with our combined organization. It will be far easier to negotiate better health plans, stronger pension plans, and more favorable legislation with the strong backing of 230,000 members than with a divided membership of 150,000 or 80,000.

“At its most fundamental level, this merger will systematically enable us to more effectively serve the membership we have sworn to represent. It is no secret that our enhanced bargaining strength will make each of us as union members stronger than if we chose to remain disconnected and weak.

“The struggle we face will be worth every
Local 23, Santa Cruz, Calif. General Chairperson Bonnie Morr, who served as the local’s delegate to the UTU’s 105th quadrennial convention in Hollywood, Fla., expressed her appreciation to all fellow delegates for their service. In a letter to the UTU News, Morr wrote: “I saw a real labor-union commitment from everyone in the room. Sisters and brothers used their hearts and made tough decisions.”

Local 30, Jacksonville, Fla. Local Treasurer Dave D’Egidio reported that a new tool is available for the local’s members—a Web site. Employees of the Tri-County Commuter Rail Authority can now visit www.utu30.org for news and information, contacting local officers and downloading useful forms. The site also features a members-only page with contract and other information. Members should select “Officers” to e-mail D’Egidio for access.

Local 113, Winslow, Ariz. State Legislative Director Scott Olson reported that longtime Local Treasurer and UTU Regional Insurance Representative Bob Olague died Aug. 29 from a massive heart attack. Olague, former vice chairperson of the Arizona State Legislative Board and a Vietnam veteran, is survived by his wife Gina, son Robert Jr., daughters Bridget and Gina, parents Willie and Betty, and four grandchildren. He was 63. “Bob was known and respected by all and he will surely be missed,” Olson said.

Local 202, Denver, Colo. State Legislative Director and Delegate Rick Johnson was the winner of 12,000 Starpoints at the UTU’s convention at the Westin Diplomat last month. The Diplomat notified the UTU that Johnson was randomly selected in a drawing from among the hotel’s registered guests. Similar to frequent flyer points that some airlines offer, Starpoints can be redeemed for free lodging, upgrades or other services at Starwood hotels and resorts.

Local 367, Omaha, Neb. A new Web site can now be found on the Internet for the members of this local employed by the Union Pacific Railroad, according to member Scott A. Sutherland. The site, at members.cox.net/utulocal367, is still under construction but provides a wealth of contract and other information.

Local 471, Eugene, Ore. Members of this Union Pacific local wish a long and prosperous retirement to Shannon P. Lawlor, who retired in July. Lawlor, who has 43 years, 11 months and 27 days of service, has held every local position during his tenure, except for the office of local legislative representative, according to Local Chairperson Greg Boam.

Local 597, Des Plaines, Ill. Members of this Union Pacific local held a food drive recently and gathered more than 900 pounds of food and other items for donation to the People’s Resource Center in Wheaton, Ill., Local Vice President Harry Lewis Jr. said. Last year, 19,216 people received “help for today and hope for tomorrow” through donations of food, clothing and cash for rent assistance. Lewis said he was “very proud of the efforts of its members.” To get more information about the center, visit the center’s Web site at www.peoplesrc.org.

Local 1067, Virginia, Minn. This local, representing the engineers and trainmen on the Duluth, Winnipeg & Pacific/CN Railways, has started a Web site at www.utu1067.org, according to local chairperson for conductors Steve Moerke. The site features contact information for local officers, a questions and answers page, contract information, a safety forum and links to a variety of other valuable Web sites.

Local 1168, Clovis, N.M. Michael Shelley, a conductor for the BNSF Railway, was recognized by the Clovis News Journal when he attended a blood drive at a local library. Shelley was featured in an article the newspaper published about the blood drive at the BNSF Blood Services of Lubbock, Texas. He happened to be donating blood when the newspaper’s reporter visited. Shelley told the reporter he gave blood when a relative was diagnosed with leukemia years ago, but “I’ve given over two gallons since then.”

Local 1190, Ludlow, Ky. The members of this Norfolk Southern local offer their best wishes to fellow member and Army Staff Sgt. Jeff Hammons, who was scheduled to be redeployed for military service in Iraq in August, according to former UTUIA Field Supervisor James P. “Pat” Sullivan. Hammons, who has a wife and two children, had already completed a seven-month tour of duty in Iraq in 2003. Sullivan said Hammons is a member of the Army’s 78th Engineer Battalion.

Local 1440, Staten Island, N.Y. The members of this local at Staten Island are sad to report the death of brother John “Buddha” Thomas, according to Local Secretary Kevin J. Hughes. “He was a great friend and colleague for many, many years,” Hughes wrote. “He will be remembered for his humor and his devotion to the Staten Island Railway. Rest in peace, brother.”

Local 1462, Boston, Mass. Local Treasurer Dave Bowes has notified the UTU News that locomotive engineer Chuck Amaru is trying to raise $1,000 by participating in the 19th Annual Boston Marathon Jimmy Fund Walk on Sept. 16, 2007. The Boston Marathon Jimmy Fund Walk gives participants the opportunity to follow the course of the 26.2-mile Boston Marathon in honor or memory of friends, family, co-workers and patients facing all forms of cancer. All money raised will be donated to the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. To contribute, visit Team Amanda’s Web page at http://www.jimmyfundwalk.org/amandateam.htm?e=1198723925. “It’s for a good cause,” Bowes said.

Local 1823, St. Louis, Mo. Members of this Union Pacific local have unveiled a new Web site that includes UTU hub agreements, national agreements, questions and answers about UP’s discipline policy, TE&Y pay codes, useful links to other Web sites and contact information for local officers, according to retired member Norbert Shacklette. Shacklette notes that the site is a work in progress, but invites all members to take a look. Visit the site at www.utu1823.com.

SEPTA bus operators keep beat on the street

For two bus operators employed by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), Philadelphia’s musical heritage is more than history. It’s a way of life.

Aubrey Kemp and Ricardo “Rick” Rector, members of Local 1594 in Upper Darby, Pa., both appreciate the wages, as well as the health and welfare benefits, their UTU-represented jobs bring them. But they particularly appreciate having full-time jobs that can support their musical pursuits.

“Music is a good outlet for me,” said Rector, a drummer since early grade school. “I don’t do it for the money.”

By the same token, Kemp, a 47-year-old guitarist, sees himself “still pushing ahead, hoping for the day I can ease out of bus driving.”

Rector met Kemp at SEPTA, and together they participate in a trio called 4 Fathers, combining rock with hip-hop influences. But they also worked a stint together for nearly four years as members of a reconstituted version of The Orlons.

Originally formed in the late 1950s and influenced by acts like The Chantels, Ray Charles, and The Moonglows, The Orlons rose to fame with a national hit in 1962, “The Wah-Watusi.” Prior to that, they provided back-up vocals on Dee Dee Sharp’s “Mashed Potato Time,” and in 1963 had hits with “South Street” and “Crosstown.” They also became mainstays of Dick Clark’s Caravan of Stars.

After working with The Orlons, Kemp narrowly caught a break in another musical project that attracted major label interest, but it didn’t quite happen. Instead, his big break came while working for a carpenter-cleaning business.

“A customer worked a paratransit job, and I got into doing that for a couple years,” Kemp said. “That led me to SEPTA in 1994, where I worked as a light-rail operator for six months before moving over to the bus side. I found I liked working on buses better, even though you have to do some tricky maneuvering through traffic.”

Rector, 52, began his SEPTA career in 1982 on the Norristown high-speed lines, working on the trains for 18 years before becoming a bus operator. “It’s a great job,” Rector said. “I like meeting people every day, and the pay and benefits are good. We were on strike last year, but we came out of it pretty good.”

We need your news!

The UTU News needs your input to keep this publication relevant and informative. If you have news about members in your local, local meetings, party or picnic information, the latest on bargaining and fundraising efforts, we would like to hear about it. Send news items to UTU News, United Transportation Union, 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107-4250, or e-mail utunews@utu.org.
The AFL-CIO has voted to “condemn” the Teamsters-affiliated Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) for dividing the labor movement, feeding into the political and bargaining agendas of corporate America, and harming the men and women whom unions are elected to represent and protect.

“The AFL-CIO stands ready to support the UTU in the defense of its membership,” said the House of Labor in an Executive Council statement issued Aug. 8.

Following is the text of the AFL-CIO condemnation of the BLET:

“The labor movement’s success in advancing the interests of working families depends on the unity of the affiliated unions of the AFL-CIO. Historically, the rail unions of the AFL-CIO have supported one another in the halls of Congress and state capitals, and at the bargaining table. This solidarity has produced more than a century of good jobs, workers’ rights, a strong railroad retirement system, and health-care benefits that have protected generations of railroad employees and their families.

‘With this as a backdrop, solidarity in rail labor is at risk. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) is embarking on a bargaining strategy with the nation’s major rail carriers that is threatening the future of tens of thousands of train-service employees who are members of the United Transportation Union (UTU), an AFL-CIO affiliate.

‘Specifically, the BLET, in recent agreements with certain major railroads, is pursuing bargaining provisions that would undermine and destroy the crew-size provisions and other key contractual protections embodied in the collective bargaining agreements of the UTU. Worst of all, the BLET agreements have failed to achieve any protections such as buyouts, continuation of health care, retirement credits or other benefits for the workers whose jobs their agreements would eliminate.

‘At the same time, the BLET has continued an intensive campaign to raid the membership of the UTU, with the objective of reducing the UTU’s combined membership by luring members from the United Transportation Union (UTU), the most powerful railroad union in the country.’

The AFL-CIO tells BLET to stop bargaining away the jobs of UTU members.

HOLLYWOOD, Fla. – When working families elect the next President of the United States in 2008, “we expect that those working families will be involved in all decisions made” by the new administration, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney told delegates to the UTU’s 10th quadrennial convention here Aug. 16.

In the past, when working families “worked their butts off” on behalf of the president elected, that president “asked us for help in selecting a secretary of labor and then treated us just like another constituency group,” Sweeney said.

“This time, we want a real voice for working people in all decisions made – not just in helping to choose a secretary of labor.”

Sweeney said the AFL-CIO presidential debate in Chicago in August was “the largest job interview in history, with workers doing the interviewing. All seven of the Democratic candidates are solid union supporters and working families in America must work to elect one of those Democrats just as working families changed the face of the House and Senate in 2006.

“The past six years have been the most anti-union, anti-worker administration in the history of our country,” Sweeney said, “and we are so ready for a change in the direction of our country. America still is not working for working families and we must take back control of our government, take back control of our country, and take back control of our lives.”

Sweeney said labor activism in the 2006 congressional elections, which returned control of the House and Senate to labor-friendly lawmakers, was but “a baby step compared to what we’re going to do in 2008” with working families participating in the political process.

In congratulating the UTU on its ratification of a merger creating SMART, Sweeney said the higher combined membership offers the strength needed “to meet the challenges confronting you – and the AFL-CIO is with you.”

Sweeney also thanked the UTU for re-affiliating with the AFL-CIO. “You chose to rejoin us, and to stand together with us; and, whenever you need us, we will be standing with you just as you have stood with us,” Sweeney said.

In fact, in August, the AFL-CIO voted to condemn the Teamsters-affiliated Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) for dividing the labor movement, feeding into the political and bargaining agendas of corporate America, and harming the men and women whom unions are elected to represent and protect.

“The AFL-CIO stands ready to support the UTU in the defense of its membership,” said the House of Labor in an Executive Council statement issued Aug. 8.

Red and Tan Lines operators choose UTU

New to the UTU family is Red and Tan Lines operator Vanessa Bryde, with UTU New Jersey State Legislative Director Dan O’Connell, left, and UTU Local 710 General Chairperson Nelson Manzano, who was instrumental in the organizing effort.

Some 30 previously unorganized bus operators employed by Red and Tan Lines of Northern New Jersey – a commuter and transit subsidiary of Coach USA – have chosen the UTU as their bargaining representative. The UTU was elected by a seven-to-one margin, with Red and Tan employees rejecting the Teamsters.

The Red and Tan bus operators had been working without a pay raise or improvements in working conditions for some two years.

UTU New Jersey State Legislative Director Dan O’Connell praised the organizing efforts of two UTU Local 710 officers – General Chairperson Nelson Manzano and Secretary-Treasurer Jessi Rivera, both of O.N.E. Bus.

Gaining praise for their efforts organizing their fellow bus operators were Red and Tan drivers Jennifer Powell and Zoraida Torres. O’Connell also praised the work of UTU’s Mike Lewis in the organizing drive.
I am very happy to learn of UTU’s endorsement of my campaign. It is great to have the support of old friends.

I believe that it is important to UTU members to know how I feel about the issues important to them.

I believe that Amtrak, commuter rail and public transportation should be well funded and have recently laid out a plan to do just that.

I believe there should be a fair way of keeping a commercial driver’s license.

I know that the labor protections at both the Department of Labor and Surface Transportation Board should be strengthened.

There is no need to worry for UTU members – I continue to strongly support the Railroad Retirement system and the Federal Employers’ Liability Act.

I believe that UTU members should be trained in safety and security and that it is important that UTU members should not be abandoned on trains at the conclusion of their hours of service or should be required to work fatigued.

I want you to know that I support you in your negotiations with the railroads, particularly on issues such as entry rates and training, and if the need should arise that a Presidential Emergency Board was required, it should be balanced and fair and not ignore the needs of UTU members.

I will stand with you just as I have fought for working families my entire life. I’m honored to have your support and together we can bring about the change this country so desperately needs.

I promise UTU members that at noon, Jan. 20, 2009, they will once again have a friend and champion at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

Times have changed, and so has the UTU

I became a Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen (BRT) member in 1969, shortly before the BRT became one of the four original organizations forming the UTU.

At the 1987 convention, I was elected national legislative director. Many felt I was too young to be an International officer – that I needed more schoolin’. I found a professor/guru/godfather in Charlie Luna, the last president of BRT and the first president of the UTU.

In spite of his making the worst coffee on the planet, he was a great teacher. I was fortunate to visit with him monthly, when he came to Washington in his post as a member of the Amtrak board of directors.

The day Charlie Luna took the reins of the UTU, we had 108 elected positions – about half being full time.

We had 39 full-time vice presidents. Now, there are only 10.

We had 14 alternate vice presidents. Now, there are only six.

We had five members and an alternate on the board of trustees. Now, none are separately elected.

We had 24 members and alternates on the board of appeals. Now, there are five.

We had nine positions on the executive board. Now, there are six.

In addition, there were multiple Canadian officers. Now, we have one.

In 1970, we had in the offices of president, assistant president, OS&T and national legislative director, 12 elected positions. Now, there are only five.

Of the 14 full-time International officers elected at our convention in August, nine are new or serving in new positions.

Only one of eight alternate vice presidents was re-elected.

There was one newly elected officer on both the board of appeals and executive board.

On the Canadian Board of Appeals, two of the three positions were filled by newly elected officers.

All but three members of our UTU board of directors are new.

Last month, we elected 39 officers – 69 fewer than in 1969.

No one can accuse your union of being top heavy.

And the changes have not stopped.

We are now part of a new union, SMART. There will be many more changes coming – even before a new emblem has been selected.

The leadership of SMART is already engaged in informal talks with other unions.

I am sure that if Charlie Luna were alive today, he would comment that history was repeating itself for the good.

This is just the beginning. As Mike Futhey told delegates following his election, “have great expectations.”

The dispatcher better give us a green signal because we’re movin’.
Minnesota
A U.S. district court in Minnesota has upheld lower-court decisions that will protect injured railroad workers and improve public safety, State Legislative Director Phil Qualy reported.

First, Judge Michael Davis ruled that states have the right to regulate train speeds over public crossings while they are operating in interstate commerce.

Davis also upheld key provisions of the 2005 Minnesota Injured Railroad Medical Treatment Law, which prevents railroad companies from denying, delaying or interfering with medical treatment or first-aid treatment to an employee of a railroad who has been injured during employment.

In the first ruling, Duluth Winnipeg & Pacific Railroad versus the City of Orr and the State of Minnesota, Davis upheld a 2005 law that provides local authorities the power to regulate an “essentially local” safety hazard. Orr and the state had sought to reduce the speed of DW&P trains passing through town over a dangerous crossing from 60 mph to 30 mph.

The DW&P, part of the CN Rail system, has appealed the ruling.

“The train conductors and locomotive engineers of UTU Local 1067, Duluth, who run the CN trains, did a great job supporting the Orr crossing legislation,” Qualy said.

In the second ruling, Davis upheld the guts of legislation brought forward by the UTU two years ago in response to documented instances of railroad companies denying, delaying and interfering with medical treatment for injured rail workers.

Qualy said rail workers’ testimony made the difference in getting the legislation passed.

“In the past, some UTU and others testified before the legislature regarding the deplorable treatment of our workers that appeared to be corporate Abu Ghraib conditions,” Qualy said. “Now a federal judge has upheld our Minnesota standard of medical ethics versus managerial conduct.”

Arizona
State Legislative Director Scott Olson and Sheet Metal Workers International Association Business Manager Gerry Stewart were recently elected to the Arizona State AFL-CIO Executive Council. Pictured above, left to right, are Olson, State AFL-CIO Federation Secretary/Treasurer Rebekah Friend and Stewart.

The pending Federal Railroad Safety Improvement Act includes similar language, Qualy noted.

New Jersey
Three years after the passage of UTU-supported legislation that greatly increased penalties for passengers and others who assault bus drivers or passenger-rail employees, State Legislative Director Dan O’Connell reports that such incidents have declined significantly.

“We have made real progress in this area,” he said.

“We worked hard to get the bill passed that hikes the penalties for assaults on bus and rail employees to up to 18 months in jail and a $7,500 fine,” O’Connell said.

“Initially, we encountered problems with prosecutors pleading out the cases, so we met with NJ Transit officials and representatives from the state attorney general’s office to stress that they prosecute fully in especially egregious cases.

“We also suggested that the authorities publicize these prosecutions so people would think twice about doing it. That has led to the placement of extra police on trains warning of prosecution and detailing the penalties involved in such attacks,” O’Connell said.

Iowa
State Legislative Director Patrick Hendricks has been appointed by Gov. Chet Culver to the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact.

“The compact, created in 2000, advocates for expansion of and improvement to the Midwest’s passenger rail system. The commission provides a unified component of a strong transportation system for the future,” Hendricks said.

A can-do attitude gets things done
Writer and clergyman Charles R. Swindoll said, “The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life.”

Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, money, circumstances, failure, successes, or what other people think or say or do. Attitude is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company, a church or a home.

The key thing is that we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change the past. We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is change our behavior on the one string we have, and that is our attitude.

I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent of how I react. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes.

As bus operators, we must be able to deal with difficult passengers, assist the elderly and disabled, and provide professional customer service even though the company we work for seems never to notice. It’s our passengers that make the job worthwhile.

As professionals, we must constantly improve our attitudes and be the best we can be in every situation. If we profess to be the kind of person in life who wishes to leave this life remembered by his fellow man, then serve the public well and let us not forget that each person we encounter must be treated with dignity and respect.

Debs’ vision improved with SMART merger
With ratification of our merger with the Sheet Metal Workers, creating the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation (SMART) Workers, Eugene V. Debs’ vision is a step closer to reality.

It is not our first step. Our four founding unions – Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, Order of Railway Conductors and Brakemen, and Switchmen’s Union of North America – made history in 1969 by forming the UTU. In the mid-1980s, the Railroad Yardmasters of America (BLET) faced a declining membership, found the right fit with the UTU. Now, we have histo again, forming the 230,000-member SMART.

Carrier mergers, technological advances, and the BLET’s last-man-standing agreements have resulted in smaller crew sizes, putting UTU in the same position as the RYA was in in 1980. For sure, our leadership found us the best partner in the SMWIA to move forward.

The SMART merger offers many additional benefits to our combined membership. SMART will have the 21st largest (among 4,000) PAC in America, and the seventh largest labor-union PAC, providing us with additional clout in Congress and before state legislatures.

The UTU’s knowledge and proven history in administering and defending agreements under the Railway Labor Act will benefit the SMWIA’s rail members. And, the SMWIA’s expertise in the National Labor Relations Act will benefit our bus members.

Change is inevitable and uncomfortable, but it is not bad. We should be optimistic about our future under SMART General President Mike Sullivan and SMART Transportation Division President Mike Furhey.

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2007 Convention Photo Scrapbook

Local 1503 (UP, Marysville, Kan.) Delegate Nile Dragoo registers for the convention and picks up his materials.

SMART Transportation Division President-elect Mike Futhey, left, gets some seasoned advice from past UTU International President Al H. Chesser.

Local 1000 (Minneapolis, Minn.) Delegate Wayne Newton (left) shares a laugh with Local 951 (Sheridan, Wyo.) Delegate Grover Sharp.

Local 32 Delegate Richard Arnold speaks on behalf of the members of his Glendale, Calif., local.

Delegates from locals across the United States and Canada lined up to cast their ballots for the candidates of their choice.

Local 1250 (Indianapolis, Ind.) Delegate Wayne Jackson tells a story to the Local 426 (Spokane, Wash.) delegates.

Local 464 (Adirondack, N.Y.) Delegate Elizabeth O’Donnell helps the UTU Convention and Registry of the General Convention in preparations for the convention.

Local 1238 (Vancouver, Wash.) Delegate Mike Surina casts his vote in support of the candidates.

Delegates from Local 1059 (Minot, N.D.) cast their votes in the convention.

Local 1678 (Minden, La.) Delegate Curnell Clark Jr., right, and his wife Vern from Local 1696 (Minden, La.) enjoy the convention.

Delegates take a break from the convention activities.

UTUIA Field Supervisor Serge Decoste, left, explains the benefits of UTUIA products to Local 1678 (Minden, La.) Delegate Curnell Clark Jr. and his wife Vern.

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Delegates take a break from the convention activities.

International President Paul Thompson, left, with SMART Transportation Division Director Peter Neumann, center, and SMART Transportation Division President-elect Mike Futhey.

Utah State Legislative Director Jay Seegmiller, left, and Delegate Steve Staley (L-597, Des Plaines, Ill.) enjoy the convention.

Delegates from locals across the United States and Canada enjoy a break from the convention activities.

Local 1092 (New York, N.Y.) Delegate Tony Murzycki, left, with Delegate Robert Caputo, center, and Delegate John Michie, right, enjoy the convention activities.

Local 23 Delegate Bonnie Morr addresses the delegation.

Delegates were free to speak on any issue, from their choice of candidates to proposed amendments of the UTU Constitution.
RRB financially healthy, report says

The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) has submitted its annual reports to Congress on the financial condition of the Railroad Retirement system and the railroad unemployment insurance system, and the news is good.

The 2007 report, which addressed railroad retirement financing during the next 25 years, was generally favorable, concluding that, barring a sudden, unexpected, large decrease in railroad employment or substantial investment losses, the Railroad Retirement system will experience no cash-flow problems during the next 25 years.

However, the 2007 report also indicated that the long-term stability of the system is still questionable. Under its current financing structure, actual levels of railroad employment and investment return over the coming years will largely determine whether corrective action is necessary.

As of Sept. 30, 2006, total Railroad Retirement system assets, comprising assets managed by the National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust and the Railroad Retirement system accounts at the U.S. Treasury, equaled $30.6 billion. (The trust was established by the Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Improvement Act of 2001 to manage and invest railroad retirement assets.) The cash balance of the railroad unemployment insurance system was $109.8 million.

The projected combined account balances are higher than in last year's report due largely to the actual investment return of approximately 14.4 percent, exceeding the expected investment return of 7.5 percent in calendar year 2006, along with actual 2006 average employment exceeding the range projected for the year.

The report did not recommend any railroad retirement financing changes. The payroll tax adjustment mechanism provided by the 2001 legislation will automatically increase or decrease tax rates in response to changes in fund balance. Even under a pessimistic employment assumption, this mechanism is expected to prevent cash-flow problems for the duration of the 25-year projection period.

The RRB's 2007 railroad unemployment insurance financial report was also generally favorable. Even as maximum benefit rates increase 49 percent (from $57 to $85) from 2006 to 2017, experience-based contribution rates are expected to keep the unemployment insurance system solvent. No new loans are anticipated even under the most pessimistic assumption. RRB said.

Under experience-rating provisions, each employer's contribution rate is determined by the RRB on the basis of benefit payments made to the railroad's employees. The report predicted that, even under the most pessimistic assumption, the average employer contribution rate remains well below the maximum throughout the projection period.

The report also predicted that the 1.5 percent surcharge in effect in calendar year 2007 will be followed by a 1.5 percent surcharge for calendar years 2008-2009. A 1.5 percent surcharge is also likely for calendar year 2010. No financing changes for the unemployment system were recommended at this time, RRB said.

The financial condition of the Railroad Retirement system is healthy, the report says.
Buses get the power to turn lights green

A pilot program starting this month on Staten Island will give buses the power to change red lights to green, according to the Associated Press.

The technology will link emitters on 300 buses to receivers atop 14 traffic lights along 2.3 miles of Victory Boulevard.

The project’s engineers say the system will speed up bus service and help alleviate traffic jams.

The devices will turn lights from red to green 7 seconds earlier if a bus is within about 120 feet of an intersection, city Department of Transportation spokesman Craig Chin said.

The program will begin at the end of September, Chin said.

If successful, the program will be expanded, he said.

The technology will be incorporated into the city’s planned Bus Rapid Transit project, a speeded-up bus service that will be introduced over the next two years in each borough.

Child-check alarms added to school buses

First Student, a private school bus company that transports kids all across the country, reports it has added safety child check alarms to its entire fleet.

The alarm sounds if a driver does not walk to the back of the bus and check for children before leaving the bus for the night.

“It’s sort of a unique system,” said Jennifer Robinson, a spokesperson for First Student, which is based in Cincinnati, Ohio.

“The alarm was created by bus drivers for bus drivers and customized to their needs.”

In addition to making sure that no child is left unattended on a bus, whether they may be hiding or asleep, the new system, if hooked to a global positioning system, is designed to discourage and prevent unauthorized entry into a vacant bus.

“It can send a wake-up message to a central station or a manager, alerting them that there is entry, and they call police,” said Robinson.

LACMTA supersizes Orange Line service

UTU-represented bus drivers in Los Angeles will soon be piloting buses so long they are technically illegal.

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority is set to unveil a 65-foot-long bus – longer than four compact automobiles parked end to end – to debut on its Orange Line busway.

It is five feet longer than the longest bus allowed by California law, so the MTA had to seek an exemption from Caltrans to operate the prototype.

“When you get inside, the middle aisle looks like a bowling alley,” said MTA spokesman Dave Sotero.

But those extra five feet give the bus three extra rows of seats and the ability to hold up to 100 passengers, while the current 60-foot models on the Orange Line can hold up to 84.

The bus comes in two sections with a flexible, accordion-style center that allows the bus to bend around turns.
Delegates elect UTU International vice presidents, asst. vice presidents

• John D. Fitzgerald (general chairperson, GO-386, BNSF) was elected International vice president, defeating incumbent Bruce Wigent, 276 to 240.
• Robert Kerley (general chairperson, GO-001, BNSF) was elected International vice president, defeating incumbent Patrick Drennan, 295 to 221.
• Roy Boling was re-elected International vice president by acclamation.
• David Wier (alternate International vice president – East, and general chairperson, Terminal Railroad of St. Louis) was elected International vice president, defeating incumbent David Hall, 188 to 228.
• C.A. (Tony) Iannone was re-elected International vice president by acclamation.
• J.R. (Jim) Cumby was re-elected International vice president, defeating challenger Richard DeGenova (general chairperson, GO-247, CSX), 345 to 181.
• Joseph Presleigh (general chairperson, GO-888, UP) was elected International vice president, defeating John Hancock (general chairperson, GO-851, CSX), 367 to 150. Steve Thompson did not seek re-election.
• John Babler, was re-elected International vice president by acclamation.
• Vic Baffoni (general chairperson, GO-875, LACMTA) was elected International vice president (Bus Department), defeating incumbent Roy Arnold, 259 to 257.
• Glenn J. King (Ontario legislative chairperson) was elected alternate International vice president/Canadian legislative director, defeating Mike Melymick (Alberta legislative chairperson), 33 to 13 (voting by Canadian delegates only). The new position combines two former vice president positions and the Canadian national legislative representative. Incumbent vice president John Armstrong and Robert Sharpe are retiring; and incumbent legislative director Tim Secord withdrew his name from nomination.
• James A. Stem was re-elected as acclamation by alternate U.S. national legislative director.
• Delbert Strunk (general chairperson, GO-687, NS) was elected alternate vice president – East, defeating George Casey (New England states legislative director and general chairperson, GO-081, New England Lines), 311 to 203. Incumbent David Wier was elected International vice president.
• Paul T Tibbit (general chairperson, GO-393, BNSF) was elected alternate vice president – West, by acclamation. Incumbent Robert Kerley was elected International vice president.
• Larry Barrilleaux (legislative representative, Local 1836, UP) was elected alternate vice president – South, defeating Doyle Turner (general chairperson, GO-347, CSX), 316 to 198. Incumbent Jerry Batton did not seek re-election.
• Garth Bates (chairperson, Local 1903, Kamsack, Sask.) was elected as acclamation by Canadian national legislative director.
• Bonnie Morr (general chairperson, Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District) was elected alternate vice president (Bus) – West, defeating Brian Donald (president, Local 161, Seattle, Wash.), 429 to 105. Incumbent Robert Gonzalez did not seek re-election.
• William W. Lain Jr. (general chairperson, Alton & Southern) was elected second alternate vice president – East, defeating Les R. Wilson (legislative rep., Local 303, BNSF), 368 to 127. Incumbent Dennis Schuler did not seek re-election.
• Danny L. Young (secretary, GO-017, BNSF) was elected second alternate vice president – West, defeating Phillip J. Craig (general chairperson, GO-270, DM&E), 283 to 231.
• R.W. (Red) Dare (general chairperson, GO-433, CN/IC) was elected second alternate vice president – South, defeating James E. McDaniel (vice general chairperson, GO-577, UP), 329 to 186. Incumbent John Hankock did not seek re-election.
• Richard Deiser was re-elected by acclamation as alternate vice president (Bus) – East.

Board of Appeals

• G. Dale Welch, Dirk A. Sampson, Donald J. Seyer and Dan O’Connell were re-elected to the U.S. Board of Appeals by acclamation. Ron Koran (general chairperson, SEPTA) defeated incumbent William J. Keoh, 264 to 251.
• Dan C. Armstrong was elected to the Canadian Board of Appeals by acclamation. Edward J. Mould defeated Ed Sears (Canadian vote), 26 to 19, and Jean C. Levesque (31 Canadian votes) defeated David Brunton (5 votes) and Jeff MacMahon (10 votes) in the races for the other two seats.

Executive Board

• James A. Huston and Joseph A. Boda were re-elected to the UTU Executive Board by acclamation. John J. Rischi III, Stephen T. Dawson and Kevin Goring were re-elected to the board. Risch defeated Fran Marceau (Montana state legislative director), 249 to 234; Dawson defeated Richard DeGenova (general chairperson, GO-247, CSX), 345 to 217, and Goring defeated Robert Michaud by a vote of 426 to 134.
• Mike N. Anderson was re-elected by acclamation as alternate to the Executive Board.

September 2007 UTU News

Delegates also sustained a decision of the UTU Executive Board denying appeals of former general chairpersons and full-time vice general chairpersons on Canadian National in Canada who had been suspended from office.

Sullivan

Continued from page 1

drop of blood, ever tear and every drop of sweat—knowing that the livelihood of 230,000 brothers and sisters rests upon our efforts.

“What you asked for is now in your vote (to merge) will echo throughout the history of rail labor and will be defined as a moment when working men and women chose a consolidated front to stand up to the manipulations of the rail operators and the predatory influences of other less benevolent organizations.

“Eugene Debs said, ‘When we are in partnership and have stopped clutching each other’s throats, when we have stopped enslaving each other, we will stand together, hands clasped, and be friends. We are contractors, we are brothers, and we will begin the march to the grandest civilization the human race has ever known.

“For far too long, we have failed to live up to Debs’ dream. The vote you cast gives both of our organizations the opportunity to expand in size and strengthen their bargaining power. Together, we will mount a concerted effort to address the assaults we face from the rail operators. We withheld them before during the age of the rail barons, and we will overcome them again.

“We stand at a time in our nation’s history where a stepped up war is being waged on working people. It goes by a number of names, terms such as trickle down economics, outsourcing and privatization. Debs was against the watered down American dream, which is a working man and woman in North America, not just union workers.

“I don’t have to recount what labor was able to achieve in getting an eight-hour workday, overtime pay, the eradication of child labor, retirement security, worker’s compensation, the right to collectively bargain without fear of retaliation—all of these were hard fought victories achieved by men and women who dared to leave a better life and a better nation for their children.

“We have taken the first step in creating a new future for ourselves today. The future will hold its share of adversity, but we will survive. We have learned that the days of easy victories have survived recessions and contractions in the economy that would have laid waste to other organizations, and we will thrive through a new era—one which we have created with an enhanced and stronger union,” Sullivan said.
Voting tally: Which delegates voted to raise their pay?

On the last day of the UTU convention, a motion was made and seconded that delegates be paid the same amount as hotel employees. A roll-call vote was demanded and held and the results were to be published in the UTU News. Below is the tally of delegate votes on the motion. A “yes” vote was to approve the motion; a “nay” vote was to defeat the motion. (The motion, if approved, would have cost the UTU International in excess of $350,000.)

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YEAS = 58
NAYS = 486
The UTU Public Relations Department awards UTU gear to the union member who submits the best photograph during the previous months.

The winning photo will be published in the UTU News. Exceptional photographs will be included on the UTU website.

The UTU would like to see photographs or digital photographs of work-related scenes, such as railroad, bus or mass transit operations, new equipment photos, scenic shots, activities of your local, or photos of your brothers and sisters keeping America rolling.

Printed photographs should be mailed to UTU News, 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107-4250.

High-resolution digital photographs should be in the JPEG format and e-mailed to utunews@utu.org.

With each photograph, please include your name and UTU local number, the names of the persons in the photo (left to right), where the photo was taken, and all other pertinent information.

All photographs submitted become property of the UTU.

Remember to review your employer’s policies regarding use of cameras on the property or during work hours.

This month’s winning photograph was taken by Joey Patterson, a UP conductor and member of Local 286 in North Platte, Neb. This photo of UP steam locomotive No. 844, a high-speed passenger steam engine and the last steam locomotive built for the carrier (delivered in 1944, saved from scrap in 1960), was taken on the UP’s Kearney Subdivision as it returned to Omaha, Patterson said.

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Inside this issue of the UTU News:

UTU News members turn up the heat, keep the beat in Philly. See page 2.

General Chairperson Nelson Manzano gets Red and Tan. See page 5.

Asth. Texas SLD David Arterburn supports AFL-CIO. See page 5.

Photo highlights from the UTU’s 10th convention. Pages 6 and 7.

UTU News
September 2007

The Official Publication of the United Transportation Union

This month’s winning photo:

The United Transportation Union is endorsing Hillary Rodham Clinton for President of the United States, becoming the first labor union in America to do so.

“It is a high honor and a distinct privilege to be the first labor union in making this endorsement,” said UTU International President Paul Thompson. “The UTU has a long history of picking winners early. Hillary will be a president that America’s working families can count on. Time and again, as a United States senator, she has stood with us.

“The UTU intends to devote our considerable resources to encouraging our 125,000 active and retired members to support Hillary and other labor-friendly candidates in 2008.”

Futhey served on Bill Clinton’s presidential election campaign finance committee.

Brunkenhofer said the UTU had supported the Clintons “going back to 1978,” when former UTU Arkansas State Legislative Director Don Beavers, and Futhey’s predecessor as general chairperson of GO-569, the late Irv Newcomb of Little Rock, were deeply involved in the Clinton for governor campaign in Arkansas.

In a personal telephone call to Thompson after learning of the endorsement, Clinton told him, “It’s time America’s workers had an advocate in the White House.”

Clinton followed up her telephone call with a letter to Thompson making specific commitments to UTU members. “This letter should encourage every UTU member and retiree, no matter their past voting record, to begin work immediately on behalf of electing Hillary Clinton president,” Thompson said.

Thompson, who will retire Dec. 31, said, “Hillary Clinton’s record has been friendly to working men and women of this country. She consistently has endorsed the necessity of a strong middle class. The UTU is on the same page with Hillary Clinton just as we were on the same page with labor-friendly candidates in mid-term elections in 2006. The UTU will encourage its 125,000 active and retired members to support Hillary and other labor-friendly candidates in 2008.”