A Life Well Lived

By Robby Stern

William Parry died peacefully in the home of his beloved friend Imogene Williams on Monday afternoon, May 13. Tom Parry, Will’s brother and close friend was by his side as he expired.

Ironically, Will died on the same day as his good friend, Larry Kenney, former president of the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO. The two men shared a passion for worker justice and baseball. Will and Larry had frequently worked together including a time when Will was President of PSARA and Larry was the Treasurer.

Will had been living with Imogene for several years and they experienced a beautiful friendship, including lots of opportunities to lovingly and in good humor give each other a hard time. When Will became seriously ill in December, Imogene was by his side, caring for him, advocating for him and believing in his ability to once again bounce back like he had done in the past. With the assistance of Imogene’s family, Jon Parry, Will’s wonderful son, other volunteers, and thoughtful, capable hospice nurses, Will was treated with the care, love and affection he so deserved.

Will wanted to keep going. He had other stories he wanted to write and more counsel he wanted to provide. He was the guiding spirit of PSARA.

In his 90s, Will developed a growing urgency to address the threat of climate change and the damage being done by the fossil fuel industry. In December 2012, Will wrote the article “To Save Planet Earth, Handcuff the Fossil Fuel Industry.” The first sentence in the article read, “This article is for my grandchildren. And yours. And everybody’s all around the world. I want them - all of them - to live out their lives on a vibrant, living planet.”

Kristen Beifus, co-chair of PSARA’s Environmental Committee wrote on hearing of Will’s death, “It was a deep honor that Will spent some of his last moments stewarding the PSARA Environmental Committee. We continue in his spirit of generosity and unrelenting hope.”

Tom Lux, co-chair of PSARA’s Environmental Committee and Government Relations Committee wrote: “I am so glad I was able to meet with Will a week before he died and share ideas with him. Even in his weakened state his thought process and resolve was clear. Unfortunately, even though I have been in Seattle over thirty years, I really didn’t get to know Will until a few years ago. I appreciate the time I was

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PSARA Summer Membership Meeting and Potluck

Please join us for PSARA’s summer general membership meeting and potluck. We will gather at a new location, the South Side Commons, located at 3518 South Edmunds St., in Columbia City, Seattle, on June 20, beginning at 12:30 p.m. (See the flyer in the mid-fold of this newsletter with transportation information.)

We will have a remembrance of Will Parry (fairly brief as the Celebration of Will’s life is scheduled for June 29th), be asked to approve the appointment of two new Executive Board members, receive a short presentation from our lobbyist, Pam Crone, about the 2013 legislative session. We will also hear about an initiative on the November ballot to publicly fund Seattle City Council races.

Members will also preview and evaluate a new 10 minute Power Point presentation about PSARA. We hope our members will help us spread the word about PSARA by creating opportunities for the PSARA Power Point to be presented to other groups with which our members are associated.

There will be lots of time for conversation and socializing. Mark your calendars, RSVP at the office (206) 448-9646 or to Maureen at adminvp@psara.org.

Let us know what food item you will bring and join us for our summer general membership meeting!

You will find a flyer with complete information on Page 6 of this issue.

A False Choice: Jobs or the Environment?

PSARA does not believe that we need to make a choice between jobs and the environment. It is possible to support living wage jobs, while promoting a healthy environment and not contributing to climate change.

Join us at the upcoming PSARA Forum: “Jobs & the Environment NOT Jobs vs the Environment”. Help us advocate for real job creation in WA while keeping our communities healthy now and into the future.

The forum will be on Tuesday, July 16, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the Central Area Senior Center, 500 30th Avenue S., Seattle.

The panelist will include Jeff Johnson, President, WA State Labor Council, Kathleen Ridehalgh, Sierra Club, Michael Woo, Executive Director, Got Green. Also invited but not yet confirmed is a representative from Governor Inslee’s administration.

Discussion groups and planning for future work will follow the presentations.

The science is clear - we are compromising our planet. At the rate we are going, our children and grandchildren will face unimaginable ecological disasters. We need sustainable ways to power our communities.

At the same time, labor sectors in our communities face 25% unemployment. Additionally, under-employed workers are struggling to provide basic needs for themselves and their families. We need to advocate for sustainable, living wage jobs and worker rights.

Our planet is suffering and so are we, as workers and members of the community. Let’s work together to address these critical issues.

You will find a flyer with complete information on Page 6 of this issue
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able to spend with him, his insight and humor. Will is a working class hero and I, as all of you, will miss him. “

Will's life has been a history lesson in the struggle of the working class for economic and social justice in our country and in our world. From Will's early days, his dad, a small business man whose business failed during the Great Depression, exposed him to the thinking of communist and other progressive working class leaders. Will's life experience and the devastation he saw around him were an object lesson for him on why he must get involved. He joined the Communist Party. He believed they had the most coherent analysis of what needed to be done to oppose the corporate robber barons of U.S. capitalism.

His incredible skills as a journalist soon shined through. He wrote for The New World and the People's World until the terrible dark days of the McCarthy era deprived him of his ability to make an income to help support his family, his beloved wife, Louise, and his two children, Naomi and Jon.

Living during that time was really scary. Naomi recounted the time Will got angry with her as a young child because she had opened a sample food package that had come in the mail. Will feared, not without reason, that the package could be a threat to the family he loved. The FBI was a regular presence in their lives and used all the tools they had to try and intimidate Will and Louise and scare the family.

“Through my tears of sadness, I am savoring the memories of the hours spent with Will During some moments of quiet conversation, I asked Will if he had any messages for the PSARA Board. He always asked about the board's plans, about the mayor's standing, the Environmental Committee and the Mariners. In his usual thoughtful manner, Will said he would like to thank the board members and others for their 'many courtesies' and noted, especially, his gratitude for the leadership and commitment of the Environmental Committee. What a blessing it has been to know Will.” Bonny Oborn, Executive Board member and one of the volunteers who cared for Will.

In 1956, when he was no longer able to make a living as a leftist journalist, Will went to work for Longview Fibre and soon became a deeply respected leader of Local 817 of the Association of Western Pulp & Paper Workers (AWPPW). He experienced some red baiting, but Will's humble and determined commitment to working class justice won over the union members.

He was elected to various union offices including being elected as the first paid lobbyist for the union. As lobbyist, he wrote weekly reports in his superlative prose educating his brothers and sisters. He went back to work in the factory when the legislative sessions were completed. He was respected and admired by the rank and file members as well as the leadership of the union.

Will also earned a reputation in Olympia as a thoroughly prepared, humble but articulate and forceful advocate for his union and the entire working class. When I was a lobbyist in Olympia I frequently heard Will described as a man of honor and integrity.

“Will Parry 'presente.' He's in all the good work we do and have done and in the good fights to come. We'll miss him every day, but we’ll also see him every day in all our acts of justice and solidarity.” Lynne Dodson, Secretary Treasurer, Washington State Labor Council.

After Will retired from the box factory, he worked with the WA State Labor Council on various mobilization projects, taught part time in the Labor Relations program at Shoreline Community College and became the editor of the monthly newsletter of the Washington Federation of Teachers. He continued to inspire new generations of workers.

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with the scope of his knowledge, his willingness to address issues of racial justice, educational opportunity and the necessity to treat the teachers of our community with respect.

“I am so devastated that Will passed away. It seemed not so long ago that he sat across from me at PSARA meetings, standing with him at several PSARA direct action events, or at Seattle Council meetings. I will miss him very much and hope I can emulate his commitment and dedication to peace and social justice issues. Thank you for having me as a PSARA member and introducing me to Will and for that I will be eternally grateful.” Frank Irigon. PSARA Executive Board member, Chair of PSARA’s Diversity Committee and community leader in the Asian Pacific Islander Community.

After leaving WA Federation of Teachers, Will became active with the Puget Sound Council of Senior Citizens (PSCSC). He was Assistant Editor under Max Roffman until Max was no longer able to carry on. Will became Editor in 1994 and President for the first time in 2000. He served for one year and was reelected as President of PSARA in 2002. He led PSARA as both Editor and President until he simply was no longer physically able to carry on in both roles. In December, 2008 he stepped down to serve as full time Editor.

In 2001, with the demise of the National Council of Senior Citizens, Will led the PSCSC as it became the Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans, a chartered affiliate of the National Alliance for Retired Americans. When PSARA was told that we could no longer use the Alliance for Retired Americans name and logo, Will came up with the name Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action.

Will and Al Peppard visited me in my office at the Washington State Labor Council in 2007. They told me that when I retired they hoped I would help them lead PSARA. I genuinely looked forward to working with Will and the other PSARA members. I retired in April of 2008 and was elected President of PSARA in December of 2009.

Will was my friend, my political mentor, my editor and my advisor. Executive Board member and chair of our Education Committee, Mark McDermott, expressed my feelings as well as his, “My heart is so heavy at the passing of one of my heroes. Our world was made better by his presence and lessened by his passing. I will draw inspiration from Will’s life and spirit.”

Phyllis Baker served for several years as Will’s proof reader for The Retiree Advocate. Here is what she wrote upon hearing of Will’s death: “I think one good way to honor Will is to ‘pass it on’ to the next generation. Ask our members to tell their grown children about the Retiree Advocate and how important it is and about Will himself and suggest their children subscribe as a memorial to Will. I feel so lucky to have known him.”

A memorial for Will Parry is planned for Saturday, June 29, 2-5 p.m. in Hall 1 of the Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Avenue.

Donations in Will’s name may be made to PSARA at 2800 1st Ave. #262, Seattle, WA, 98121, to continue his work.

Remembering Will

By Minnie Caruso, Trade Printry

“Will.” Such a perfect name. Will Parry had so much will - the will to fight for social justice and the will to continue working for that even as the end of his life was near. But it seemed his abiding passion was his will to write.

I knew Will for some years before I began working with him on The Advocate newsletter. He always seemed so young for his years, coming into the print shop after a jog, and this was when he was in his seventies! He always had a smile and often a joke.

One of the pleasures of my working life was working with Will on The Advocate. For a number of years he WAS The Advocate, spending countless hours researching and writing most of the articles. I remember one day when we were discussing the layout he asked me with a twinkle in his eye, if I knew the identity of Rap Lewis. It turned out to be Will himself. He made up a pseudonym using some of the letters in his own name. It was his private joke. Rap wrote some fine articles over the years.

The best way to get to know someone is to work with him. Will had a kind and gentle manner and worked in a way I would call “soft precision.” He knew what he wanted but was never heavy-handed. He was a meticulous writer and editor, making every sentence clear, and often changing a word or sentence at the last minute. Equally concerned about layout, he tried to make each page stand on its own visually. He cared about everything, from the quality of a photo to the placement of a comma. All of that caring resulted in a quality newsletter that I know he was proud of and that kept him going into his 90’s!

It was early this year that producing the newsletter became too much and he stepped down as editor. Our years of collaboration came to an end. I was left with the gift of knowing a wonderful person who came to be a friend, one of his many. Will’s passing has left a hole in my heart.

There is so much to say about Will Parry and it will be said. His work, his respect for his fellow man and his humanity will be his legacy. He really was a working class hero.
A new bill sponsored by Sen. Tom Harkin of (D-Iowa) combines benefit increases for low and middle income Social Security recipients with phasing out the "cap" on contributions from high income earners. The phase out of the "CAP", currently $113,700, will pay for increased benefits. (Example: If a worker is paid less than $113,700 a year, the worker pays 6.2% of every dollar earned towards Social Security. Someone who makes $1 million a year on payroll, pays only on the first $113,700—or about 1/10th of what most workers pay.)

Social Security has been the target of right-wing propaganda for years. Various corporate interests try to grab the money or make benefits so little that workers cannot afford to retire. It is not an unearned "entitlement" like tax free yacht purchases; WE PAID FOR IT! It is not causing budget deficits; two unfunded wars and the Wall Street Casino crash caused the deficit. Social Security is needed now more than ever as defined benefit pensions are being eliminated by employers, and 401k pensions, financial investments and home values have decreased.

According to Washington D.C. based advocacy group, Social Security Works, the “Strengthening Social Security Act of 2013” (S. 567) would:

- Increase benefits for current and future Social Security beneficiaries by changing the method used by the Social Security Administration to calculate Social Security benefits. Over time, benefits for all Social Security beneficiaries will be increased an average of $70 per month. The Act particularly targets those in the lower and middle income distribution for whom Social Security has become either their entire retirement income or a growing proportion of their income.

- Ensure that cost of living adjustments (COLA) adequately reflect the living expenses of seniors. The Act requires adoption of the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E) which better reflects cost increases paid by seniors. This change is likely to result in higher COLAs, which will allow seniors to better keep up with the rising cost of essential items like health care.

- Improve the long term financial condition of the Social Security Trust. The Act phases out the current taxable cap of $113,700 so that payroll taxes apply to every dollar of wages. While the Trust Fund is not in crisis, it does face a long-term deficit. This change will significantly extend the solvency of the trust fund and assure payment of full benefits at least through 2049.

S. 567 is a direct challenge to those who advocate for cuts to Social Security such as the "chained CPI" and/or raising the age of eligibility.

PSARA members are urged to call our Senators and request they co-sponsor Sen. Harkin's Bill – The Strengthening Social Security Act of 2013 (S.567). When a companion bill is introduced in the House, we will ask you to call your Representatives. In Washington state call: Senator Patty Murray 206-553-5545 or 1-866-481-9186; Senator Maria Cantwell, 206-220-6400 or 1-888-648-7328.

On May 1st, PSARA joined thousands of others to march for workers' and immigrants' rights. The Washington State Labor Council and the Martin Luther King County Labor Council organized a large Labor Contingent. At left, WSLC President Jeff Johnson takes his place in the march. At right, the PSARA contingent falls in. An estimated 7,000 marchers participated. (Photos: Garet Munger)
June 20, 2013 – SAVE the Date
PSARA ANNUAL SUMMER MEMBERSHIP PARTY,
Yummy Potluck &
Reasonably Brief Membership Meeting
12:30 to 3:00 p.m. THURSDAY, JUNE 20

Location: South Side Commons, 3518 South Edmunds St, Seattle, WA 98118 (Columbia City just west of Rainier on S. Edmunds)

12:30 Potluck lunch and socializing: Please bring a main dish, salad, fruit, dessert or soft drink to share at the party. RSVP to office and let us know the food item you can bring: 206-448-9646 or e-mail to adminvp@psara.org.
1 p.m. General membership meeting and then back to socializing!

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Free 2-hour parking is available on the street near the building. There is unrestricted free parking on S. Angeline (east of Rainier) and on most streets east of 39th Ave S, about a block and a half from the Commons. There is also an inexpensive parking lot just east of the facility on S. Edmunds ($1 per hour.) The small parking lot adjacent to the building will mainly be used by Commons staff.

Bus stops are within a block or two of the Commons. Metro transit #7 and #9 stop on Rainier at S. Edmunds, #8 stops on MLK at S. Edmunds, and #50 stops on S. Alaska. The Columbia City Light Rail Station is on MLK, about a block and a half from the Commons.

If you cannot drive or take public transit and need a ride, or if you can offer a ride to a member who cannot drive, please e-mail Maureen Bo at adminvp@psara.org or leave a message on the office phone 206-448-9646. Accessible ramps to first floor on west side of building.

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Please consider bringing items of non perishable food for the Labor Agency Food Bank.

PSARA Forum: Jobs & the Environment NOT Jobs vs the Environment

When: Tuesday, July 16th, 5:30pm - 7:30pm
Where: Central Area Senior Center, 500 30th Avenue South

Panelists:
Jeff Johnson, President, Washington State Labor Council
Kathleen Ridihalgh, NW Regional Director, Sierra Club
Michael Woo, Executive Director, Got Green
Representative from Governor Inslee Administration (Invited)

Break-out discussion following panel

For more information contact PSARA Environmental Committee Chairs Tom Lux & Kristen Beifus, envirocommittee@psara.org or call the PSARA office, (206) 448-9646
Will was a warrior for working people for more than seven decades. His leadership, compassion and deep commitment to economic and social justice were an inspiration to several generations of labor union and progressive activists. In his 90s, he became a fierce voice in opposition to the fossil fuel industry and the threat they pose to our planet.

Everyone is welcome to attend the Celebration on Saturday, June 29th at 2:00 pm in the Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Avenue. Free Parking.

The Celebration continues! Jon Parry and Friends play a concert in honor of his father at 8:00 pm at the Owl ‘n’ Thistle, 808 Post Alley, west of the intersection of First and Columbia. $3 admission. Proceeds donated to PSARA.

The family requests those wishing to make a contribution in honor of Will please donate to PSARA, 2800 First Avenue, Room 262, Seattle, WA 98121

There will be free parking in two different parking facilities for the Celebration of Will Parry’s life. Look for signs that will lead you to one of the two garages. There is abundant parking in the garages.

One garage is located in the alley of the 2800 block between Western Avenue and First Avenue. The entrance to the garage is located at the north end of the alley, nearest Broad Street. (You cannot enter the garage door at the south end of the alley, nearest Clay Street.)

There will be someone stationed at the garage doors for easy access.

There are two Disabled Permit parking spaces located at the south end of the garage (enter garage, turn right, go up the ramp) for those who need them and have a valid permit.

There is an elevator to First Avenue and stairs to Clay Street, also at the top of the ramp. You can access the elevator to leave the garage using the code *011209# on the keypad.

When leaving the garage in your car, pull up to the gate and it will open automatically.

Note: This parking code is not available for general use other than for the Will Parry Celebration. Anyone using it to access the garage at other times is subject to towing without notice.

A second garage is on Clay Street between First and Second AV, east of the alley. Clay is one way west bound. There are about 70 parking spots. There will also be signs for this garage and someone stationed at the garage door to assist entry.
Grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, sons, daughters, grandchildren, families and communities are being shortchanged of their fair share of their Social Security benefits. That’s what I conclude when I look at a report of the effects of the consolidation of Social Security Administration (SSA) field offices into the newly formed Seattle Metropolitan Office in the Jackson Federal Building (JFB) last year.

The report, by a coalition of concerned community and labor organizations, is just a bunch of numbers with analysis, but they tell a story of barriers that discourage people from services to which they are entitled. Yes, entitled to, because they or someone in their family paid for it. Consolidation happened because the government had to downsize and save money. Serve less people, save money too. Seems like a win-win situation.

Well, when that happens you get this:
(a) The number of visitations to the newly consolidated Seattle Metropolitan Social Security office dropped dramatically by 24% over all. There were 1,373 average weekly visitations at the International District and Belltown SSA field offices before the move. After the move to the Metropolitan Seattle office in the JFB, there were 1,038 average weekly visitations, or 335 less each week, a 24% decrease. Projected over a year, that’s 17,420 less visits per year.

17,420 less visits a year. I wonder where the money saved went?

You also get this:
(b) 97 average Limited English Speakers (LES) weekly visits at the two SSA field offices before consolidation which dropped to 39 average weekly visits at SSA at JFB, or 58 less a week (a 60% drop).

A 60% drop in LES weekly visits, 58 visits less a week. I wonder what happened to the people who stopped going to a SSA office? Was the downtown office unable to accommodate their needs? Do clients feel too uncomfortable at the downtown office to ask for what they need? Do clients no longer need as many services from SSA?

Given these numbers the SSA offered the possible explanation that more people were using phone and internet services. Highly unlikely, especially for people who have language difficulties.

(c) Demographic information on the area: of the 35,528 households in the area, 7,093 households had incomes less than $15,000; 2189 households had no phone. 37.2% are Asian/Pacific Islander, 29.6% are African American, 1.5% are Native American. 37% are from cultures in which English may not be their first language.

In an April 2013 survey, the coalition collected opinions on the consolidation from 144 clients of Asian Counseling & Referral Service, Chinese Information Service Center, and Interim Community Development Association: only 2 respondents indicated that they spoke English; of the 94 respondents who wrote suggestions for improving SSA services.

Of the 110 who responded to computer usage, 108 reported that they do not use the computer to access services from SSA. Only 2 indicated that they do.

Almost all respondents had been to the ID SSA office before it was closed (128 out of 144), almost 89%; only 66 respondents (46%) have been to SSA in JFB.

In additional suggestions/comments, 72 asked for better translation services (combination of “translation services/interpreters available” with “interpreter/translation in person”), 33 for more efficiency (more staff, shorter wait time, increased office hours, clearer answers to questions), 30 for a more friendly environment (combination of “more friendly environment” with “no security check”).

So we know what’s important to this population. They want to understand what’s going on, and they want a place where they can feel comfortable. JFB does neither.

Many of us know Jackson Federal Building. Intimidating. Even more so when there’s some demonstration going on there. It’s on a hill (a killer for grandma and granddad, and me too). No more free bus transportation to and from. Only expensive parking available.

And as the report says, “it’s a maximum security building, with armed guards, metal detector screening, requirements to remove outer clothing, and requests for identification, all of which can be deterrents to visits.”

I’ll say. Almost all of my siblings would or could not go there. Unless they absolutely had to. Even then, I don’t think they would. They would ask me to go for them. I would too, for the older ones especially. We shouldn’t let Social Security treat them this way.

As I said before, grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, sons, daughters…and brothers and sisters, are being shortchanged. Let’s put a stop to this.

(PSARA is a member of the “coalition of concerned community and labor organizations” mentioned above, working to relocate the Seattle Metropolitan Office to a more convenient central Seattle location.)
He set the grassroots ablaze with song

By Will Parry - Reprinted from The Retiree Advocate, August, 2007

My guitar work is less than distinguished, and my voice is nothing special. But if I do say so, I’m a pretty darn good song leader. And during the week this Retiree Advocate hits your mailbox, I’ll be leading the singing around the campfire for about the fiftieth consecutive year at Family Camp on Lake Wenatchee.

I learned how to lead group singing from a master: Pete Seeger. Me and about a million other guitar, banjo, mandolin, autoharp, accordion, harmonica and ukulele players.

At Family Camp we sing children’s songs, union songs, spirituals, patriotic songs, love songs, funny songs, sad songs. All through the last half century, Family Campers have learned these songs as children, sung them again as teenagers, again as mothers and fathers, and now some are singing them as grandparents.

We learned many of these songs from Pete Seeger. But Pete – still going strong in his 88th year – taught us more than words and tunes. He taught us the fun, the excitement, the pleasure, the satisfaction of coming together, across the generations and the genders, in song.

Pete Seeger has been singing for peace, justice, the union cause, and the happiness of boys and girls ever since his youth in the Great Depression. In 1950, with Lee Hays, Ronnie Gilbert and Fred Hellerman, Pete launched the Weavers. Their spirited music-making did much to trigger the folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s. Pete’s lively banjo and high-pitched tenor have brought people alive on picket lines and in churches, in summer camps and classrooms, in union halls and living rooms – just about any venue you can think of.

And not just in our country. Acting on the sound theory that the whole world wants to sing, Pete has embraced the folk traditions of every continent.

One example among many: In Moscow, and again in Tokyo, thousands sang right along with Pete on “Wimoweh” and other African folk treasures.

This year, thousands of Pete’s fans from many countries are signing petitions asking that his lifelong contributions be recognized by awarding him the 2008 Nobel Peace Prize. The sponsors are asking the American Friends Service Committee, which won the Nobel peace award in 1947, to formally submit Pete’s name.

In the depths of the Cold War, Pete was hauled before the House UnAmerican Activities Committee. Despite the threat of prison, he refused the committee’s demand that he “name names,” citing the First Amendment right of free speech. Accused of singing on behalf of subversive causes, Pete offered to sing some of his songs for the committee. No dice.

Today that execrable committee has been consigned to its rightful place in the damp cellar of history, while the folksinger it sought to vilify is beloved the world over.

As he should be. No other human being has done as much as Pete Seeger to set the grassroots ablaze with song. We’re rooting for him to be awarded this year’s Nobel Peace Prize.

One of Will’s many enduring legacies is the new Will Parry Library at the Labor Education and Research Center, South Seattle Community College. Will donated his entire collection of labor books and pamphlets. From left: Cheryl Coney and Will Brucher, Labor Educators; Will; and Sarah Laslett, Program Director.
Now preparing for take-off: Airport worker justice!

By Jonathan Rosenblum, Working Washington Campaign Director and a member of PSARA

If you've flown out of Sea-Tac Airport on Alaska Airlines, you might have met Saba Belachew.

Saba is one of hundreds of wheelchair attendants who help passengers needing assistance get safely and efficiently from the curb to their flight. She does her job with professionalism and compassion.

It's because of people like Saba that Alaska is a well-regarded, popular airline; so successful, in fact, that it made $319 million in net profits in 2012 – the third straight year of record profits for the SeaTac-based company.

Now you might think that Saba, as part of Alaska’s team, would reap the rewards of Alaska’s success. Not so: She makes $9.19 an hour, the state’s minimum wage, by an Alaska Airlines contractor.

“It’s appalling that my co-workers and I are paid minimum wage while Alaska Airlines makes record profits,” notes Saba. “We’re part of Alaska’s success. We provide quality customer services, every day of the year. Who can raise a family on $9.19 an hour?”

Saba is just one of several thousand Sea-Tac Airport workers stuck in poverty-wage private-sector jobs at our public airport. Her story also belongs to her colleagues who clean and fuel the planes, load and unload baggage and cargo, clean and prepare rental cars, and do a myriad of other jobs to make air passenger travel safe, comfortable and reliable. Many of these jobs used to be good, union jobs. But with airline deregulation in 1978 and decades of union-busting by employers, thousands of these jobs have been reduced to poverty-wage, non-benefited positions.

Thankfully, Saba and her co-workers are doing something about it. Earlier this year, low-wage airport workers began forming unions and launched the fight for respect and good jobs. And they’re doing this with strong support from faith and community allies, high school students, senior citizens and many others.

On March 26, more than 80 airport workers and faith and community allies went to 5 major contractors at Sea-Tac to announce that they had formed unions covering 1,300 workers. They called on the employers to recognize their unions and begin negotiations.

Not surprisingly, the employers refused, but that hasn’t stopped things. In mid-April, dozens of faith leaders and community allies descended on the Alaska Airlines ticket counter to lodge customer complaints. “It really surprises and upsets me that Alaska would contract with companies that treat workers so poorly,” community supporter Nicki Olivier told an Alaska Airlines manager as TV cameras filmed the protest.

On May 21, workers and their community supporters stunned Alaska executives by taking over the company’s 2013 annual shareholders meeting. A dozen faith leaders preempted the start of the normally prosaic affair with a prayer for justice for Alaska’s workers. During the business meeting, workers rose to speak out against low wages and mistreatment. Community activists inside the meeting led chants and boisterous singing. And finally, faith and community leaders openly challenged the company CEO to respect people, not just profits. By the end of the meeting, the rattled company executives had committed to talk directly to the workers and their representatives.

Meanwhile, workers and their allies have recently announced that they have collected enough signatures from voters in the City of SeaTac to qualify their living wage initiative for the November ballot. The initiative calls for a living wage of at least $15/hour, paid sick leave, and worker protections for workers in the airport and also for those who work in the hotels, rental car companies and parking lots around the airport.

It will be an exciting 2013 as Saba and her co-workers fight for justice at work and at the ballot box. We welcome everyone’s participation.

For more information: www.itsourairport.com or Brianna Thomas @ 253-370-8972.

Airport workers, Working Washington members, and community supporters at the Alaska Airlines terminal. (Photo courtesy of Working Washington.)
Honor Will, build PSARA

In this issue of the Retiree Advocate, we remember our mentor, friend, and comrade Will Parry.

Unlike some PSARA members who worked with Will for decades, I knew him, of course – everybody knew Will – but I only had the opportunity to work closely with him in the last 18 months when I came aboard as associate editor of the Advocate. During that time I saw Will mainly as a journalist, and he was one of the great journalists. Will wrote in a plain, straightforward style, with humor, yes – Will had a sparkling sense of humor – but without any frills or rhetorical flourishes of any kind.

Will wrote that way because he always had a purpose in mind. Will wanted to change the world. And he believed that we were the ones who were going to have to change it.

Will wrote with absolute confidence that ordinary men and women could understand even the most complicated problems, and once they understood, could get together and solve them.

Will meant for the Advocate to have a role in that process of change. He wanted it be a tool for organizing.

Will envisioned PSARA members taking the Advocate to their friends, neighbors, and co-workers, pointing to an article, and saying “Look, did you hear about that? What are we going to do about it?”

No individual can fill Will’s shoes, but as we honor him by continuing his work, let’s use the Advocate in the way Will envisioned it being used, and let’s build PSARA, the organization he devoted so much time and energy to.

You can help.

Please use the coupon below to renew your PSARA membership and subscription to the Advocate, or better yet, give a subscription to someone you know, and get them involved in PSARA. Or as Will said, just find us a millionaire.

-- Mike Andrew

Any old millionaire will do...

By Will Parry - Reprinted from The Retiree Advocate, April 2006

Martin Luther King, Jr. is justly revered as a selfless champion of the poor and oppressed. Dr. King might find it ironic that Martin Luther King, Jr. County -- the county now named for him -- is overrun with millionaires.

TNS Financial Services, a British market research firm, reports that Martin Luther King, Jr. County now has 65,536 millionaires. Among the nation’s 3,140 counties, our county ranks twelfth. We’re even ahead of New York County, with its pathetic 62,773 millionaires.

For some reason, we’ve never met a real millionaire. Maybe one of our readers could put us in touch with one. With all those thousands of millionaires in the neighborhood, there ought to be one millionaire ready to bankroll the Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans. We wouldn’t need the whole million – just a couple thousand a month.

Any old millionaire can reach us at 2800 First Avenue, Room 262, in Seattle, right here in Martin Luther King, Jr. County. Our phone number is (206) 448-9646

Words to think about...

"Our nation was born in one revolution against tyranny. Nothing written in the stars rules out another."

Will Parry, The Retiree Advocate, July 2008

To subscribe or renew visit

http://psara.org/become-a-member-of-psara
Meetings and Events

PSARA Summer General Membership Meeting & Potluck: 12:30 – 3:00 p.m., Thursday June 20, South Side Commons, 3518 South Edmunds St, Seattle, WA 98118 (Columbia City just west of Rainier on S. Edmunds St) More info. in centerfold of newsletter.

Celebration of Will Parry’s Life: 2 – 5 p.m., Saturday, June 29, Seattle Labor Temple, Hall 1, 2800 First AV, Seattle. Free parking. More info in centerfold of newsletter.

Concert to Honor Will Parry: Begins at 8 p.m., Saturday, June 29, Owl n Thistle, 808 Post Avenue, Seattle, near Pioneer Square. $3 admission. Jon Parry is bringing together a group of local musicians to honor his father and raise money for PSARA. This will be an amazing concert! Let’s celebrate Will with wonderful music.

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 12:30 – 2 p.m., Wednesday, July 3, Seattle Labor Temple, Room 226, 2800 First AV, Seattle. All members welcome.

PSARA Environmental Committee: 2 p.m.- 4 p.m., Thursday, July 11, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First AV, Room 226, Seattle. All members welcome as PSARA Environmental Committee finalizes plans for PSARA forum entitled “Jobs & the Environment NOT Jobs vs the Environment.

Jobs & the Environment NOT Jobs vs. the Environment: 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, July 16, Central Area Senior Center, 500 30 AV S, Seattle. PSARA sponsored forum presented by PSARA Environmental Committee...More information on p.2 & in centerfold.

Mayoral Forum: 12:00 – 1:30 p.m., Friday, July 19, Central Area Senior Center, (500 30 AV S., Seattle). Jointly sponsored by the Central Area Senior Center & PSARA. Doors open at 11:30 a.m. Soul Food lunch served - $3 for people 60 & over; $6 for people under 60. Moderated by King County Council Chair Larry Gossett.