

SEIU fights for new contract

Tanitors crowded a room at the Frontier Airlines Center (once the Midwest Airline Center) listening to speakers before taking to the streets in a march in the fight for a renewed contract with decent wages and health insurance at Downtown office buildings. SEIU Local 1 fought for 15 years to win such a contract for some 400 janitors, most cleaning Downtown office buildings. The current contract expires July 31, and already one office building, Heartlande Partners at 789 N. Waters St., dumped its management contract with a union company and is attempting to impose poverty wages and little or no benefits. Local 1 organizer David Somerscales emphasized that this is yet another part of the effort to break the decent wages won by SEIU over the years.

MALC Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran noted with quiet sarcasm that the well-paid downtown workers who use the toilets SEIU keeps clean were no where to be found when the janitors wages were in doubt, but they still expected the bathrooms to be maintained.



Assuring Voces de la Frontera's support for decent wages and health insurance in a new contract was the organization's executive director, Christine Neumann-Ortiz.



Organizer David Somerscales introduces the speakers.



Downtown custodians and their families sign in for the event.



Bruce Colburn (left), a veteran Wisconsin SEIU leader, chats with Tom Balanoff, president of SEIU Local 1 who came down from Chicago for the Milwaukee downtown janitors rally. Balanoff was immediately grabbed for interviews by local TV since he had been called as a witness in former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich corruption trial for trying to peddle the state's US Senate seat.

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AFT renewing connections with communities

66 No teacher—myself included—wants a bad teacher in any classroom," said American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten in a July speech to thousands of delegates at the AFT biennial convention in Seattle, Washington outlining proposals to change American public education on several fronts to "build a system of public education as it ought to be."

But Weingarten – as did another convention speaker, AFL-CIO National President Richard Trumka – also lashed out at the "hate the teacher crowd" that would rather "affix blame than fix schools." These critics, she continued, "would have Americans believe that there is only one choice when it comes to public education: either you're for students, or you're for teachers," which Weingarten called a "bogus choice."

Weingarten detailed real changes focusing on good teaching, creating a curriculum that provides opportunity for students to learn and sharing responsibility and accountability with parents and administrators.

It's simply wrong, she said, to suggest that there is an epidemic of bad teachers and at the same time to ignore poverty, budget cuts, the absence of curriculum, the huge attrition of good teachers — "all things we know truly hamper student success."

Among the steps Weingarten outlined to creating better public schools:

Focus on good teaching, including better evaluation procedures. Teacher evaluations should include measures of student learning but, Weingarten said, there's a huge difference between using multiple indicators of student learning as part of a teacher's evaluation, and basing a teacher's hiring, firing and promotion on standardized test scores.

Create curriculums that provide opportunities for students to learn. Weingarten reaffirmed the union's support for wraparound services—such as after-school, nutrition, health and early childhood programs—to be available in traditional public schools, not just charter schools.

Share responsibility and accountability. Weingarten described a vision of accountability "that is meant to fix schools...and holds everyone responsible for doing their By Randi Weingarten Special to Labor Press



Randi Weingarten

share." She said that "shared responsibility should extend to the bargaining table" and described the growing number of AFT affiliates that have used "collective bargaining as a creative tool to codify collaborative approaches that.

Nor did she discount that some teachers need to change some entrenched attitude. "We have looked at our practices and made changes when we needed to change," Weingarten said. "We have lived up to our responsibility and asked others to do the same. When there have been problems, we have sought common ground to solve them."

Weingarten pledged to "hold up what works and call out what doesn't," and announced that the AFT will work with its local unions to fight for public services through a series of actions in support of public education.

Central to these actions, Weingarten said, is renewing connections with the communities in which AFT members live and work, which have been frayed by the economic upheaval. "The irony is that the movement—organized labor—that is largely responsible for elevating millions of workers and their families into the middle class, that has won economic benefits for all workers and not just our members, is under assault for doing the very job it was conceived to do," Weingarten said. "These hardwon, noble achievements now are seen as things that separate us from our communities rather than connect us to them."

Weingarten encouraged AFT members and unions to be "fully embedded parts of our communities" and to remember that, "especially in tough economic times, we have a responsibility to work with communities to strengthen the institutions in which we work, and upon which they depend."

Just a Thought

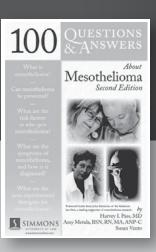
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Top award won by Milwaukee Labor Press

By Lynnda Guyton Editorial Assistant



MLPA President Paul Beimborn presents the Don Dalena Award to Lynnda Guyton of Milwaukee Labor Press as Steve Henderson state vice president of Indiana looks on.

The 2010 Midwest Labor Press Association's annual conference was held in Terre Haute, Indiana, in June and the AFL-CIO Milwaukee Labor Press was the recipient of two honors, a second place certificate for *Best News Article* and the association's first place Don Dalena Award for *General Excellence* for the overall newspaper that was entered in that category. The wooden plaque will join the wall with others won in previous years.

Attending for the newspaper was Lynnda Guyton editorial assistant and also an executive board officer in the MLPA. Members of the MLPA are labor communicators from various organizations throughout the Midwest. The objectives of the MLPA are to increase the effectiveness of the labor press – print, radio, TV and web in the Midwest Region, Canada as well as the United States. It provides education, promotion and interchange, supporting the goals of the labor movement and the classes taught vary from year to year.

As part of the activities each year, the Eugene V. Debs Banquet is held to present the Debs award to someone associated with the hosting city who has demonstrated excellence and education to the ideals of the labor movement, and also to honor members in a variety of contest categories.

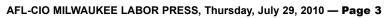
At the Debs Banquet this year the Debs award was

presented to Dr. Charles King who is the secretary for the International Eugene V. Debs Foundation and has had that position for last 25 years. King is also the director for the Debs museum in Terre Haute, Indiana.

There is no better way to get our message out than through the media. With the elections coming up this fall it's important that members know the differences between the candidate positions, noted Guyton in accepting the award. The Milwaukee Labor Press is dedicated to keeping unions abreast.

Guyton, who was again elected Wisconsin's MLPA state vice president was also elected the organizations recording secretary. She invites and encourages new members to join and attend next year's conference which will be held in Louisville, Kentucky. Membership is open not only to labor newspapers and newsletters but also to those who provide communications via the website, TV and radio.

For more information please contact Lynnda at the Milwaukee Labor Press office, 633 S. Hawley Road, #110, Milwaukee, WI 53214, 414-771-7070 or email lynnda@ milwaukeelabor.org.





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By Karyl Richson Special to Labor Press

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You can apply online for Medicare, if you're within four months of your 65th birthday. Most people, even those who don't plan to start getting retirement benefits right away, need to apply for Medicare coverage at age 65. The application takes as little as 10 minutes, from start to finish. Learn more at www. socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10530. html.

There are other things you

can do online, such as apply for a replacement Medicare card, and request an SSA-1099 for tax purposes. You can learn about these and other online services at www.socialsecurity.gov/ onlineservices.

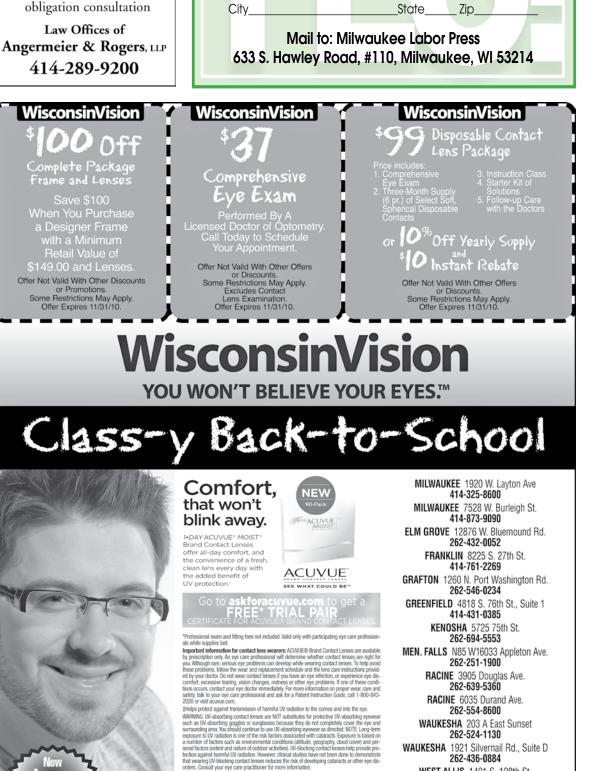
So if you'd like to soak up some sun this summer, we suggest you take your Social Security business online. You may even be able to take your laptop outside and conduct your business in the great outdoors. See for yourself at www. socialsecurity.gov.

The author is the Social Security public affairs specialist in Milwaukee.

National Association of Letter Carriers to receive award

Tinal numbers continue **H** to roll in from the national May 8 food drive, usually the most important for US food pantries conducted each year by the National Association of Letter Carriers.

But we already know that Milwaukee Branch 2 of the union, which encouraged the public to set food items out for pick up by its letter carriers, will be one of 10 branches around the US that will receive special plaques for the depth of their participating at the national NALC convention Aug. 9-13 in Anaheim, Calif. Campbell Soups will present the plaques, plus 1,000 cans of soup to food banks. Branch 2 collected 909,738 pounds of food to earn the 2010 honors.



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Governor Doyle announces the Industry Partnership Grant at WRTP/BIG STEP



Governor Jim Doyle presents a check in the amount of \$444,961 to continue workforce investment training. Shown at the presentation from left to right are Earl Buford, WRTP/Big Step, Don Sykes and John Kissinger both from Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board and Governor Jim Doyle. WRTP/BIG STEP is partnering with the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board to train workers from five different trades

(Bricklayers, Carpenters, Sheet metal, Laborers and Painters) as each segment has been impacted by the growth in the green economy and needs to retrain for specific skills to meet demands for skilled workers with green certification.

LCLAA to hold 18th National Convention

The Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) will hold its 18th national convention August 3-6, 2010, at the Mirage Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas,

The theme of the Conference, "Los Latinos Cuentan: Honoring the Past, Building the Future," celebrates LCLAA's 37 years of service to the Latino community. As part of that celebration, LCLAA will host a series of events including a women's leadership luncheon with invited guest Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis, a town hall meeting with congressional speakers, as well as important workshops and discussions on the key issues for Latinos and labor, including immigration, green jobs, wage theft, Latino young workers, education, midterm elections and the Latino vote.

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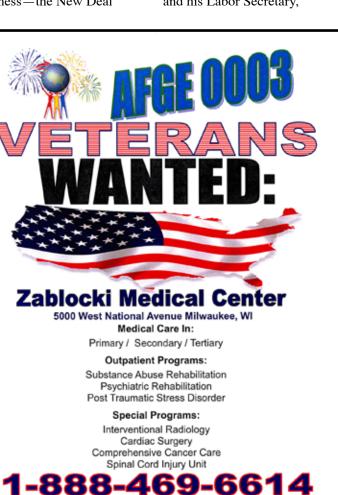
Over coming the great recession

In this crosspost from Huffington Post, U.S. Labor Secretary Hilda Solis reaffirms the importance of the National Labor Relations Act, which gave workers freedom to form unions.

July 5 marked the 75th anniversary of the National Labor Relations Act—also known as the Wagner Act—one of the lesser known, but key components of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. In addition to Social Security, Unemployment Insurance, a federal minimum wage and laws regulating child labor—all controversial concepts at the time that we now take for granted as basic elements of fairness—the New Deal included the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) which protected workers' rights to join or form unions and engage in collective bargaining.

The NLRA was signed into law when our nation was in the grip of the Great Depression. At a time when the economy was spinning out of control, some critics were hesitant about a law that empowered workers. Sound familiar?

But President Roosevelt and his Labor Secretary,





U.S. Labor Secretary Hilda Solis

Frances Perkins, understood the importance of giving workers bargaining power and saw the NLRA as central to his strategy to rebuild the economy. The famous economist John Maynard Keynes would later write a letter to FDR praising his efforts to restore the American economy and emphasizing the expansion of collective bargaining as an essential effort to the economic recovery.

Collective bargaining helped create our middle class. Working people were able to share in the gains of their productivity and labor and management together forged creative solutions to create the powerful engine of the American economy we all are proud of.

In order to rebuild the middle class today, we need to level the playing field for all working people and update our labor laws to fit the 21st century workplace. That's why the President and I support the Employee Free Choice Act, which would update the NLRA so workers can form unions if they choose to without fear or pressure. In addition, millions of workers are not covered by the NLRA including public sector workers, farm workers, domestic workers, and more. So other laws, like the Public Safety Cooperation Act would ensure that firefighters and other public servants have a voice on the job, too.

Some people say that given the state of the economy, we can't afford unions right now. They've got it backwards.

Workers are facing unprecedented challenges and they need the voice on the job that unions provide. Leveling the playing field is a win for workers and employers. Most employers believe that investing in their workforce makes good business sense, but businesses that play by the rules and respect workers' rights should not have to compete unfairly with those who do not.

As we work together to overcome our own Great Recession we need strategies that create good jobs. That means realizing the promise of the Wagner Act, in the words of FDR, to achieve both "common justice and economic advance."

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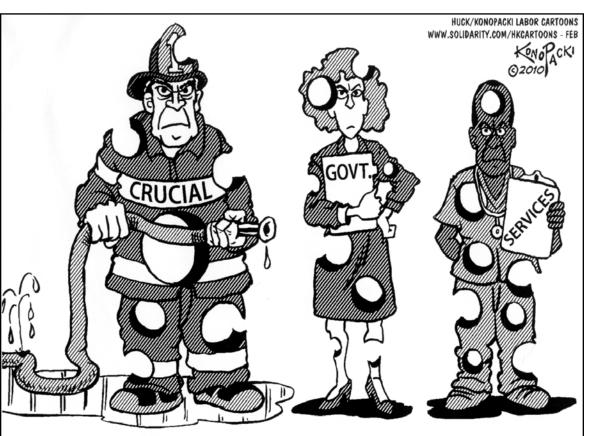
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MAKE WALL STREET PAY



Construction jobs continue to decline

For yet another month according to final June numbers, the jobs picture for construction workers grew worse. Data released by the US Labor Department indicated the number of construction jobs fell by 22,000, marking the second straight month of decline. Construction unemployment stayed near Depression-era levels at 20.1%. Nearly 1.8 million construction workers are still looking for work.

The figures brought anger from Terry O'Sullivan, general president of LIUNA, the union of half-million Laborers' International Union of North America.

"The loss of over 50,000

construction jobs in the past two months is tragic, not only because it threatens the livelihoods of thousands of working families, but also because it's a problem we can easily fix - by building our country.

"The 1.8 million construction workers looking for a job are ready to report to work to rebuild our roads, fix our bridges, repair our water systems and renovate our aging school facilities - things America has put off for too long at too great a cost.

"We face a choice today. Either we can continue down the path to a Third World infrastructure, or we can invest in our workers, in our country and in our future."



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This poster announcing the itinerary for Laborfest and the 2011 FAT BOY Harley motorcycle you can win are available for distribution at labor halls, stores and other supportive outlets. The poster is available in two sizes (11" x 15" and 8" x 11") unions and locals can pick them up at Laborfest planning meetings or stop at the labor council office, 633 S. Hawley Road, #110.

By Donald Kaul

clever politician can Aget away with a lot; standards in the profession aren't high. But if there is one thing Americans will not put up with from their elected officials, it's complete honesty. The only truly unforgivable sin in Washington is sincerity. So when Rep. Joe Barton, the ranking Republican on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, apologized to BP for President Obama's "\$20 billion shakedown" of the company, I knew he was in trouble.

"It is a tragedy of the first proportion that a private corporation can be subjected to what I would characterize as a shakedown," Barton had said. The Texas Republican was talking, of course, about the deal the president had cut with BP to set up a \$20 billion escrow account to pay damages to victims of the Gulf oil disaster.

Naturally, Democrats were all over that like a piñata, beating it with sticks. His Republican colleagues pulled him off to one side and said: "What are you, crazy?" Sadly, within six hours he recanted his position and apologized. He said he had been "misinterpreted." No, he hadn't.

In a moment of weakness he had given us a glimpse into the mindset of the political

WI Alliance for Retired Americans join Labor 2010 walk

The Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans is encouraging its members to join unions in their Labor 2010 neighborhood walks, a big one in Milwaukee being held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, August 7.

Retired Americans belonging to the alliance are asked to introduce themselves to walk leaders and follow instructions as they carry worker and campaign messages to households in Milwaukee.

This walk organizes and checks back in at Yatchak Hall, 633 S. Hawley Road, the headquarters building of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, which helps the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO organize these regional walks. To participate, contact: Jenissee Volpintesta: (414) 771-7070 extension12; or jvolpintesta@wisaflcio.org Right. To a man (and woman), it believes that poor BP is being victimized by its victims. Barton was merely being true to the Republican philosophy of standing up for the rich and powerful against the tyranny of the weak. He just didn't have the courage of his lack of convictions. Over the past 20 years Barton has collected \$1.4 million in campaign funds from Big Oil, and he was merely paying a dividend to the industry on that investment. Since 1998, Big Oil has spent nearly a billion dollars in Washington, lobbying for tax breaks, diminished regulation and drilling licenses--and it got them.

Actually, Barton's apology was not unique. The day before he spoke the Republican Study Committee, an arm of House Republicans, called the \$20 billion deal a "Chicagostyle shakedown" and Rep. Michele Bachmann, the rightwing darling from Minnesota, has called the escrow account "a redistribution-of-wealth fund."

When Senate Democrats proposed raising the liability of oil companies for a spill from \$10 billion to \$75 billion, Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) stepped in to block it from being considered. She said it would hurt

Special to Labor Press the smaller companies and produce "unintended consequences." Not that Democrats aren't on the oil companies' tab too. Oil-state Democrats are upset about Obama's temporary moratorium on offshore drilling because they're oil lackeys first, then Democrats. They have the good grace to act shamefaced about it, however. Republicans don't. They actually are outraged at the very thought that a corporation that pays their campaign bills should be penalized for its misdeeds. Corporations, in their view, are sacred and must be protected at all costs. It's why our health care is so expensive. First you have to take care of insurance

companies, then patients. It's that reality Barton revealed, if only for six hours. It's also a reality that Republicans can't afford to brag much, which is why they bludgeoned Barton into a public apology. (There's also a rumor that the House leadership locked him in a room and piped in Sarah Palin speeches until he broke down, but I can't get that verified.)

The really odd thing is that the conventional wisdom says that Democrats will lose support in the next election because of the oil spill. That means Republicans -- including kooks and crazies like Rand Paul of Kentucky and Sharron Angle of Nevada, who want to do away with what little government protection we have against corporations -will gain support and votes. Some are even predicting

that Republicans will pick up enough seats to take over the House of Representatives. And voters think that will make things better? Oh wow. *The author is a retired D.C. newspaper columnist. Article provided by Other Words*

Trapshooting

After 13 weeks of shooting in the Milwaukee Area Labor Council league, here are the results by team, reflecting wins, losses and ties:

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2. 6 volts to lightning		
IBEW 494		
3. Pipe Dopes		
Plumbers Local 75		5-6-2
4. Pipers		
Plumbers Local 75.		4-9-0

Class A

1.High Voltage	
IBEW 494	
2.Wirenuts	
IBEW 494	
3.CWA 4603-1	
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Passion investing scoreboard

Every summer, several financial firms competing to get the banking business of the world's mega millionaires release what amounts to scorecards on global wealth. These data-packed reports tally the current number of our international rich and superrich, by nation and region.

"World Wealth Report 2010" is the most comprehensive of these scorecards. It's got some fascinating details about the planet's wealthiest of the wealthy, those households worth at least \$30 millionthat's not counting their primary residence and "collectibles."

These "ultra-high-net worth" households make up less than 1% of the global millionaire total, yet in 2009 and 2008 they held more than a third of combined global millionaire wealth. In other words, the global financial crash that mega-millionaire speculation triggered has ended up concentrating even more wealth in mega millionaire pockets.

The Merrill Lynch and Capgemini researchers who prepared this report also offer some lusciously revealing information about what they call "passion investing," the vast sums the rich plow into everything from country club memberships and yachts to jewelry and fine art.

Global millionaires, they say, "returned to passion investments in 2009," but the overall volume of these passion investments still hasn't rebounded all the way back to pre-financial crash levels.

That complete rebound, the report adds, may come shortly, since "auction **By Sam Pizzigati** Special to Labor Press

houses, luxury goods makers, and high-end service providers all reported signs of renewed demand toward the end of 2009."

One sign of that increased demand: Late last year, an antique penny -- a 1795 one-cent piece--went at auction for \$1.3 million. That marked the first time a penny had ever gone for over \$1 million.

This resurgence in "passion investment" illustrates the latest World Wealth Report's overall theme: The global millionaire "segment regained ground despite weakness in the world economy."

We have that weakness because average consumers still don't have the buying capacity to get national economies going again. And those average consumers don't have that buying capacity because income and wealth are getting even more concentrated at the top. An antique penny, thanks to that concentration, can now fetch more than a million dollars.

But imagine if our wealth were more equally shared. Imagine that the \$1.3 million that went for a 1795 penny had been sitting instead in the pockets of average consumers. Over 1,500 of those consumers could have bought brand-new energyefficient refrigerators with that \$1.3 million.

And what do you

suppose this would do our economy -- and our world -more good, one deep pocket spending \$1.3 million on a penny or 1,500 households buying new energy-efficient refrigerators?

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The good folks at Merrill Lynch and Capgemini will most likely never ask that question. We should.

The author, an Institute for Policy Studies associate fellow, edits Too Much, an online weekly newsletter on excess and inequality.

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SPOTLIGHT

When there's a will, there's a way

A look behind the life of a determined pastor, community and union supporter and over-comer By Lynnda Guyton,

Editorial Assistant

Rev. David Blathers Sr. was one of the recipients of an award presented at the Milwaukee Area Labor Councils 1st Annual Awards Banquet in June, for his community work, dedication and support of the labor movement.

Speaking bold and profound was not a problem for the Rev. David K. Blathers Sr. We sat in my office recently along with his wife, Miriam, to go inside his story. There is no finish line for him as he helps others in the community and tends to his flock at Paradise Sanctuary Missionary Baptist Church where he has been the pastor for many years.

He says he's a minister that just doesn't sit behind the walls of his church but is out in the community with a public announcement to "Come One, Come All, and If it's of God, Yes We Can", because he loves what he does.

His relationship with unions has benefitted him since he was a young lad. His father was a union steward (he couldn't remember the name of the company) who would come home and share with the family the experiences of his work day. That inspired him to get involved with a number of community groups that helped the down-trodden and that's how he got introduced to the labor movement.

Through his outreach he says he met a lot of nice people (he described one as "a wonderful lady" by the name of Shelia D. Cochran, secretarytreasurer and chief operating officer at the Milwaukee Area Labor Council.) He believes that if it had not been for the support of the unions most people would not enjoy the things we have today.

Blathers has faced and overcome many challenges in life. One of the things he regrets is that he didn't take advantage of furthering his education immediately after high school, adding that it's never too late. He always urges young people to never quit and continue to study whatever field they are in. The pastor was reared and educated in Milwaukee and is a product of the Milwaukee Public School system and acknowledges the support of the wonderful teachers he had. He also attended MATC and focused upon biblical studies.

Ministering to others was not the reverend's only job in life, he laughs as he recalls that he spent three years in the Marine Corps where he was an expert when it came to "latrine duty" (some may not know that's cleaning toilets). He also worked as an building & grounds attendant quipping that "he really knows how to cut grass", as a hospital attendant at the County Mental Institution, an insurance salesman and also a salesman at Boston Store where he worked mostly in



A delighted Shelia D. Cochran presents award to Rev. David Blathers at MALC banquet.

appliances, (commenting that he could really sell).

He told this funny story of being moved from place to place in the store until he got to the carpet department, he sold so much carpet that his supervisor said he could never leave and eventually had him selling everything on the floor including furniture. At that time they didn't hire blacks in the furniture department at Boston Store because of the commission you made but he went on to be the first black in Milwaukee at the downtown Boston Store to work in the furniture department and succeed.

He was like a crusader when it came to jobs because he wasn't afraid to ask the hard questions of management when it came to the sake of others, he always wanted to know "Why?"

Blathers was overlooked for many promotions in alot of the jobs he held, but he was respected and hastened to add that the best thing that could happen in the industry was the unions.

As he smiled adoringly at his wife Miriam, he wanted all to know that his wife is the most influential person in his life - she is number one outside of God, he said. He really wanted me to know and whoever reads this story that "he made out in his choice, and doesn't mind telling it" noting

that there has to be a God for her to have put up with him. By the way, the happy couple celebrated 50 years of married bliss on July 16th in an era when a lot of marriages don't last a year. He grinned as he said "she would have to bring all of the troops back from the war to get rid of him." The Reverend and his wife are the parents of two grown children Lolita and David Jr. and the proud grandparents of ten and greatgrandparents of four.

When I mentioned hobbies – he gave me a puzzled look and pointed out that he has no particular hobby and that his outreach in the community and his ministry is what he loves. When growing up he did enjoy skating and swimming. (a memory he said was between me and him, but now you all know)

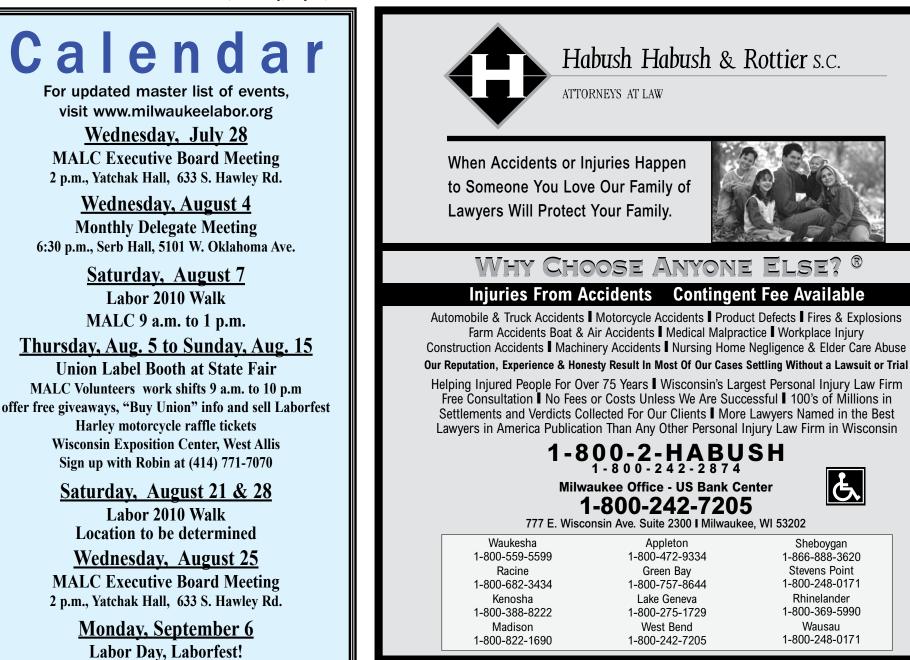
He has a saying: "Robin Hood (we remember him right) robbed the rich to give to the poor, but in this modern era of Robin Hood (the rich) robs the poor and keeps it.

He can always be found trying to make a difference in the lives of others and will continue to be a strong advocate for unions when it comes to disparities in the workplace, believing that the righteousness of God is the Supreme equalizer for justice and equality in our home, community, government and halls of justice.

"Whenever you see injustice," he says, "which you know is wrong. Stand Up against it and support what is right and just."







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