

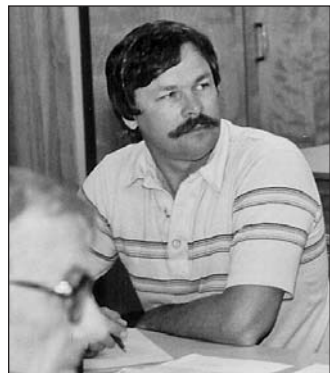
# In memoriam: Jack Osburn

Jack Osburn, a man who negotiated more union contracts than any other Local 1245 Business Representative in the history of the union, died of a heart attack on Oct. 5. He was 63.

Business Manager Tom Dalzell said Osburn took his place alongside Mert Walters, one of the union's founders, "as a great public sector negotiator." Osburn was also involved in the single largest arbitration award in the union's history, a case that arose from 1999 negotiations with Frontier Communications.

Brother Osburn, an electrician at PG&E, was initiated into the IBEW in 1970. He became a union business representative in 1984 and during his career represented employees at Bella Vista Water District, City of Shasta Lake, City of Redding, City of Gridley, Clear Creek Community Services District, Frontier Communications, Lassen Municipal Utility District, South Feather Water & Power, Sacramento Regional Transit, Richvale Irrigation District, Video Satellite, Truckee Donner PUD, and City of Roseville.

Osburn had a great appreciation for how important the small things are, said Dalzell. Like the great pride in took he maintaining a good union bulletin board at the worksite. Or the bagful of burgers he sometimes would bring to a crew in the field.



A very young Jack Osburn serving on a union committee in 1982.

"Jack was never satisfied with the status quo," said Communications Director Eric Wolfe. "He had a restless intellect and never seemed to run out of questions, whether dealing with management or his fellow business reps. Some of the properties he represented didn't have many employees but that didn't stop him from raising their issues—sometimes at great length—at our union staff meetings."

Representing such a diverse membership, under many different labor agreements, is a demanding job. Osburn discussed what it was like at a conference in 2002 that sought to describe the life of a business representative to up-and-coming union leaders. Here's how Osburn described the training that a business rep traditionally has received:

"Here's your keys, here's your car, here's your assignment."

Union business representatives have to learn to be many things to many people, but Osburn believed it was important for business reps to not overreach. "Don't try to play God," he said. "Members know what they want more than we think they do."

At the same time, he believed that a business rep could benefit from a broad education, and recommended that prospective business reps consider taking classes in labor relations, psychology, and even interrogation techniques.

Osburn said that business reps must remain flexible and "learn how to juggle your schedule" because meetings get cancelled, appointments get missed, and emergencies sometimes arise.

Humor is a tool that Osburn actively promoted in carrying out the union's



Jack Osburn, staff photo, 2003



Lightening the atmosphere at staff meeting.

mission. One of Osburn's unit chairs got into the habit of wearing a bow-tie to remind members it was unit meeting day. Osburn himself was handy with quips. If management negotiators started pressing too hard for union "flexibility" at the bargaining table, Osburn accused them of using the "f" word. He believed a little humor could be a more effective way of showing displeasure than losing your temper and pounding the table.

And then there were the crazy glasses at staff meeting...

## Lasting Impression

Although it wasn't so funny at the time, Osburn left a lasting impression on the citizens of Marysville when—dressed as Santa Claus one Christmas season—he was hit in his personal truck by a drunk, who took off running.

"Jack pursued in his Santa costume, and tackled the drunk and stood over him until police arrived," Dalzell recounted. "The children of Marysville probably never looked at Santa Claus in quite the same way after that."

Osburn was knowledgeable and engaged in political issues. He was a fierce opponent of Gov. Schwarzenegger's efforts in 2005 to roll back pension benefits for public employees, who were the heart of Osburn's assignment as a business rep.

Osburn's wife, Barbara, was a frequent visitor to union functions and

Jack didn't hesitate to utilize her artistic skills in designing materials promoting the union.

In addition to Barbara, Osburn is survived by daughters, Gina Osburn-Lee of Chico, Lisa Christina Osburn of Yuba City, Cheryl Elynde Osburn of Marysville; sister, Jean Thoem of Marietta, GA; mother, Annabelle Osburn of Davenport, IA; and three grandchildren.

Memorial contributions can be made to The Museum of the Forgotten Warriors, 5865 A Road, Marysville, CA 95901.

Local 1245 offers our deep condolences to the friends, family, and former co-workers of Brother Jack Osburn.



(Left and above) Jack on the picket line at Frontier: never bashful on the picketline.