



Local 1277

News

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1744 North Main Street • Los Angeles, CA 90031 • (323) 222-1277

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A Career Filled with Hard Work, Progress and Accomplishments

By Adolfo Soto, Financial-Recording Secretary

After 38 years on the job, helping my brothers and sisters at two divisions, and serving in two positions on your Executive Board, I take my leave from my “second home”, ATU Local 1277. I do so with a mixture of sadness and pride, but feel it is time for me leave the future of our Union in the reliable hands of other capable officers.

As a Shop Steward at RTD’s Division 6 and then MTA’s Division 9, I made it my top—really my *only*—priority to serve the needs and goals of every Local 1277 brother and sister it was my honor to represent. No problem was too small, no situation was too difficult that hard work, contract knowledge and determination couldn’t solve. It was a welcome and even joyous responsibility to safeguard my co-workers’ best interests.

I wouldn’t exchange that experience, education and sense of achievement for anything!

Along with Local 1277 “second home”, I have been privileged to work productively and closely with my “second family”, the effective and dedicated members of our Union’s Executive Board. Starting in January 2004, and continuing right up until the end of this month, I have been truly honored to serve every Local 1277 active member, retiree and family as your Treasurer and then Financial-Recording Secretary.

Over the years, I worked hand-in-hand with some of the best and most accomplished officers ever to serve our Union: President Emeritus Neil Silver; former Vice-President Dane Sheldon; former President and now International Vice-President James Lindsay, and current Local 1277 officers President Art Aguilar, Vice-President Errol Frazier and Treasurer Jeff Shaffer. I most gratefully acknowledge their leadership, vision, skill at negotiations, and constant dedication to our membership’s needs and goals. I learned a lot from them and have been proud to be a significant “player” on our team. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for electing me to the Board and re-electing me four more times!

I am profoundly grateful that I could serve and, with my best efforts, make a difference in the lives, working conditions and future of every Local 1277 member and family!

On a personal note, I am tremendously proud of my daughter Cristina’s continuing years of service to our Union. Who would have guessed that a summer internship would blossom into a rewarding and productive career as an efficient administrative assistant? *Well done, Cristina!*

Above all, I am *certain* that I would never have enjoyed such a long and rewarding career at MTA and with our Union without the love, support and patience of my wife of 37 years, Debbie. Not only did she have her own career, she kept things going at home. Her support of my career choice was always unwavering. She is my rock and my greatest blessing.

It’s time now for my children and grandchildren, travel and working at my hobbies. But Local 1277 will always be near and dear to me.

So, brothers and sisters, I retire now, knowing our Union will remain strong, an active player in labor-management matters, and political and social issues, and in very capable hands in the years to come. It’s been an absolute and rewarding pleasure to work for each of you, and I wish you nothing but safety on the job, increasing wages, strong healthcare coverage and other benefits, and the happiest and healthiest lives and retirement for you and your families. *Always stay union strong!*

Oh, and a final message, in case I never made it clear: brothers and sisters—do NOT use your cell phones for personal reasons while on the job!

Please Update Us on Any Address Change, So You Will Be Eligible to Vote.

Your Union, ATU Local 1277, always needs to know if you have moved or in any way changed your address. We need this information both to ensure that you receive your newspaper and all other Union mailing, and (under Article 21.8 of the International Constitution) your official ballot for our upcoming Union elections. We also need updated contact information whenever we file claims or actions on your behalf. It is not enough just to notify management and your friends if you move; *your Union has to be updated, too. Thank you.*

It has Been an Exciting and Educational Experience Serving Our Union and You

By Doug Kurowski, Executive Board Member-at-Large

*To all my wonderful ATU Local 1277 brothers and sisters,
active and retired:*

Because of a “perfect storm” of on-going medical issues, the heavy responsibilities and obligations of serving on your Executive Board, and my personal commitments as a husband and father, I have chosen not to seek the honor of serving another term as Executive Board Member-At-Large. My retirement, however reluctant, will give me the time needed to focus on my own health, as well as allow me to spend some needed quality time with my family and friends.

I warmly commend Local 1277 President Art Aguilar for stepping up to the plate as our Union’s effective and warm-hearted leader. Like the enthusiastic baseball fan that he is, Brother Aguilar has “*hit it out of the park*” when it comes to strongly representing our membership, both active and retired. Not only has he maintained the sound level of benefits we hold so dear—and so much need—but he has steadily *improved* them over the years and into the future. President Aguilar’s efforts on behalf of the working people he represents will have a long-lasting, positive effect not only on our members, but our families, too.

By no means do I want to overlook the hard work, cooperation, and determination shown every day by the other members of your Executive Board. I have nothing but admiration and respect for those brothers, as well as for the previous Local 1277 Presidents I have worked under. Each one has served with dedication and distinction, and in working with them, I have learned and grown personally and professionally. They all have given selflessly of time and effort, both to make our Union stronger and better serve the hard-working brothers and sisters we represent.

It has been the honor of a lifetime to work with them, learn from them, and grow with them. Because of their presence and experience, our continuing struggle to better your lives, working conditions, and benefits has been a satisfying and successful endeavor.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, from the bottom of my heart, for allowing me to serve our great Union. The hard-working men and women of our skilled workforce have helped put MTA on the map. Your drive to be the best has been proven by the many awards our members have amassed for the Authority, not to mention the political support in helping to secure a 1/10- cent sales tax for transit throughout greater Los Angeles well into the future. Your work and dedication has made MTA a reliable mass-transit system throughout its service area, and a beacon of hope and progress across a nation that desperately needs more reliable, affordable and safe public transportation.

I also salute our brothers and sisters at our other properties, Riverside, SunLine and Long Beach. Your professionalism has helped these agencies grow, expand their service, and aid in reducing automobile traffic and air pollution.

Our commitment to your agenda and progress has never stopped at the end of the Board’s work day. Often, we spend weekends and evening involved in the *political process*: leafletting; phone-banking; precinct walking, or being trained on how to best handle grievances, arbitrations and negotiations. Whether fighting anti-union legislation, defending workers’ rights, or electing pro-union politicians, your Executive Board can be very proud of its achievements! *Always keep up the good fight!*

*In solidarity and with deep appreciation, farewell
and thank you again.*

Douglas C. Kurowski
Executive Board Member-At-Large
ATU Local 1277



**Your Executive Board and staff
wish you and your family**

*A joyous and safe holiday season,
and a wonderful 2019!*



Lives and Careers are at Stake

Think Before You Drink!

By Art Aguilar - President, Local 1277

During the holiday season—and throughout the year—you and your families probably attend many parties and other social get-togethers. Enjoy the festivities and the company! Have a great time, *but remember*: There may be consequences—*serious, life-changing consequences*—if you celebrate too much.

Or, to put it as bluntly as possible: ***If you drink too much and lose control, you may well be risking everything of value—your career, your families' well-being and security, and even your lives!***

See the title of this article? *Think before you drink!* It is worded that way because—to be as honest and concerned as I can be—most people don't do a lot of thinking after they've been drinking and, besides, it's likely that it will be too late to help, anyway.

California, along with many other states and cities, always needs new revenue sources. Therefore, among other reasons, state and local law enforcement set up an increasing number of sobriety check points along many streets and highways. You *know* what inevitably comes next: more and more drivers are being tested—and *arrested*—for driving under the influence. More and more drivers are involved in fatal and non-fatal crashes.

Please do not become a statistic

Due to the nature of our work, most ATU Local 1277 members are rightly and honorably considered “safety-sensitive employees”. *Your work directly affects public safety.* With this in mind, never forget: **Your driver's license is a privilege, not a right.** Your license is, however, clearly a *professional necessity* for our Coach Operators and for our members in many other classifications.

Please do not drive anywhere, or come to work under the influence!

You may be randomly tested at work, or you may well be pulled over at a sobriety check point. At your worksite, a number of factors come into play:

- Under the influence, you are hampering both your judgment and reaction time to a possible emergency.
- This, in turn, may cost a co-worker, a union brother or sister, injury or even his or her life.
- While driving to and from work—or to and from a holiday celebration—you may be involved in a serious or even fatal collision, one which may drastically affect loved ones.

Is this a risk worth taking? *Of course not!* Enjoy your parties and travel to and from work, but always—always—**think before you drink!**

don't drink & drive

Consequences of Drinking and Driving

Before you make the terrible mistake of drinking and driving, think of the consequence.

If you are convicted of Driving Under the Influence (DUI) of alcohol or drugs—while driving a commercial vehicle (testing at 0.04% or higher), or a personal vehicle—you will, for a first offense, lose your Class “A” license for one year.

If this is your second conviction within 10 years—while driving a commercial or non-commercial vehicle—your driving license will be revoked for life.

Once again, I remind you in the strongest-possible way: Your California Driver's License is a privilege, not a right!

Think before you drink! At any time, the risk you are taking at work or on the road will affect you and your family forever. You cannot undo the past. The loss of a loved one, co-worker or a completely blameless person on the road who has not been drinking or even driving will haunt you for the rest of your life.

If You Need It, Help is Available

If you fear you may have an alcohol or substance-abuse problem, help is available. ***Do not wait until you are involved in a life-changing accident before seeking assistance!*** Through your Union, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available for you to use. Do not hesitate to take advantage of this excellent resource. If you have any questions about EAP, or wonder if it can help you, talk to your Shop Steward or a Union officer. Life is too short to fool around with drinking and driving!

A final reminder: A number of Local 1277 brothers and sisters—too many, actually—have been terminated for alcohol or drug abuse. ***Never forget this: Management at all of our properties is not fooling around or making idle threats. You can lose your job, your career, your future and that of your family's! Please get help if you need it. Only you can save your job and everything that flows from it.***

On a Happier Note

As we head into another joyous and, hopefully, safe and healthy holiday season, my family and I join your Executive Board and their families in wishing every Local 1277 active and retired member, and your families and friends, the very best in holiday cheer and enjoyment.

But even as we prepare to celebrate the season, we must never forget the economically challenged people and families who live among us throughout Southern and Northern California. Too many people live in shelters or, worse, on the streets. Too many children will miss the joy of opening presents and, far worse, will be hungry and cold during this holiday season.

Please try to help those who are much less fortunate than we who have homes, food, careers, healthcare, savings and pensions. There are many ways you can do this; please pick a way and do so.

Enjoy the holidays! *Be safe and responsible. We don't want any Local 1277 brother, sister or family member to end up as a holiday-season statistic!* You know what I mean.

Baby walkers just aren't safe!

We Need To Protect Our Future; Local 1277 Families, Please Read This

By Errol Frazier - Vice President, Local 1277

Time and time again, we remind ourselves—and others—that our children are, truly, our future. That they are tomorrow's best hope for a better, fairer society. It follows, then, that we must *continually* safeguard our children's health, prospects and security.

With that indisputable commitment in mind, consider this recent, startling finding from the respected magazine, *Pediatrics*, perhaps the "bible" of this vital field of study: ***“Almost 231,000 babies younger than 15 months were treated for walker-related injuries in emergency rooms from 1990 to 2014, averaging more than 2,000 kids per year during that period. About 90% suffered from head or neck injuries, and almost three quarters were hurt after falling down stairs.”***

There it is in black-and-white: the staggering statistic of how deadly and dangerous the baby walker is. It has been a staple in the American home for many years, but this new study has found that too many of our babies continue to get hurt by this product.

Now it is true that the number of children being injured by the baby walkers is decreasing, but just having one of these in your house (and using it) *is still an accident waiting to happen. “Baby walkers continue to be an ‘important and preventable’ source of injury for young children”*, noted lead researcher, Dr. Gary Smith, director of the Center for Injury and Policy of The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio.

“We know these walkers continue to be used in homes,” Dr. Smith told the author A. Pawlowski, for *TODAY.com*. ***“They give children mobility before they can handle it. They can move up to 4 feet per second in a walker and even the best parents in the world who are watching their children closely can't react that quickly.”***

Baby walkers are an unnecessary and dangerous product, said Dr. Benjamin Hoffman, professor of pediatrics at Oregon Health & Science University and chairman of the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Injury, Violence and Poison Prevention. ***“People think it's cute, but there really is nothing good about them”***, Hoffman said. ***“If there's an infant walker in the home, there's a clear and present danger to that child”***.



The American Academy of Pediatrics started to call for a ban on sales of baby walkers in 1990. The industry instituted *voluntary safety standards*: The walkers had to be wider than standard doors, or the wheels had to stop if it went over the edge of a step. *From 1990 to 2003, the numbers of injury fell 84%*. In 2010, a mandatory federal safety standard was put in place, and that has helped to lower the injury rate by 22 percent compared to the previous four years.

“There is this assumption among parents, understandably, that if something is being sold, it should be O.K.”, Dr. Hoffman said. ***“As the study shows, there are a lot of kids still getting injured”***. Parents may think the product helps kids to walk more quickly, *but the studies shows they can actually delay mental and motor development.*

Drs. Smith and Hoffman support an all-out ban like the one in Canada, which was the first and only country in the world to do so in 2004. Baby walkers cannot be imported, sold or even advertised as a new or second-hand item.

“If you have a baby walker at home already, don't use it. Dismantle it and get rid of it. Don't sell it: You don't want anyone else using it, it's a dangerous product,” Dr. Hoffman advises.

As an alternative to a baby walker, consider a stationary activity center. It allows your baby to bounce, swivel, rock, and keep him/herself busy in a self-contained space. Dr. Smith adds, ***“The lack of wheels prevents them from scooting across the floor and getting into harm's way!”***

Our babies really *do* represent our future, our tomorrow, and we need to protect them like the wonderful gifts they are.

Here are the upcoming Local 1277 membership meetings for December. Please make every attempt to attend the meeting for your unit. It's your Union, and we need your participation at our meetings!

Tuesday, Dec 4: Los Angeles area members:
L.A. Building Trades Council, 1626 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles. Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Evening Session 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec 5: Riverside area members:
1074 E. La Cadena Dr., Riverside Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 3:00 p.m.

Thursday, Dec 6: Palm Springs/SunLine members:
Cathedral City Branch Library, 33520 Date Palm Drive, Cathedral City Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 4:00 p.m.

Thursday, Dec 6: Long Beach:
Machinist Hall, 319 W. Broadway, Long Beach Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 3:00 p.m.

NO JANUARY MEETINGS. ALL MEMBERS RECEIVE CREDIT.