



Local 1277

News

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A half century of service

William Dorsey Puts the Senior into Seniority!

By Errol Frazier - Vice President, Local 1277

Brothers and sisters, I am so very proud and pleased to introduce you to ATU Local 1277's *number one* member in seniority, Mr. William Dorsey. Let's all join me in wishing Brother Dorsey a Happy 50th Anniversary!

Along with our Executive Board, I went out to MTA's Division 18 to congratulate Mr. Dorsey and extend our warmest well-wishes. I have known Brother Dorsey for close to 25 years, and recently, in speaking with him, I was so fascinated with the history that he shared with me, that I wanted to introduce him to you and share some of his life's experiences.

Brother Dorsey was born in a very small village, Rosedale, in Louisiana. His birth place was named for the abundance of wild Cherokee Roses found by the English speaking people who settled the area in 1815. This small, rural community is located at the intersection of State Highways 76 and 77, between Baton Rouge and Lafayette. In the 2000 census, Rosedale had a population of 973.

Mr. Dorsey graduated from the village high school in June 1965. He could still remember when the village school only went up to 7th grade. His parents gave him the opportunity to go to college, but he wasn't confident about his ability to get the necessary grades. And he also didn't want to "waste his parent's money." After graduating, he worked construction and also for the Village until the call came from Uncle Sam. He was drafted, and he still remembers the exact date: January 18, 1966. (By contrast, I can't remember what I had for dinner last night!).

After his honorable discharge from the Army in 1968, Brother Dorsey moved to Los Angeles. His first job was with General Telephone, which was one of the "baby bell" companies that made up the giant "Ma Bell" corporation (known today as AT&T). He was a warehouseman, stationed in Santa Monica. Within the year, General Telephone opened a big central warehouse in Pomona and started to consolidate all of the smaller warehouses in the area.

RTD/MTA Gets Lucky

Mr. Dorsey didn't want to make that long drive every day, but as luck would have it, he was given a new professional opportunity. During a conversation with a retired Navy friend, he was told about a possible job with Southern California Rapid Transit District. Brother Dorsey applied and was hired, starting work eight days later. I asked why did it take you eight days to start your new job? "I wanted to give my old job a week's notice", he explained.



His first day at RTD was September 8, 1969. He was hired as a Utility Man, now known as a Service Attendant, making \$3.45/hour! Starting out at the old Division 8, he soon transferred to Division 1, on the graveyard shift, with Wednesday/Thursday off. Brother Dorsey earned an extra 15 cents/hour differential for night work. He recalled that in those days you could get a cup of coffee for 10 cents (try *that* today!).

That was 50 years ago, and along the way, Brother Dorsey thought of retiring many times. One time was May 14, 1996. He actually went down and signed the paperwork, and was all set to go. Then he started having second thoughts. There was an "investment consultant" hanging around the division, a fast talker, and as Mr. Dorsey remembered, "he was answering my questions before I could ask them", and that made him very uneasy.

Brother Dorsey spoke with his division manager, Roy Starks, and asked him, "Could he stop his retirement?" The manager didn't want Mr. Dorsey to retire anyway, so he made a call to Ed Paul, then the manager of Employee Benefits. Once Mr. Paul was made aware of the situation, he told Mr. Starks, "As long as I get a blue memo before that date comes", he could stop it. And stop it he did, with that blue memo, the very next day!

The last question I asked Brother Dorsey was, *why?* Why has he stayed on the job for so long? "My health is good and this is a good job," he said. "I've only been out two times, one because of a car accident, and the other was for surgery. I've thought about leaving, but every time something has kept me there, plus I kind of like what I was doing. And like Steve Harvey says, 'I try and stay out of God's way and let him do his thing!'"

Indeed. What a wonderful attitude. What a wonderful career. *Congratulations, Brother William Dorsey on your 50 years of service and your exemplary life!*

MTA's drug and alcohol policy

Testing May be Coming to You

By Mauro Varela - Treasurer, Local 1277

Some of you, brothers and sisters, may already be aware of—literally—a new path that MTA is taking when it comes to random drug and alcohol testing. If you haven't heard about this, please let me explain.

The Authority has launched a pilot program to test employees for drug and alcohol intake while on the job, *at the jobsite*. This is a pretty far-fetched, off-the-wall idea, even for MTA. It came about in the name of "saving time and keeping the work going". The program was dreamed up by some out-of-town consultant (you might have guessed that!) who, clearly, has some pretty strange ideas about how to "improve" productivity.

Apparently, this consultant thought that MTA's conventional drug- and alcohol-testing protocol was wasting valuable time because our members in a particular unit have to drive to the testing center, sign in, wait to be tested, and then drive back to their division jobsite.

Can't have that, the consultant told MTA, it's inefficient and time-consuming. *So, let's bring the testing to the divisions.* Sure, let's cut down on all that travel time by using mobile drug and alcohol testing centers. *To see if anyone at MTA had a sense of humor, we actually "suggested" that Local 1277 and the sample-collection company go into business together to develop a device that an employee could simply attach to his/herself so that the work could go on, uninterrupted, with no lost time.* Simple: when employees were done being tested—while performing their precise jobs—the attached device would simply display a color or some other type of indication that the container was full and ready for collection! MTA didn't get the joke.

Welcome to MTA's very own version of "Big Brother"—of keeping an intrusive eagle eye on you at work. What's next, bathroom-break monitors?

We Say "Forget It"

This MTA "brainchild" started at Division 3, and has since expanded to Divisions 1, 2, 10 and 13. *You should know that ATU Local 1277 has made it crystal clear to MTA that this so-called program is completely unnecessary, but the Authority had continued to ignore our input.*

Apparently, MTA didn't like our objections. *And*, it went out of its way to report that brothers and sisters being tested at Division 3 (the first trial location) "loved it and wanted to continue the program." I don't know about that, but I *do* know this: *Random drug and alcohol testing is a very serious matter. We are professionals, and we owe it to the mass-transit-dependent public we serve to always be clean and sober on the job. Messing in any way with a test can easily cost you your job and career, and make it very difficult for our Union to do anything for you in this matter.*

Brothers and sisters, never use any drugs or alcohol on the job (or abuse them at any time, really). Know your testing schedule, keep an eye on the clock, and drive to the clinic (if the testing hasn't already come to you).

*If you do have a substance-abuse problem, or think you may be developing one, don't wait! Get help before you get called in for a random test, because enrolling in MTA's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) after a positive test will **not** help save your job and career.*

There are many options out there if you need—and want—help. And if you are hesitant to use company referrals, please talk to your Shop Steward or all any Local 1277 officer. Your Union can—and will—help in getting you any help you need for combatting substance abuse.

The problem of drug and alcohol abuse is very real even if MTA's latest zany proposal to deal with it doesn't make a lot of sense.



Important Reminder to All Local 1277 MTA Unit Members.

UNUM Insurance Company will be holding its Annual Open Enrollment for Whole Life Insurance, Group Short Term Disability Insurance, Group Accident Insurance, Group Critical Illness Insurance, Hospital Indemnity, and Term Life Insurance from **October 29, through November 8, 2019**. If you are interested, please contact your Shop Steward for more information on how to sign up and have an enrollment counselor come to your work location.

Trying to make things better

Instead of Pointing Out the Problems, Let's See How We Can Improve Things

By John DiRito - Board Member-at-Large

Good morning, afternoon and evening, brothers and sisters! I hope this message finds you all well at home and on the job. As you know, over the past few months, I have had the unfortunate job of describing—sometimes in harsh terms!—just how bad things have become for American working men, women and families.

And, brothers and sisters, as far as the feds' seemingly unending “war against unions and working people” goes, things are still far from rosy. But, this time, I would like to turn optimist and point out some of the things that could *positively* affect working families—if there were a different kind of leadership in Washington, D.C.

Let's start with this basic idea: *The best way to improve the lives of American workers and their families is to improve the conditions they face day to day at their jobsites.* For example, raise the wages of restaurant and other service workers who now can barely feed their families. Secure benefits like pensions, jobsite safety protection and healthcare coverage to those millions of working people like ride-hailing drivers, warehouse workers, and other “gig economy” men and women who lack these basic rights simply because they are classified as “independent contractors” rather than employees (the goal of labor-backed AB 5). Provide paid leave for child-care providers who currently cannot care for *their own* children.

I am very pleased that, in the crowded race for the *Democratic* Presidential nomination next year, more and more of the candidates are focusing on these and other important issues that so greatly affect the daily lives, careers and future of working people and families. I am even more heartened that an ever-increasing number of voters across the country have applied more and more pressure on these politicians to do just that: *focus on the needs and goals of working people!*

The leading *Democratic* contenders all want to increase the national minimum wage and, I'm glad to report, pass a law *guaranteeing* paid family and medical leave for all working people (ATU Local 1277 members already enjoy this tremendously valuable benefit!). This is all well and good, but we should never lose sight of the disturbing fact that in recent decades workers have received a declining share of our nation's economic output in the form of wages and benefits.

Simply put, we need changes in federal law to shift the balance of power to working men and women.

Unions Can Lead the Way

The Union movement can—and *should*—be a leading force to bring about a shift towards workers' rights and goals. With the really depressing figure of only about 10.5% of American workers having union membership as of last year, it is no wonder that a number of “think tank” reports clearly link the decline of private-sector union membership and influence to depressed wages and the scourge of income inequality (the ugly reality where corporate executives make obscenely more than the workers who actually power their companies and bloated profits).

Once again, I am pleased to report, the *Democratic* Presidential candidates are vocally supporting the effort to expand union membership and influence. The major contenders agree on the need for *federal* legislation to finally prohibit anti-union “right to work” laws (now legal in 27 states!). Another needed change, backed by unions: Get rid of the unfair exclusion rule that *denies* agricultural and domestic workers the full protection of federal labor laws.

Other union-inspired proposals from *Democratic* contenders:

- Rewrite a current law that requires workers to bargain only with their *particular* employers. Instead, allow them to collectively bargain for *industry-wide* wages and benefits.
- A Domestic Workers Bill of Rights that would extend a mandated minimum wage, paid time off and eligibility for overtime pay to caregivers and housekeepers.
- An executive (Presidential) order that would *bar* federal contracts for companies that do not meet certain standards like a national minimum wage.
- Federal commitments for expanded subsidized child healthcare and universal access to affordable pre-school.

Brothers and sisters, it is nothing less than a crime that a country as rich and powerful as the United States lags far behind most other developed countries in ensuring everyone's access to decent, affordable healthcare in general and especially that for children!

We should always remember that a stronger “safety net” of laws and support for basic human rights and benefits not only improves the overall quality of life in our society, but it also *increases productivity* by allowing working men and women to stay at their jobs and produce in a way to strengthen both our economy and society.

If our political leaders—office holders and contenders—really think about it, the common sense ideas of higher minimum wages, expanded unions and collective-bargaining power, and a stronger, more reliable social “safety net” can (and will) help improve the quality of working-class jobs and lives in the years to come! All we need is determination and the right leadership.

Forty One 1277 Members Retire from Careers at MTA

Forty One Local 1277 members have retired from MTA after long and productive careers. They all were hardworking employees and loyal members of our Union.

Fausto Saavedra, Rail Electronic Communication Inspector, Rail Comm 3922, 28 years, September 28, 2018; **Manchiu Chan**, Maintenance Specialist, Green Line, 24 years, January 19, 2019; **Anthony Herumin**, Warranty Equipment Mechanic, CMF, 33 years, January 31; **Michael Vu**, Electronic Communications Technician, Revenue Collections, 20 years, February 1; **Francisco Guzman**, Mechanic A, Division 9, 44 years, February 6; **Thi V. Vu**, Maintenance Specialist, Blue Line, 19 years, February 15; **Albert Sola**, Air Conditioning Technician, Facility Maintenance, 30 years, February 17; **Lee Edmond, Jr.**, Senior Service Attendant, Division 18, 18 years, March 1; **Jesus Flores**, Mechanic A, Division 13, 42 years, March 1; **Petronilo Benavidez**, Maintenance Specialist, Blue Line, 20 years, March 15; **Joel Smith**, Senior Service Attendant, Division 18, 32 years, March 15;

Douglas Kurowski, Electronic Communications Technician, Local 1277 Executive Board Member, Division 3, 34 years, April 1; **Juan Villalba**, Maintenance Specialist, Division 24 (Monrovia), 37 years, April 16; **Randal Tamayei**, Mechanic A, Division 15, 37 years, April 22; **Iqbal Mohamedy**, Mechanic A, Division 2, 30 years, May 4; **Gwendolyn Rhodes**, Senior Service Attendant, Division 4 Maintenance, 22 years, May 28; **Daniel "Bear" King**, Mechanic A, Division 1, 32 years, June 2; **Dyana Elorriaga**, Maintenance Specialist, Red Line, 34 years, June 7; **Thomas Holland**, Mechanic A, Division 1, 38 years, June 7; **Reynaldo DeJesus**, Systems Electronic Communications Technician; ITS, 28 years, June 23; **William Heiller**, Master Mechanic, Division 8, 36 years, June 29;

Saeed Bahmanshir, Maintenance Specialist, Blue Line, 33 years, July 2; **Mark Calinog**, Mechanic A, Division 15, 27 years, July 8; **Asoka Paranaheewa**, Senior Service Attendant, Division 1, 20 years, July 12; Alan Addie, Maintenance Specialist, Gold Line, 28 years, July 12; **Sieu Hong**, Maintenance Specialist, Division 24 (Monrovia), 38 years, July 14; **Glen Abraham**, Maintenance Specialist, Red Line, 27 years, July 15; **Nancy Johnson**, Senior Service Attendant, Division 8, 20 years, July 15; **Peter Yanez**, Mechanic A, Division 1, 40 years, July 15; **Melvin Lesure**, Senior Service Attendant, Division 24 (Monrovia), 37 years, July 24; **Leonard Skinner Jr.**, Mechanic A, Division 9, 37 years, July 26; **Masamitsu Takata**, Mechanic A, CMF, 39 years, July 26;

John Kielb, Mechanic A, Division 4, 37 years, July 27; **Oscar Ancheta**, Traction Power Inspector, Traction Power, 29 years, July 27; **Howard Luong**, Mechanic A, Division 4, 35 years, July 28; **Manuel Cendejas**, Mechanic A, Division 3, 28 years, July 31; **Forrest Belmont**, Signal Inspector, Signals, 27 years, July 31; **Jose P. Martinez**, Mechanic A, Division 1, 36 years, August 1; **John F. Garcia**, Facility Systems Technician, FST Rail, 28 years, August 5; **Mark Delgadillo**, Mechanic A, CMF, 20 years, August 19, and **Alfredo Soto**, Body Repairer A, CMF, 32 years, August 23.

Local 1277's Executive Board and members wish these brothers and sisters long, enjoyable and healthy retirements. They will be missed!

Here are the upcoming Local 1277 membership meetings for October and November. Please make every attempt to attend the meeting for your unit. It's your Union, and we need your participation at our meetings! All members will receive credit for the meetings.

Tuesday, Oct 1:	Los Angeles area members:
Tuesday, Nov 5:	L.A. Building Trades Council, 1626 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles. Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Evening Session 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday, Oct 2:	Metrolink Unit members:
Wednesday, Nov 6:	Union Offices, 1744 North Main Street. Morning Session 11:00 a.m.
Wednesday, Oct 2:	Riverside area members:
Wednesday, Nov 6:	1074 E. La Cadena Dr., Riverside Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 3:00 p.m.
Thursday, Oct 3:	Palm Springs/SunLine members:
Thursday, Nov 7:	Cathedral City Branch Library, 33520 Date Palm Drive, Cathedral City Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 4:00 p.m.
Thursday, Oct 3:	Long Beach:
Thursday, Nov 7:	Machinist Hall, 319 W. Broadway, Long Beach Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 3:00 p.m.