PONDERINGS OF THE PRESIDENT
By Laurie Ordin

Last month John Sutherland was so kind to write a short article in my absence advocating for a more perfect union. I was away because my almost ninety year old father was failing and I was able to be by his side during his final hours. If you will indulge me, I would like to use this space to write a brief homage to my dad.

My father was born in Poland in 1923. He lived in a shtetl in the small town of Ivansk. You might imagine something like “Fiddler on the Roof” only poorer. He was the youngest of six children. Before he was even born, his father had been traveling back and forth to Canada and the U.S. trying to earn enough money to bring the family to this country. He had been successful in bringing the four oldest children over and was in the process of earning enough money to bring the family to this country. He had been successful in bringing the four oldest children over and was in the process of earning enough for my grandmother, my father, and his sister, when my dad’s mother died. Dad was only four years old. Losing his mother at such a young age had the most profound effect on my father and he talked of the pain of this loss throughout his life.

Within a year of my grandmother’s death, my grandfather had earned enough to bring his two youngest children to this country. Their grandmother put them on a ship to make the Atlantic crossing without any adult supervision. They were five and six years old! My father often told us that his older sister saved his life when she pulled him back from a porthole, from which he was about to fall. When they reached Ellis Island they were photographed and a story about their journey was published in newspapers throughout the country.

All that glamour lasted about one day and at the ripe old age of 6 my father began his newspaper career, peddling newspapers on street corners and delivering them to homes in his neighborhood. His father had been working at the Ford foundry, doing back breaking work, but making a decent living. Once his back actually gave out, without union protection, he was
promptly fired and had to figure out how he would provide for his six children and new wife. He ended up peddling junk and they were once again very poor, so every penny that my father brought in from his newspaper route was needed to help provide for the family.

My father was a very kind man who had his share of pain, emotional as well as physical, but these days I am remembering his kindness and generosity. Some of my earliest memories are of my father hoisting me up on his broad shoulders so that I could see a local children’s entertainer over the crowd. He took me to museums and concerts. I remember looking forward to our weekly visits to our local library. He instilled a love of reading that has been a lifelong pleasure. He had a beautiful baritone voice and loved music, so I was weaned on opera and other classical music piped in from his “phonograph.”

During my childhood, my father continued to work for newspapers and he was a union man. We weren’t wealthy, but by father’s job provided a living wage, enough so that we could live in a modest neighborhood with excellent public schools and services. I remember several long periods of time when my father was on strike and times were hard for us, but he explained that this was the price we had to pay to secure a decent wage and good benefits. My childhood was enhanced because of those benefits and I feel that the education I received as a result of those benefits has enabled me to have a comfortable life now, working at a job that I love, that provides security for my family, that I think is important, but which will never make me (or you) wealthy. Now, at UPM, we are working to provide a living wage for our members so that we can continue to provide a decent life for our families and ourselves. We want our children to be able to go to good schools.

We don’t want to worry about going bankrupt if we or our loved ones are unlucky and need a lot of medical care.

We want to be able to live with dignity in our later years, when we can no longer teach. We want to be able to attract talented people to this important profession, but those people will have to give up the potential for greater income and we need to provide a modicum of security for them.

In the end, my father’s union job provided him with a modest pension and healthcare, and my father was able to live his final years in peace and security. When end of life issues became extremely difficult, we didn’t have the additional worry about how to take care of the financial concerns. We had my father’s union to thank for that small comfort.

In the end, I was able to take UPM negotiated personal leave days from my job to spend my dad’s final days with him.

In the end, I put my hands on my father’s once broad shoulders, the shoulders that carried me as a child. I hoped that he felt my hands there and that he knew I was there for him as he had always been there for me. His shoulders were now so small and I knew he was slipping away.

I really miss my dad. Thank you for allowing me to share this with you. ☐
EDITORIAL

The singing of our National Anthem by Beyoncé at President Obama’s inauguration last month was passionate and moving. But then we learned that her performance wasn’t live, but was lip-synced to a recording she had made previously in a studio.

And when the great Yo-Yo Ma played cello at Mr. Obama’s inauguration four years ago, the music we thought was coming from his cello was also faked - hand-synced by Mr. Ma to a prior recording.

In both cases, the music was great, so I suppose it might have been sufficient to sit back and enjoy what was presented. But there is something unsettling about the matter because we don’t expect this kind of deception at an epic event like a presidential inauguration. Could we even be sure that it was Beyoncé or Yo-Yo that we saw, rather than a hologram? It sends a bad message when you can’t be certain that the activities at important occasions are authentic.

The same should hold true at College of Marin. Apparently however, such has not always been the case. For years our Board of Trustees had publicly praised our faculty for the wonderful job we had been doing, but like Beyoncé, it appears they may have been lip-syncing, because at Collective Bargaining time, when it was time to reward us for our praiseworthy contributions, they changed their tune and started singing a different melody, announcing that we were over-paid and under worked. And they hired a faculty-bashing, union-busting attorney to lead their negotiation team.

Currently, we have been hearing similar praise for our faculty from members of our Board of Trustees and from our Administration. So let’s hope that they aren’t once again just lip-syncing, and that this time at the bargaining table they will put their money where their mouths are.

The lip-syncing that occurred at President Obama’s inauguration was disappointing. Similarly, any District lip-syncing at our up-coming bargaining sessions will be equally disappointing. □ A.L.

UPM STAFF AND COMMITTEES 2012 - 2013

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CLASS STRUGGLES

In 1932, Lou Goldblatt, Secretary-Treasurer of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), wrote the following: “Not believing in the class struggle is like not believing in death – it still exists.”

Goldblatt wrote these words in the 1930s when labor-management relations were at their lowest ebb, but given current political trends, his words also seem to be relevant today.

Perhaps the best way to understand what Goldblatt was trying to say is to relate it to the well-known Aesop fable about the Frog and the Scorpion.

One day a frog was swimming in the river when a scorpion called to him from the shore. “Mr. Froggie, said the scorpion, I sorely need to get to the other side but I cannot swim, so would you please take me across on your back? I would be everlastingly grateful.”

The frog, who was no fool, responded thusly, “I would like to oblige you Mr. Scorpion, but you have a deadly stinger with powerful poison and you are known to kill many creatures. So how do I know that if I take you on my back, you won’t sting me?”

And the scorpion replied, “Oh Mr. Froggie, I certainly would not do that, for if I did you would die and we would both sink beneath the waves and drown.”

The frog pondered this for a time and realized that there was good logic in what the scorpion had said, and because he certainly would like to have the everlasting friendship of such a powerful creature, he agreed to the scorpion’s request for a ride.

So the scorpion climbed on the frog’s back and they started across. But when they came to the middle of the river, the scorpion turned and drove his stinger into the frog’s back.

“You fool” said the frog as he was dying, “Why did you do that? Now we will both sink beneath the waters and die.” And the scorpion replied, “I’m sorry Mr. Froggie, but I couldn’t help it; IT’S MY NATURE.”

This fable might be read as a metaphor for today’s labor-management relations. For despite the fact that management’s success depends on the success of those who work for them, they continually try to destroy or weaken labor. And they do it, Goldblatt suggests, because, like the scorpion, “it’s their nature.”

That’s the “class struggle” that Lou Goldblatt was talking about it. It exists in all workplaces and seems to have existed for all recorded history. And it exists here at College of Marin where for years, but especially during the Fran White administration, the District continually tried to degrade the status of our faculty and weaken or destroy our faculty union, even though it is our faculty who are responsible for the success of our college and the ultimate survival of management’s own jobs.

Our UPM Bargaining Team will shortly begin negotiating with the District for a successor contract. We hope that Lou Goldblatt can be proven wrong and that the District will recognize that their own well-being and the well-being of our college depends on a vibrant and well compensated faculty, and that (unlike the scorpion) they will not be so foolish as to revert to their “nature.”

But if they do, you can be sure that our UPM Bargaining Team will not be as credulous as Mr. Froggie.
“NEWS AND NOTES”

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Did you know that even though you may think you are a member of UPM, you may not be? Sure, deductions for UPM are taken from your paycheck, so you must be a member, right? Not so fast! Unless you have filled out the membership application on the back of this newsletter, you are only paying a representation fee and you are not entitled to UPM’s full membership benefits. If you were an actual member of UPM there would be many benefits from UPM, CFT and AFT that you would be able to access. Perhaps the most important of these is the right to be a voting member of UPM and help determine the future of our union, including what we should bargain for in our successor contract. So if you haven’t filled out this important membership application, do it now and take it to the UPM office, TB 124. It won’t cost you any more than what you are now paying but you will have a greater ability to ‘stay in touch, stay informed, and stay involved!’

Laurie Ordin.

UPM COLLECTIVE BARGAINING UPDATE

In this newsletter, you’ll find the UPM Bargaining Team’s request for membership input into the upcoming round of contract negotiations. You’ll also find the same request in your (unitedprofessorsofmarin.org). Your and to your and your colleagues’

Please take some time to formulate the CB Team bring to the table when we the CBA Article in which your concern article your issue falls, describe it as well secretary at: ESecretary@unitedprofessorsofmarin.org Also, please include your contact information so that we can get in touch with you for clarification, if necessary. Finally, please observe the deadline (March 15, 2013) for submitting your considerations.

We are pleased to announce that we recently met with CoM President Coon and our new HR Director Kristina Combs regarding nearly ten outstanding sidebars and have reached a tentative agreement on all of them. President Coon and HR Director Combs, in contrast to previous, punitive District negotiators, gave us reason to believe that we will see a fair and productive bargaining later this year. We welcome dealing with District reps who want to work with us rather than, as in the past, against us to reach a CB agreement that will benefit all of us and our students. We’ll keep you posted as any new information arises.

John Sutherland
"FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER"
A SAMPLING OF MYTH, MIRTH AND MISCELLANY FOR THE UNION FAITHFUL

COLLEGE HUMOR

At a community college not unlike our own, an announcement came over the classroom intercoms: "Will the students who are parked on University Drive please move their cars so that we may begin excavating for our new Administration building." Twenty minutes later there was another announcement: "Will the five hundred students who went to move fourteen cars please return to class."

ODDS AND SODS

Please make a note of UPM’s new contact information, some of which has changed since the move to our new office in TB 124:
PHONE and FAX: (415) 459-1524
EMAIL: ESecretary@unitedprofessorsofmarin.org

Our UPM WEBSITE can be accessed at: www.unitedprofessorsofmarin.org
Or by scanning:

OBITER DICTUM

Comments overheard in the Mailroom:
“it’s great that we’ve been taken off the WASC warning list. Now our administration can’t justify holding us hostage to perform pedagogically meaningless exercises like SLOs, threatening that if we don’t do them we will lose our accreditation.”
and:
“I show supervisors and managers the same respect – or lack of it - that they show me.”

UPCOMING CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

• WHAT MANAGEMENT SAYS:

"If we cancel their eyeglass benefits, the union won’t be able to read the fine print."

• WHAT LABOR SAYS:

"Some folks will rob you with a six-gun – Others will rob you with a fountain pen."
- Woody Guthrie

• WHAT UPM SAYS:

Let’s make sure that we won’t be “robbed with a fountain pen” at our upcoming bargaining sessions with the District. Let our Bargaining Team know what you think we should be negotiating, when you receive the survey from our UPM office.

• AND IF ALL ELSE FAILS:

"I’m NOT going to negotiate with you!
Then I’m going to pee on the carpet."

I'm going to negotiate with you!
FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH

For all its foot-dragging and resistance in earlier decades, today’s labor movement plays an important role in the struggle for equal rights for black workers. Recognition of this change was noted by Dr. King in 1967, when he wrote:

“When the rest of the nation accepted rank discrimination and prejudice as ordinary and usual - like the rain, to be deplored but accepted as part of nature – trade unions, especially the CIO, leveled all barriers to equal membership.”

Today, the wages of unionized African-American workers are 35% higher than the pay of those who are not represented by a union, and their participation in union affairs is unquestioned.

But these gains were not achieved without the active involvement and persistence of African-American labor leaders.

It was E.D. Nixon, a member of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, who brought Rev. King to Montgomery, Alabama to support the 1955 bus boycott, an action that became one of the seminal events of the civil rights movement. And thirteen years later, Dr. King was again linking civil rights to labor organizing by supporting the Sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee.

Organized labor may have been tardy in joining the struggle for equal rights for African-American workers, but it can be proud of its current contribution to the struggle.

We should celebrate those black labor leaders who persisted in the struggle for equal rights, and who showed us the way. □

MOOD SWING

On Thursday (2/14), Dr. Coon met with our Academic Senate to answer questions and discuss current and future budget concerns. While not all his answers were encouraging, the conversation was collegial, respectful and cordial; far different than with previous CEOs. The real test of our Administration’s collegiality, however, will be how Dr. Coon and the Board direct their Bargaining Team at our upcoming Contract negotiations. The jury is still out, but there definitely seems to be a “mood swing.”

ON THE OTHER HAND

Some of us think it’s unfortunate that Dr. Coon, (with the approval of the majority of our Academic Senate) has recommended the elimination of the COM fee waiver for concurrently enrolled High School students. Many of these student’s families cannot qualify for the BOG fee waiver and thus these young people may not be able to attend COM while attending High School. It will be a loss for them and a loss for us.

Surely there must be a better way to save money than by penalizing High School students who are motivated to enroll for what our college has to offer.
UPM BARGAINING TEAM ASKS FOR MEMBERSHIP INPUT

Our UPM Bargaining Team requests your input into up-coming negotiations. This year, the third of our current collective bargaining agreement, we are scheduled to negotiate the UPM/MCCD 2013-2016 Contract.

Are there any contractual improvements you would like the Team to negotiate on your behalf? If so, please make recommendations you’d like us to bargain. Consult the current CBA and identify by Article and Section numbers what you’d like to see addressed. Please include a brief explanation along with the Article you identify.

If you don’t know what Article your concern applies to, please give a synopsis of your issue and we will contact you for further explanation.

Please include your name and contact information in case we need clarification.

Put your suggestions in the UPM mailbox or send them to UPM at: ESecretary@unitedprofessorsofmarin.org Deadline for input is March 15, 2013.

“United We Bargain, Divided We Beg”
Slogan of the SEIU Health Care Workers, Local 250

UPM Membership Application

I hereby apply for membership in the United Professors of Marin, AFT Local 1610

Date: ___________________________ Email: ___________________________

Name __________________________________ SS #: _________________________

Address: ___________________________ Department: ______________________

City: ___________________________ Zip: ___________________________

Home Phone: ___________________________ Campus Ext: ______________________

Check the appropriate category:

____ I am a permanent credit or non-credit employee or leave replacement.

____ I am a temporary non-credit employee on the quarter system.

____ I am a temporary credit or non-credit employee on the semester system.

Return to UPM Kentfield campus mailbox or UPM Office, Science Center 136