

COPY

April 1, 1, 1975

Mr. Joe M. Boa, Press Secretary,  
L.U.400 - I.B.E.W.  
Post Office Box 1256, Wall N.J. 07719

Dear Joe,

You probably have seen the enclosed Press clipping about the strike of L.U.400 fifty years ago. Few members of our Local are alive today who participated in that strike, the first in the history of the young local organized in 1917 during World War I, while I was in France, serving with the Asbury Park Co. H, 3rd N.J. Infantry National Guard Volunteers.

As Press Secretary and Historian, you will no doubt provide historical information when 400 celebrates it's 60th Anniversary in 1977. I offer some facts of the strike with events leading to it and the following growth of 400. I was discharged from the army April 8, 1919 and applied immediately to join 400. Three months later, on Saturday night, July 19, 1919 a meeting was held in the rear of the Crowell-Hendrickson Electric Shop, on Main Street in Asbury Park. There in the presence of John Bird, President; Charlie Ferris, Financial Secretary; Dave O'Reilly, Treasurer; Rufe Brown, Art Maps, Floyd Brooks, Beb Crowell and Ray Hendrickson, I was sworn in as a member of 400, with a membership of only 20. Three and a half years later, I was elected and installed as President of 400, January 1923, in the old Winkler Hall opposite the Savoy Theater. As a result of our organizing activities prior to the March 1925 strike, and with our help, an electrical contractors' association was formed in Monmouth & Ocean Counties, that included the following new union electrical contractors: Proctor-Jones, VanDyke, Hardy<sup>B</sup>-Hendrickson, all of Asbury Park; Hickley of Allenhurst; Viering of Ocean Grove; Newman of Belmar; Edwards of Red Bank; Nelson of Long Branch; Roger<sup>B</sup> Hayes of Lakewood. From these new organized shops we admitted new members who went on to leadership in L.U.400 to become Presidents and/or Business Agents. They included John Newbon, Marshall Ritter, Jack Kramer Sr., Percy Sisco, Ray Watson, Orville Winterstella and Bill Brennecke to mention a few.

During the period 1923-1925, 400 grew from 20 members to over 100. These figures are a matter of record in our I.O., Jerry Boa and Floyd Brooks, who served as part-time business agents then, with little or no compensation, contributed greatly to our membership growth. After the strike, we moved frequently, first- a few doors west to the Appleby Bldg., now a vacant lot; Then-to <sup>2</sup> locations on Cookman Ave.; Next stop- Main St.; Then- Asbury Ave. & Pine St.. In the depth of the depression-1932- we met in the home of executive board member Clarence "Cap" Bennett, West 3rd Ave. all in Asbury Park. Those old-timers still with us, who participated in our early struggles a half-century ago, can view with gratification and accomplishment the strong position of L.U. 400 today in their fine new home.

With kindest regards, I am Fraternally yours

Ernest Knierim,  
Past-President L.U.400 I.B.E.W.  
1923-24-25

Initiated July 19, 1919  
Card # 383256

In closing, I will read a brief postscript to this letter- In our July 1976 Journal, the following appeared:- "By 1925 our membership had dropped to 56,349 - a loss of 96,723 members in six years". I am proud to have been active in Local Union 400 during those lean years when we increased our membership from 20 to approximately 100 (see L.U.400 records). August 5, 1976, Ralph A Legion, our International Secretary wrote to me, "The records would indicate that your local did experience some growth during that period -1923-25- and it was one of the few that did"! It's great to look back and be able to say, "I helped to build that".

Tonight I thank the officers and members of L.U.400 for honoring me with this 60 year I.B.E.W. membership pin and scroll, and tell you how happy I am to be a part of the I.B.E.W., one of the finest and strongest international labor unions in the world with over <sup>ONE</sup> ~~5~~ million members.