

# 60 Years of Brotherhood

By Bruce Moffatt, Business Manager

IUOE Local 955 is proud to honour an incredible milestone for two of our members this year. Brothers Claude Robert and Norman Walters are celebrating a remarkable 60 years of Union membership.

Their achievement embodies the principles of commitment and solidarity your Union represents. They are living proof of the Union's strength and rich history. Their example is inspiring.

## CLAUDE ROBERT

Claude signed up with Local 955 in May of 1953 after being admitted transfer from Locals 827 and then 115 (initiation date of April 1951). He was then a young man of 21 years. He went on to work on the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line project, which established a series of radar stations across the Canadian Arctic to warn against attack from Russia during the early years of the Cold War. This was a monumental effort that saw Claude driving a dozer on a "cat train" that hauled material more than 1,000 miles across the Canadian Arctic for delivery to the construction sites, and then working on those sites. He later worked on a series of construction jobs, becoming a crane operator as well. Claude went on to turn his natural mechanical aptitude into work as a mechanic, studying the textbooks on his own so he could challenge the exams to become certified as a Heavy Duty Mechanic. Claude eventually became shop foreman with a series of crane companies, ending his career with Atlas/Gwil Crane. At the time, Claude operated a 330 Ton DEMAG Crawler. Claude has retired and now lives in B.C.

## NORMAN WALTERS

Norman started his working career at the age of 17 with one of the many coal mines that dotted the

Edmonton River Valley during the depths of the Depression. He started out as a driver, working the horses that hauled the coal out of these underground mines, and as a timberman's assistant, helping to put the timbers and shoring in place that held up the roof of the mine shafts and drifts. These mines generally worked in the winter when people were burning coal to heat their homes (natural gas is a real blessing!), and during the summer Norman was given work by one of the mine owners on their farm. He then went on to deliver coal with a truck. Norman translated this experience into operating heavy equipment, specializing on shovel and hoe, but also running crane. Norman worked on the construction of a number of army bases in Alberta and B.C. during the Second World War. He was signed up with Local 955 by Irv Nessel on the construction of the Hotel Macdonald expansion in Edmonton in 1951, a Union job. The shovel he operated then was a cable machine, and required real finesse to operate; otherwise the operator spent a lot of time replacing broken cables. At the time our Union was just beginning to expand by organizing workers on construction sites. Norman worked on Union jobs when he could, but always maintained his Union dues, and retired in October 1983. True to his roots, Norman is still an Operator, running a lawn tractor doing maintenance at an RV park in B.C. 🇨🇦

## Snapshot 1951: Norman and the "Sidewalk Supervisors"

Today, you probably wouldn't think of heavy equipment operation as a spectator sport, let alone one with audience participation. But 60 years ago, it was a different story...

In 1951, Norman Walters was operating a power shovel on the site of the expansion of the Hotel Macdonald, an iconic Edmonton landmark. At the time, it was rare (and apparently quite enter-

taining) for the average person to see heavy equipment in action. So every day, an enthusiastic crowd would gather to watch Norman and the rest of the excavation crew work. The guys on site came to think of them as "sidewalk supervisors."

You ever notice in photos and movies from the '50s how everybody always wore hats? Well, one day, an onlooker's prized fedora dropped down into the excavation. The jury's still out on whether it was accidentally blown off by the wind, or if it was some kind of gag or dare. Either way, Norman had the last laugh.

Demonstrating exceptional control and finesse, Norman manoeuvred the scoop shovel and picked up the hat out of the dirt. Then, casually as you please, he lifted the headwear up to street level, right into the waiting hand of the grateful gentleman. And he did it with no low-noise cab, no ergonomic chair, no vibration damper, no LCD display screen. Just a cable-and-pulley machine and Norman's remarkable skill. (You can see the moment captured on this issue's cover.)

Imagine the smiles on the crowd's faces as Norman received a well-deserved round of applause. That's a moment to build a proud career on. 🇨🇦

Below: Norman Walters operating his power shovel at the Hotel Macdonald expansion site, captured by an Edmonton Journal photographer.

Right: The newspaper article featuring Norman's on-site antics.



load of earth.