Leonard Woodcock

Leonard Woodcock became one of America’s great international labor leaders. It was at the bargaining table where Woodcock really excelled. As president of the United Automobile Workers (UAW) and as America’s first Ambassador to the People’s Republic of China, Woodcock demonstrated superb negotiating skills.

Born in 1911 in Providence, Rhode Island, Woodcock’s father was a skilled workman and a staunch trade unionist. The Woodcock family moved to Germany in 1914. When World War I began, Leonard and his mother moved to England, but his father, an English citizen, was interned in Germany for the duration of the war. The family was reunited after the war, and moved to Detroit in 1926.

After working for the CIO in the late-1930s, Woodcock began his career in the UAW in 1940 when he accepted a position as a staff representative for union locals in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He became a close ally of Walter Reuther during this era, and when Reuther was elected president of the UAW in 1946, Woodcock accepted a position as his first administrative assistant. He was subsequently elected UAW regional director in 1947, and UAW vice-president in charge of the union's General Motors Department in 1955. By the 1960s, Woodcock had earned a national reputation as a tough, shrewd and highly successful negotiator. In particular, he emphasized collective bargaining: “If we can’t do that well [in negotiations] … we can’t unite our people on other questions.” He became UAW president after Reuther's tragic death in a plane crash in May 1970.

In 1977, newly elected President Jimmy Carter asked Woodcock to head a delegation to Viet Nam and Laos to attempt to determine the fate of missing American servicemen. Woodcock not only returned with the remains of 13 soldiers, he also laid the groundwork for reconciliation between Viet Nam and the United States. Impressed with his negotiating skills, Carter asked him to lead a mission to establish diplomatic relations with China. By 1979,
Muriel Friedman ‘Manny’ Tuteur (b. 1922) has spent a lifetime fighting for the rights of women and children, minorities and workers. Her work for a wide range of social improvements, from child care to a higher minimum wage, has won her an equally wide range of honors and recognition over the years, including the Coalition of Labor Union Women’s Florence Criley Award in 1982, the National Council of Jewish Women’s Hannah G. Solomon Award in 1988, and induction into the Chicago Women’s Hall of Fame in 1989. Muriel Tuteur has built a career around dedication to child welfare, social justice, and the labor movement.

Tuteur’s involvement in the labor movement dates back to the 1940s when, as a University of Chicago student, she decided to work in the steel mills as part of the war effort (she received her B.A. in Sociology in 1943). From 1943-44, she worked as a milling machine operator at the U.S. Steel South Works plant in Chicago. At that time, she met and married Charles Tuteur—a German Jew who had escaped to the U.S. a day before Hitler’s Kristallnacht—and the couple moved to Vancouver, Washington in 1944. While in Vancouver, she worked as a shiplifter in the Kaiser Shipyards from 1944-45. Both Muriel and Charles Tuteur enlisted in the Armed Forces in 1944. Muriel was accepted into the Women’s Army Corps and received training at the Parachute Training School at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Returning to Chicago after the war, Tuteur worked as a caseworker for the Cook County Bureau of Public Welfare, and as a teacher for several Jewish Community Center preschools. Her interest in developing quality day care programs for working families led her to apply for a job with the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU). In 1969, the ACTWU hired Tuteur to start the first union-sponsored day care center in the country: the Amalgamated Day Care and Health Center operated from 1969-1983. She served as Director throughout that entire period.

In addition to leadership in the field of child care and early childhood development, Tuteur’s life reveals a commitment to women in the labor movement. An active member of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), both the national organization and the Chicago Chapter, Tuteur has also served as co-chair of CLUW’s National Child Care Task Force, and as a member of CLUW’s National Executive Board. In 1983, she was appointed Assistant Director of Education and Political Action for the Chicago and Central States Joint Board of the ACTWU, serving in that capacity for over a decade. As the assistant director, Tuteur has worked to protect the rights of textile workers. Muriel Tuteur has also served as an advisor to a variety of committees, national and local, related to women’s, children’s, and family issues, including the National Implementation Task Force of the White House Conference on Families, the Illinois Women’s Agenda, and Women for Economic Justice.

The Muriel Tuteur papers (12 linear feet) is a collection of her speeches and personal subject files, that documents her interests and involvement in union-sponsored childcare, women’s issues, politics, the labor movement, CLUW, union organizing, and early childhood education. The collection is an important addition to women’s history resources at the Reuther Library.

Lauren Kata

Actor Visits the Reuther

Theo Bikel, actor and president of the Associated Actors and Artistes of America, stopped by the Reuther Library during the 30th anniversary tour of ‘Fiddler on the Roof’ in October 2000. Dan Golodner, pictured right, took Mr. Bikel on a short tour of the library and pulled some Yiddish song sheets out from the People’s Song Library collection.

George Hardy had a long history with the labor movement and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in California before becoming the union’s seventh international president in 1971. Both of his parents were involved in the labor movement. His father, Charles “Pop” Hardy, became a Vice President of SEIU before his death in 1948. Already an active member of SEIU, George Hardy assumed the position vacated by his father’s passing and moved up the ranks until he assumed its highest office.

“The Executive Office Files: George Hardy Collection” chronicles the tenure of George Hardy as president of SEIU from 1971 until 1980 when he retired from the union. His administration increased the membership of the union and was largely responsible for modifying the National Labor Relations Act to include hospital employees within its jurisdiction. Under Hardy’s leadership, SEIU increased its efforts to organize public employees and hospital workers. Materials on these and other subjects are found within the “SEIU Executive Office Files: George Hardy Collection.” This collection also contains material on local unions, joint councils and other SEIU affiliates; Executive Officers; representatives and organizers; the International staff; Executive Board Reports; the unsuccessful efforts to merge Local 1199 and SEIU in the late 1970s and early 1980s; and general subjects.

Those considering SEIU as a point of departure for research will find subjects that are fresh, as the service industry is an increasingly important sector of the economy with a history documented within this collection. The George Hardy Collection provides an important resource to better understanding this sector.

As this collection chiefly represents the records documenting his tenure as SEIU President, there is little in the collection that reflects his life in the union prior to his ascendency to that position. However, other SEIU collections contain additional material on Hardy. As with many other collections at the Reuther Library, the finding aid to this one and other SEIU collections are located on the Reuther website. For additional information about this collection or other SEIU resources, see http://www.reuther.wayne.edu/use/seiu.html or call Louis Jones at 313/577-4024.

Louis Jones

Audiovisual

The Political Animation of Ben Yomen

Ben Yomen, the dean of American labor cartoonists, recently donated the original artwork for twelve of his cartoons to the Reuther Library. These works from the 1940s and 1950s will be added to the initial collection Yomen gave to the Reuther Library six years ago.

The son of a Detroit autoworker, Yomen began his career as a cartoonist when he and several friends decided to make sketches of unemployed workers parading from Detroit to Ford Motor Company’s River Rouge plant in March 1932. They watched as Ford Servicemen fired tear gas and machine guns at the demonstrators, leading to the deaths of five marchers and dozens of injuries. This affair is now known as the famous "Ford Hunger March." Since that time, Yomen has devoted his art to the labor movement, and his cartoons have appeared in hundreds of newspapers and labor publications around the United States. Yomen has also illustrated and published a book for children. He and his wife, Rose, are now retired and live in Ann Arbor, Michigan.
Leonard Woodcock

Woodcock had established formal relations with China and was named the first U.S. Ambassador to China, a position he held until 1981.


To honor his life and career, the Walter P. Reuther Library created the Leonard Woodcock exhibit in March 2001. It will be on display in the Library's exhibit gallery through April 2002 during Library hours. Admission is free.

Interview with Cheri Register author of *Packing House Daughter: A Memoir.*
By Daniel Golodner

Cheri Register writes a beautiful and poignant memoir about growing up in Albert Lea, Minnesota. Her writing takes you on a journey through the discovery of labor songs, working class heroes, the pride of work and the stark realities of unions vs. business. Register uses archival materials, interviews and her own memories to construct a memoir that is impassioned about the dignity of work.

The memoir focuses around the Wilson and Company 1959 meatpackers’ strike. Mandatory overtime and management demanding a yellow-dog contract provoked the strike. Violence erupted when a scab-driven car hit a striker, which led to Governor Orville Freeman calling out the National Guard to close the plant to halt any further violence. The strike lasted 109 days and ended before an arbitration board.

Register’s memoir is a history that revolves around America’s heartland. It is a book for every person who grew up in a small town during the 1950s or who was raised in a union family. The memoir is a history that reflects on industrial America and class division. The following is an interview with Cheri Register. Her book was released as a paperback during the Labor Day weekend. If you would like to write to her about the book or if you have your own stories, there is a special email at packdaughter@aol.com.

Daniel Golodner (DG) - Your book can read as a novel. Was that your first intention?
Cheri Register (CR) - I had originally tried writing this as a novel, probably a young adult novel for people who were about my age during the strike. I found that creating characters was a lot less interesting then just going for the real story.

DG - There seems to have been a lot of writing on meatpacking and the industry lately, such as Eric Schlosser’s *Fast Food Nation.* Is there a rebirth of investigative reporting into where the people work?
CR - Yeah, it is the kind of thing that I imagined myself doing when I was younger. Like what Eric and Barbara Ehrenreich’s book did is something that I would very much have liked to do. It seems that there is a little wave going on. We can only hope it continues.

DG - From interviews, oral histories, to archival research to the personal archives in basements and union halls, your research covers a lot of various avenues that historians take in writing their books. How difficult was that?
CR - To me research is never difficult, as it is never-ending and I get caught up in it. I want to follow all the trails. I just enjoy the whole thing and along the way there were some strange coincidences that kept me intrigued. The only difficulty was trying to persuade some people to be interviewed who didn’t want to be. Mainly because they worried about family members that would take issue with them.

DG - What kind of coincidences did you stumble across?

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Interview with Packing House Daughter author

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CR - Well, for instance, I was at the University of Wisconsin and I called up all these files from the United Packinghouse Workers. I started reading through this one file and came upon a copy of a letter that had been sent to the Albon Advance, which is a little paper from this little town where my parents grew up. I read through it and there was my aunt’s name at the end. I didn’t know that she had ever expressed herself this way – it was a very articulate and impassioned letter - she had been dead for years, so I never had a chance to talk to her about it. It was stuff like that, where you get that creepy sensation that you are fated to do this.

DG - Tell me about Hazel Gudvangen.
CR - Oh Hazel! That came up with an interview with Chuck Lee, who was the UPWA Local 6 president at the time of the strike. He said that there were some scrapbooks down at the Union Center. So I went down there and asked about it and sure enough, they had it up over the desk in the reception area. They got it down and here was this wonderful scrapbook that was so meticulously kept. I knew that Hazel had died, so I got her obituary from the county historical society and located her daughter and interviewed her. I got to know a little bit more about her. She was the only woman that was involved in a very public way with Local 6. She held office because she was elected steward in a primarily female department. She helped organize the union at Hormel when she was very young. She was a union person through and through. But unusual, because it was a pretty male-run union, even though it had a philosophy of equality. I think they were more serious about racial equality than they were gender equality.

DG - What drew you to the music of the labor movement?
CR - It is the one side of it that allows some emotional release, whether it is joy or anger or just firming up the commitment. I was really deprived of that as a kid. It wasn’t until I went to college that I learned anything about those songs. I was so eager for something like that; it really made me mad that people appropriated those songs without any conscious connection to actual people and events. They took them on as feelgood folk songs. I have real mixed emotions about that stuff. I still do have that kind of anger that all of that was lost on at a time that I needed it most.

DG - You mention that anger in your book, but overall it seemed that you had a lot of fun learning the songs and letting go.
CR - The event that I wrote about in that chapter “A Dream of Joe Hill” was really fun. It was so amateur, except for Joe Glaser; everybody else could not sing but having such a good time with it.

DG - So what was it like growing up in Albert Lea?
CR - Well, it was mixed. It was one of those boring small towns that you want to get out of because the world is much bigger than this and I have better things to do. In retrospect, I have a lot more appreciation for it and respect for the upbringing I had and the things I learned. These are things that are hard to pass on to my kids in the setting that we live today.

DG - You mention that this setting is becoming lost, being replaced by Target and Wal-Mart in the small towns. Is there a future for the small towns?
CR - Hopefully. I just read in the Albert Lea Tribune online, one of my classmates – another packinghouse kid – is spearheading some kind of drive to restore the uptown area. He is trying to bring local business back into those stores and kind of feature that main street area as a destination for people who want to see a small town again in the old style. There are lots of people who live in town who are getting really dis-couraged in the way that Wal-Mart or Home Depot come in, use the town and pull out again. They are trying to work on a local pride. Then what happened is really tragic. On July 8th, the packinghouse burned. There was a fire started by somebody who was doing a job that my Dad would have been doing in the old days, which bothers him to no end. The worker was careless and started a fire that smoldered. No one noticed for a while and it ended up burning up the middle of the plant. Now Farmland foods, which runs it now, had to shut down. They haven’t decided yet whether they can rebuild. There are 600 people out of work. The population has been declining and the town wants the jobs, they want the people, they want that economy. But a lot of them are new to the place; there are lots of immigrants and refugees. They are not sure if they can hang on and live off of public support and donations. It is really sad; this may be the end of meat packing in Albert Lea.

DG - With the decline of the membership in the local, has there been a loss of union loyalty in Albert Lea?
CR - Oh yeah, sure it has. It made a big difference when the UPWA merged with the Amalgamated and then merged with the UFCW. The UPWA had such a distinct personality of its own. It was a very grass roots and militant union. Now it is run like a business organization and I don’t think it brings out the same loyalty in people. When I was a kid, there was rank-and-file meetings about everything and local officers were very involved with the governance of the international union. I don’t know of the inner working of the UFCW, except that it is a very large union, with lots of different kinds of labor in it. I am not sure whether the people in the meat packing plant feel much camaraderie with grocery store cashiers.

DG - You write about the pride your Dad took in retiring at 62. Does that pride still exist today?
CR - I don’t know, I see lots of people retiring early. With him, it was an element of holding out with a tough job. Maybe if his job had been easier, I think there would have been somewhat less of that pride.

DG - Is there still respect for the packinghouse worker?
CR - I doubt it. The stereotype is the Mexican migrant, who is maybe an illegal alien who comes in, earns money and sends it back home, takes off and doesn’t hang around to become part of the community. The problem is that it is so difficult for them to become part of the community and keep the jobs, because they are not retained. The companies do nothing to make it possible for them to become a stable ongoing workforce. Sometimes I think how hard it must be for the UFCW to try to keep going in some of these plants where there are Mexicans, Bosnians, Somalis and Laotian people working side by side, with very little English skills. However, I look back when the unions were first organizing in those Chicago plants with all these different varieties of European immigrants and they still managed to build a union out of that. It shouldn’t be impossible, but just difficult.

DG - During the strike, did you do any teenage pranks or was there too much fear in the air so you left the strike to the adults to deal with?
CR - I did my own typical teenage thing, which was all the girl stuff of obsessing about boys, which was important for me to remember. Another research coincidence is that my best friend from that period had given me all the notes that I had written to her. It was a good

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The Albert Shanker Fellowship for Research in Education

The Reuther Library is pleased to announce the winners of the second American Federation of Teachers Albert Shanker Fellowship awards: Carole J. Trone from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and assistant professor Joseph Slater from the University of Toledo College of Law. Trone is working on her doctoral thesis in the Education Policy Studies department. Her project focuses on how public relations and the media have shaped public perception of education since 1920. Mr. Slater is turning his dissertation into a book-length manuscript, which focuses on public sector labor law and history. Both recipients will be awarded $500 in the memory of Albert Shanker, president of the AFT, 1974-1997.

The fellowship is intended for advanced graduate students and/or junior and senior faculty who wish to use the Reuther Library’s collections pertaining to the AFT, affiliates of the AFT or those individuals who were active in the union. The fellowship is also available to those who are interested in resources at the Reuther Library that relate to educational issues. Applications for the next fellowship award will be accepted beginning February 1, 2002 and must be postmarked no later than May 30, 2002. Applications are available on the Archives Web site at www.reuther.wayne.edu. For further information, please contact Daniel Golodner, AFT archivist at (313)-577-4024 or Daniel_Golodner@wayne.edu.

Exhibit Tour: Marching Toward Justice: The History of the 14th Amendment

The Walter P. Reuther Library has been intimately involved in the national tour of the exhibit, Marching Toward Justice: The History of the 14th Amendment. In the past year, staff member Louis Jones has played a major part in arranging for its tour to several prominent locations throughout the United States. In addition, he visited many archives throughout the northeast to secure images that ultimately became a part of the exhibit. The Marching Toward Justice exhibit was created by the Damon J. Keith Law Collection of African-American Legal History to inform the public about the fundamental importance of the 14th Amendment and our nation’s ongoing quest to realize the high ideals of the Declaration of Independence. The Keith Collection, initiated by Wayne State University Law Professor Edward J. Littlejohn, is dedicated to drawing attention to the history of African-American lawyers and judges through the select collection of their records, public programs, and related efforts. The Honorable Damon J. Keith, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, sees the collection as memorializing his commitment to freedom and justice for all.

Marching Toward Justice tells the story of our government’s past promotion of justice and equality for some, while condoning the enslavement of others. The philosophy of “justice and equality for all” is the founding principle of the nation. But in practice, African Americans were long denied due process and equal protection under the law. The question of how the legal status of African Americans and the practice of slavery fit into the democratic ideals of the Constitution remains a critical issue of historical – and contemporary – significance.

The academic year 2000-2001 has found this exhibit at the Historic United States Court of Appeals Building in San Francisco; Chicago’s Museum of Science and Industry; Topeka’s Kansas Judicial Center and Kansas State Historical Society; Chicago’s American Bar Association; and Dallas African American Museum. Opening programs have included speakers such as Judge Damon Keith, Judge Ann Claire Williams--both Wayne State University alumni--Wayne State President Irvin Reid, journalist and political commentator Juan Williams, and San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown.

Louis Jones

Interview with Packing House Daughter author

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healthy reminder that I was still this really dippy teenage girl and not this girl caught up in these adult questions of justice. I mean that was true too, but they co-existed. I was still going to movies and hanging out with friends, except there were national guardsmen all over the place. One little trick we did do was put marshmallows on the antennae. We knew there was life and death dangers involved with this.

DG - Do you still own the blue denim shirt described in the first chapter?
CR - No I don’t. I don’t know what happened to it. Even after that occasion I don’t know what happened to it. Although I never asked my Dad about that and what he meant by it. My Dad has read the book but we still never have had that conversation and we never will. I think it is better left unsaid.

DG - Your Dad is now in a retirement home and you mention that Governor Freeman is there as well and they became friends.
CR - Oh Yeah. I figured that must be why fate demanded that I take so long in writing this book.

DG – Thank you very much
CR – Thank you.
I arrived at the Reuther a little more than a year ago. The legacy of Phil Mason, rich collections and an exceptional staff were too hard to resist, especially for this onetime factory worker from a union family. I certainly have not been disappointed by the opportunities. What I hope that you will notice is that we continue to build from excellence. My own contributions initially focus on the Web. Working with the staff, we built a different home page and are placing the Reuther in the forefront of archival automation. The renewed site (http://www.reuther.wayne.edu) contains a powerful Google search engine and was redesigned for direct links to our collections. It features special buttons to take you to audio-visual resources, union holdings, Detroit materials and Wayne State archives. In February, we developed an HTML-Encoded Finding Aids (HEFA) process to simplify the conversion of collection descriptions for our electronic users. To date, we have mounted over 225 collections and some 2,000 pages of description. On Labor Day, we launched the first of our new Web Archival Resource Directories, which are intended to provide even better descriptions of our major union and university holdings.

Equally important, we want to build partnerships with those committed to preserving the legacies of labor, the city of Detroit and Wayne State University. Over the coming year, I hope to be able to reach out and work with many of you on oral history, documentation, and Web projects. Comments, criticisms, and ideas are gratefully accepted.

Fred Stielow, Ph.D., MLS

Two Reuther Library staffers, Mike Smith and Tom Featherstone, recently published works focusing on labor in Detroit. Smith's book, The Reuther Brothers: Walter, Roy, and Victor, published by the Wayne State University Press, was written for the Detroit Biography Series for Young Readers. Mike’s wife, Pam Smith co-authored the book. The reader centers on the lives of three Reuther brothers from their childhood to Walter’s becoming president of the United Automobile Workers Union.

Labor in Detroit: Working in the Motor City, authored by Mike Smith and Tom Featherstone, is a compilation of nearly two hundred photographs covering the legacy of the working class in Detroit. The book also captures the early labor campaigns from the first sit-downs of 1937 and the formation of organized labor, to the challenges unions faced in the 1970s and ‘80s.

For purchasing information, visit the following websites:

The Michigan Labor Legacy Project was established two years ago by the Michigan Labor History Society in anticipation of Detroit’s tricentennial in 2001. A program of the Michigan Labor History Society, the project’s goal was to sponsor and promote the design and construction of a monument celebrating the role of working men and women who built Detroit in that three-hundred-year history and into the future.

Earlier this year, a 59-foot-high stainless steel arch, complemented by 14 six-foot-high natural boulders carrying bronze reliefs depicting the proud story of the workers who built this city, was the winning entry in a national competition to create a labor landmark, the only one of its kind in the nation. Designed by local sculptors, David Barr and Sergio De Giusti, the monument will rise between Hart Plaza and the UAW/Ford National Programs Center on Detroit’s waterfront beginning in 2002.

Much of the funding for the Labor Legacy Landmark has come from unions and rank-and-file union members. To help with that effort or to learn more about the project, contact Alberta Asmar, 313-577-4003. Contributions, with checks payable to the MICHIGAN LABOR LEGACY PROJECT, may be mailed to Ms. Asmar at the Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, 5401 Cass Ave., Detroit, MI 48202.

Margaret Raucher
2001

SEPTEMBER
27  On Our Own Time Exhibit
Exhibit showcasing the works of Wayne State University photographers, Rick Bielaczyk and Mary Jane Murawka. Reuther Library Woodcock Gallery until May 2002.

OCTOBER
18-20  North American Labor History Conference
McGregor Conference Center.

2002

MARCH
22-23  44th Annual Conference on Local History
McGregor Conference Center.

SEPTEMBER
Albert Shanker Exhibit
Reuther Library main Gallery.

Society of Women Engineers Exhibit
Reuther Library Woodcock Gallery.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Reading Room hours:
Monday-Tuesday - 11 a.m.-6:45 p.m.
Wednesday-Friday - 9 a.m.-4:45 p.m.

Business hours:
Monday-Friday - 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Phone: (313) 577-4024
Fax: (313) 577-4300

Web: www.reuther.wayne.edu

The Reuther Library Newsletter is published each year to inform those interested in the library’s collections, exhibits, and special projects. It is written by members of the library staff. This issue was edited by Kathy Schmeling and Mary Wallace and designed by Mary Wallace.