

REMEMBERING FRANK JENKINS, JR.

By

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I have been around longshoremen, workers and union officials all my life. Longshoremen's kid, fellow worker and union lawyer for 36 years. I knew and worked with every longshore union leader in the Puget Sound Region from 1961 through 1997. Hundreds of outstanding men and women. If asked to nominate one person of extraordinary abilities, character, commitment and competence, that person, without question, would be Frank Jenkins, Jr. Martin Jugum and everyone who knew Frank would without hesitation second the nomination.

Frank was born November 11, 1903, at what is now Fort Ord, California. His father, Frank, Sr., was a career army man, a Buffalo soldier of the vaunted 25th Infantry Regiment. Frank Sr. served in Cuba and the Philippines. Frank Sr.'s father (our Frank's grandfather) was a runaway slave who married a "Texican" (our Frank's grandmother), thereby giving Frank Sr. the Spanish language necessary to court and marry Frank Jr.'s mother Rufina Clemente while serving in the Philippines. The Jenkins family was transferred to Ft. Lawton, Seattle, in 1909. The Jenkins family is the first known Filipino family in the Puget Sound area. The Jenkins family history reads like a chapter of "Roots". For more information on Frank and this first family of Seattle civil rights and union activism see:

http://depts.washington.educivilr/frank_jenkins.htm.

Frank Sr. retired from the army in 1915, and shortly thereafter, Frank Jr. dropped out of Queen Anne High School. He first worked in the shipyards during WWI. In the early 1920's, he joined his father on the waterfront where he remained until retirement on January 1, 1967.

From the 1934 strike onward, Frank Jenkins Jr. was a union officer. He was one of three union members of the Labor Relations Committee for more than 30 years. He memorized the contract--

chapter and verse. While others were thumbing through their copy of the contract, Frank was thinking, planning and getting ready to pounce. Frank was effective because he was very intelligent, loved colorful language and knew how to present his position and win converts to his position. It did not hurt that he was tall, handsome, always neatly dressed and distinguished looking. Frank was a master at reporting bad news. I learned a lot from Frank by watching and listening. He stood tall. He looked them in the eyes and he spoke softly. With the combined skills of a maestro conductor and lion tamer, he let the membership know “we didn’t get all we asked for”. He handled the outrage that followed with grace and aplomb. The louder the shouts the softer he talked. He gave a masters class on how to be an effective union leader at every meeting. We all knew that there was no one better than Frank.

Frank died on April 4, 1974, aged 70 years and five months. Frank Jenkins Jr. name belongs at the Bridges Chair along with his friends Harry Bridges and Martin Jugum. Most of Frank’s contemporaries have died. Those remaining who knew and worked with Frank are now in their 80s and 90s. Before we go, we must preserve the memory of Frank Jenkins, Jr. His and his family’s name belong at the Bridges Chair.

Join us in establishing the Frank Jenkins, Jr. Fellowship.