



NO GREATER CALLING:
The Life of Walter P. Reuther,
1907 ~ 1970



than to have done it well.”

The second of five children, Reuther was born on September 1, 1907, in Wheeling, West Virginia. His father and mother, Valentine and Anna, raised their family to hold dear traditional values such as hard work and disciplined living. Valentine also taught them the essentials of unionism and social justice. “At my father’s knee,” Walter later recalled, “we learned the philosophy of trade unionism. We got the struggles, the hopes and aspirations of working people every-day.”

Walter Reuther left school at the age of 15 to take a tool and die apprenticeship at a local factory. In 1927 Reuther, like so many before him, journeyed to Detroit in the hope of finding more fruitful employment. He landed a job at the Ford Motor Company where he was quickly promoted to the task of supervising a group of die makers. Despite the demands of his job, Walter also called upon his enormous energy and drive to finish his high school diploma. These characteristics served him well his entire life.

The years 1936 and 1937 were pivotal both for the United Automobile Workers and Walter Reuther. In March of 1936 Walter married May Wolf, an organizer for the American Federation of Teachers. Later that spring, Walter Reuther was elected to the union’s Executive Board and he organized and became president of UAW Local 174 in Detroit, also known as

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The Reuther Library Celebrates the Life of Walter Reuther

On Monday, August 27, the Walter P. Reuther Library celebrated the opening of the exhibit, *No Greater Calling: The Life of Walter Reuther, 1907-1970* and the launch of the website dedicated to him. The exhibit and website were created to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Walter Reuther’s birth. The event was attended by UAW President Ron Gettelfinger, members the Reuther family, former UAW President Douglas Fraser, Wayne State University President Irvin Reid, Congressman Sander Levin, Detroit City Councilwoman Joann Watson, and many others.

see photos on page 5

Walter Reuther is often remembered as one of the most accomplished leader in the history of the American labor movement. A man of character, resolve and boundless energy, he sought to level the playing field for all working people. Reuther was ambitious, but took pride in being the nation’s lowest-paid union president. As head of the United Automobile Workers (UAW) from 1946 to 1970, he held enormous economic power, but used it to better the lives of the union rank and file. As an advisor to four American presidents Reuther had political influence, but applied it on behalf of the disadvantaged. He spoke and lived his guiding philosophy: “There is no greater calling than to serve your fellow man. There is no greater contribution than to help the weak. There is no greater satisfaction



The UAW’s Robert Kanter, Walter P. Reuther, Richard Frankenstein, and J.J. Kennedy are approached by Ford security men. The confrontation and violence that follows is now known as “The Battle of the Overpass.” 26 May 1937.

Collections Open for Research

Reverend James Drake

1961-1977 [6 l.f.]

The papers of James Drake relate to migrant labor legislation, and to his work with the United Farm Workers organizing campaigns of the late 1960s and 1970s. In particular, the papers reflect Drake's work with the Delano Grape Boycott and lettuce boycotts.



UFW president Cesar Chavez and Reverend James Drake.

Ann Filardo

1969-1993 [2 l.f.]

Ann Filardo was an executive board member and chairperson of the Teachers Action Caucus. She was also a founder of the United Action Caucus, a group within the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) that was formed to be the opposition group to the Progressive Caucus, the dominant party in the AFT. The collection has files relating to the Ocean Hill Brownsville Strike in New York City, community control issues, U.S. foreign policies in Vietnam and Central America, education reform proposals in the 1980s, and AFT internal politics regarding the secret ballot.

Martin and Jessie Glaberman [Part 2]

1939-2001 [12 l.f.]

This is an addition to the current collection that reflects the Glaberman's many years of involvement in the labor, civil rights, and women's movements. It includes two linear feet of material relating to C. L. R. James and audiotapes of James and Detroit black radicals.

Luella Hannan Memorial Foundation

1927-1988 [19 l.f.]

The Luella Hannan Memorial Foundation provided financial support for Detroit's indigent aged. The collection consists of client files. There are restrictions: no names can be cited.

James G. Pyrros

1943-1988 [6 l.f.]

James G. Pyrros was Michigan Congressman Lucien Nedzi's administrative assistant. The collection relates to Michigan Democratic Party politics with good coverage of Zolton Ferency's 1966 campaign for governor of Michigan.

William H. Simons

1906-1995 [13 l.f.]

Mr. Simons was the Washington Teachers Union (WTU) president and a member of the American Federation of Teachers' Executive Council. The collection documents his career with the WTU and the history of public education in the Washington D.C. area.

Thomas W. Stephens

1978-2003 [12 l.f.]

Mr. Stephens is a Detroit environmental justice lawyer who was involved in lawsuits against municipal incinerators in Detroit and Flint. The collection also contains material on globalization and trade policy.

Young Woman's Home Association

1877-2003 [3 l.f.]

The Young Woman's Home Association was a Detroit residence club for working women that began in 1877 and closed its doors in 1969. The collection contains material primarily relating to its operation.

Metro Detroit Skilled Tradeswomen Oral Histories

Interviews with 19 women from a variety of trades conducted between 2004 and 2006. The collection consists of video interviews and written transcripts. Not all of the oral histories are open for research.

Presidential Collections Open



American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Office of the President: Gerald W. McEntee

1977-1995 [125 l.f.]

The papers of Gerald McEntee, president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees since 1982, are comprised of the Federation's Executive Department and International Affairs Department. This is the first installment of the McEntee Collection, which has records from 1982 to 1995.

UAW President's Office: Owen Bieber Collection, Part I

1970-1995 [41.25 l.f.]

Born December 28, 1929, Owen Bieber first joined the United Automobile Workers (UAW) union in 1948. He later became the 6th president of the UAW, serving from 1983-1995. This collection documents policies, programs and the activities of the UAW during his presidency and is comprised of personal subject files, correspondence, speeches, interviews, and official records.



National Association of Letter Carriers



The Reuther Library is pleased to announce the opening of 11 collections from the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC). The Reuther was designated the official archives for the NALC in 2000 and since that time, nearly 500 linear feet have been transferred to the Reuther, including this year's accession of President Vince Sombrotto's papers (approximately 260 l.f.). The collections listed below are the first historical records of the NALC open for research.

Office of the President: James H. Rademacher

1950-1987 [11 l.f.]

Contains NALC President James H. Rademacher's biographical information. The collection also documents the 1970 wildcat strike and postal service reorganization.

Office of the President: J. Joseph Vacca

1966-1979 [3 l.f.]

Includes rulings by the NALC Committee of Laws regarding branch compliance with the national constitution.

Office of the Executive Vice President

1965-1997 [46 l.f.]

Contains the records of the second and third officers to hold the position of executive vice president: Tony Huerta (1976-1986) and Francis J. Conners (1986-1998). A large portion of the Huerta material relates to legislative issues, including NALC's grass roots lobbying and training programs, while the Conners material deals extensively with the Joint NALC-USPS Employee Involvement program of the 1980s and early 1990s.



The Reuther Director, Mike Smith and Nancy Dysert load Vince Sombrotto's NALC boxes into a truck in Washington, D.C. for shipment to Detroit.

Office of the Vice President

1968-1986 [12 l.f.]

Generated by Francis J. Conners during his tenure as vice president of NALC (1976-1986), materials include extensive documentation of the 1978 contract negotiations, as well as information relating to the controversial U.S. Postal Service data collection study of 1979.

Office of the Secretary-Treasurer

1921-1995 [35 l.f.]

Documents the administrations of NALC Secretary-Treasurers Gustave J. Johnson (1976-1980) and Richard P. O'Connell (1981-1994), and includes material regarding affiliations with the AFL-CIO and Postal, Telegraph and Telephone International (PTTI), planning for conventions and other special events, and extensive information relating to member recognition and special honors.

NALC Auxiliary

1905-1994 [4.5 l.f.]

Includes minutes, transcripts, and/or printed proceedings of meetings, beginning with the national Auxiliary's founding meeting in 1905 through its 44th Biennial Convention in 1994.

F. John Miller, Executive Assistant to the President

1889-1999 [24 l.f.]

Comprised of a combination of documents directed to and generated by both Miller and President Vince Sombrotto, including reports on NALC's investment funds; material regarding the federal government's Employee Thrift Advisory Council that was chaired by Sombrotto; and detailed records documenting preparations for NALC's 1989 centennial celebration.

Director of Research and Education

1968-1985 [4.3 l.f.]

Includes NALC publications and training materials produced by the Director of Research and Education, as well as material developed and relating to the Joint NALC-USPS Employee Involvement program.

Director of Public Relations

1985-1995 [5 l.f.]

Relates primarily to the promotion of the association and its members through advertising, press releases, and numerous media contacts. Files document a wide range of NALC activities, including the Postal Employees' Relief Fund and extensive material relating to the early years of the annual NALC food drive.

Office of the Comptroller

1892-1981 [9 l.f.]

Contains material relating to the supervision and maintenance of NALC's financial records. Also includes information relating to the activities of the Nalcrest Foundation (National Association of Letter Carriers' Retirement, Educational, Security, Training Foundation, Inc.) and the planning, building, promotion, and operation of the Nalcrest retirement community in Polk County, FL.

Information Center

1889-2004 [18 l.f.]

Contains items developed and published by NALC, including current and past editions of the national constitution and national agreement, convention transcripts and reports, arbitration decision summaries, and NALC-related government materials. Also included are clippings and interviews relating to the 1986 Edmond, Oklahoma post office shootings.

Walter Reuther: No Greater Calling

continued from page 1

the West Side Local.

By the end of 1936 the stage was set for the UAW's attempt to organize General Motors (GM), the largest corporation in the world. After a 44-day sit-down strike GM signed an agreement with the UAW on February 11, 1937. Chrysler was organized in March. To many UAW members in the spring of 1937, it seemed that the entire industry would soon be organized.

"We'll never recognize the United Automobile Workers Union, or any other union," said Henry Ford in 1937. Walter Reuther would learn first hand how far Ford would go to keep that pledge. On May 26, 1937, Reuther and other UAW organizers went to the Ford Rouge plant in Dearborn, Michigan to pass out leaflets. There they were attacked and beaten by members of the Ford Service Department, Ford Motor Company's private police force. Ford would not sign a contract with the UAW until 1941.

After the entry of the United States into World War II, Walter Reuther spent increasing amounts of time as a behind-the-scenes consultant to the White House,

working to eliminate production bottlenecks. Reuther became a favorite of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who often referred to him as his "red-haired engineer."

Walter Reuther was elected UAW President in 1946. In 1948, his life was nearly cut short by an assassination attempt, but he recovered and served for a total of 24 years. It can be difficult to follow all of the projects and ideas he worked on, but most can be placed in three categories: Equity, Justice, and Solidarity.

At the beginning of the automobile era, most cars were hand-built by highly skilled craftsmen. Mass production broke these complex jobs into many simple tasks performed by unskilled workers. Overworked and insecure, autoworkers produced great wealth while receiving relatively little in return. During his tenure as UAW president, there was a constant redefinition and expansion of what was fair and equitable for union members. Beyond all the improvements and innova-

tions, perhaps Reuther's most significant bargaining victory was the Supplemental Unemployment Benefit (SUB). SUB replaced most of the income workers lost during layoffs, taking some of the sting out of the cyclical nature of auto work. These many gains were hard-earned, and brought increased dignity and equality to the members of the UAW.

Walter Reuther knew the importance of everyday union issues. However, he also stated: "To make that the sole purpose of the labor movement is to miss the main target. The labor movement is about changing society." To aid the cause of social justice, Reuther marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., fought for universal health care, and worked for open housing in America. He was also a co-founder of Earth Day, and as UAW president, provided funding and support to such groups as the Southern Christian Leadership Council and the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee. If the purpose of the labor movement is to change society, then Walter Reuther did more than his part to affect that change.

Finally, Reuther worked to improve solidarity among working people, both at home and around the world. He saw this as a way to counter multi-national companies. As early as 1962 Reuther said, "The day of the purely U.S. auto corporation is gone forever." As he pushed for greater ties between all working people, Reuther also became the best-known American union leader in the world. After addressing a crowd of 600,000 people in Berlin in 1959, an English newspaper commented: "No overseas visitor in living memory has made such an immense impact by his personality and his tempestuous oratory."

Walter and May Reuther's lives were tragically cut short by an airplane crash in 1970. His legacy, however, both in economic and social justice, persists to this day.

For more information, visit the Reuther Library website at reuther.wayne.edu, where there is a link to the Walter Reuther website "No Greater Calling" at <http://reuther100.wayne.edu>. ■

Thomas Featherstone



Walter Reuther recovers in bed, with his wife, May by his side after an attempt on his life.



Walter Reuther walks in the front of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 1963.



Walter Reuther negotiates with General Motors in 1946.

Images from the Walter Reuther Exhibit Opening



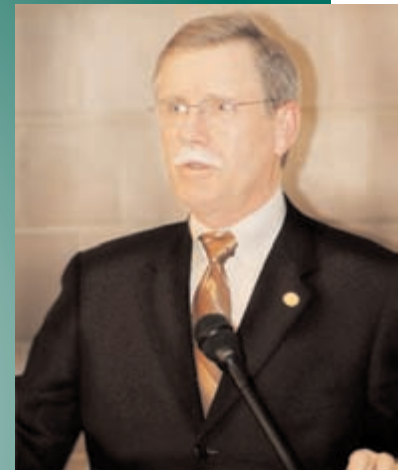
Theodore Reuther and Wayne State University's President Irvin Reid wait to speak.



Former UAW President Doug Fraser shares his stories about Walter Reuther, while Theodore Reuther, WSU President Irvin Reid, Reuther Library Director, Mike Smith, and UAW President Ron Gettelfinger look on.



The Reuther family poses as a group next to the statue of Walter Reuther. Left to Right: David, Theodore and his wife Patty, Sasha and his wife Sonya.



UAW President, Ron Gettelfinger, takes a break from negotiations with GM to speak at the event.

A guest enjoys the exhibit.



Reuther Library AV Archivist, Mary Wallace, and Library and Information Science Program (LISP) Director Stephen T. Bajjalay, pose with graduates of the LISP program who worked as interns at the Library and were pivotal in the creation of the "Reuther100" website. Left to right: Wallace, Megan Garza, Nick Ruest, Akilah Gates, Bajjalay, and Sharon Williams.



UAW Vice President, Bob King, United States Congressman, Sander Levin, and UAW Secretary-Treasurer, Elizabeth Bunn listen to the speeches about Walter Reuther.

Updates

The Labor Legacy Landmark Featured in Two New Books



The Michigan Labor Legacy Landmark in Detroit's Hart Plaza is featured as one of 52 U.S. public monuments in a new National Geographic book, *Etched in Stone*. The lavishly illustrated, oversize book includes three stunning photographs of the landmark. An accompanying essay describes the monument and how it honors labor's contributions to society through words and images. "The hard-won victories—a 40-hour work week, medical benefits, paid holidays and sick leave, and increased salaries among them – have benefited all of society, not just union members," declare the authors. The landmark is also featured as the cover photo in the new 10"x13" American Map Metro Detroit Street Atlas, which went on sale Sept. 30 in area bookstores.

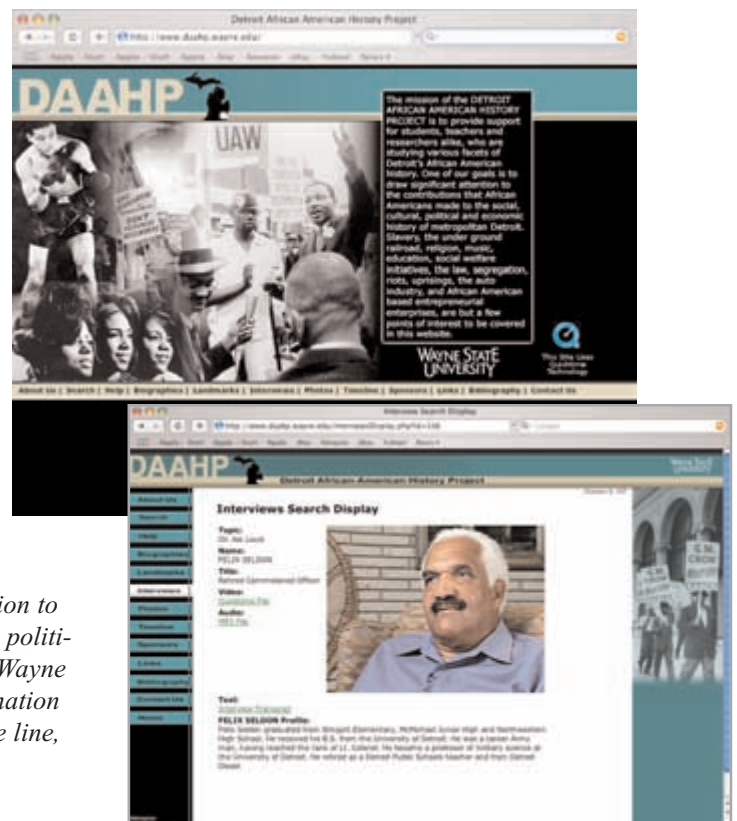
While the Landmark has received numerous accolades both locally and nationally, it faces serious challenges from vandalism and misuse by skateboarders. Several tiles have been destroyed or damaged, lettering on the central dais has been defaced, and lights have been broken. Repairs for the four-year-old Landmark could cost tens of thousands of dollars, and the Michigan Labor History Society is appealing for donations to help cover the costs. Contributions are tax-deductible and may be sent to: Michigan Labor History Society, c/o Walter P. Reuther Library, 5401 Cass Ave., Detroit MI 48202. ■

The Way it Was on the Detroit West Side, 1920-1950: An On-line Oral History Project

In association with the Detroit WestSiders, the Detroit African American History Project (DAAHP) and the Walter P. Reuther Library launched an on-line oral history project with 12 former residents of Detroit's Old West Side. This oral history project, sponsored by the Detroit WestSiders and entitled, *The Way it Was on the Detroit West Side, 1920-1950*, received funding from the Michigan Humanities Council, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

DAAHP formally launched these oral histories of the Detroit WestSiders on February 1, 2007 at the Reuther Library during Wayne State University's first African American History Month celebration of the year. In addition to the launching of the oral history project, the event featured an exhibit and essay contest winners, all of which illuminated the history of Detroit's West Side as it developed during a pivotal period of its history. The oral history interviews can be viewed and listened to on the DAAHP website at <http://www.daa hp.wayne.edu/index.html>.

DAAHP is an on-line resource designed to draw significant attention to the contributions that African Americans made to the social, cultural, political, and economic history of metropolitan Detroit. It is sponsored by Wayne State University's Walter P. Reuther Library and Computing & Information Technology. In addition to oral histories, DAAHP also includes a time line, selected bibliography and biographies, among other elements. ■



Audiovisual Department

1920s Newsreel Gets Restored through a Grant

The Walter P. Reuther Library is pleased to announce the restoration, duplication, and research-availability of one 16 mm WWJ Newsreel. The film series of 13 newsreels was originally produced by the Detroit News in the 1920s and edited onto compilation reels sometime in the 1940s. They contain various footage of events that took place in and around Detroit during the “Roaring 20s.” Among other things, the films show historic buildings being built, newsworthy events taking place, society events, and famous people visiting the Motor City. Because of their age and condition, to make the films available for research, the Reuther Library needed to restore, preserve, and make duplicates of the films. In order to do this, the Reuther Library applied for and received a National Film Preservation Grant to restore, duplicate, and make available for research, one of the 13 WWJ Films. The



Above: Notre Dame's head football coach, Knute Rockne, on a visit to Detroit.



Hoses are scattered about as Detroit firefighters attempt to battle a building blaze at Wayne and Woodbridge Streets.

Library hopes to receive more grants to continue the work on the rest on the films. VHS and DVD versions of the film are available for viewing. Call the Reuther Library's AV Department at 313-577-4024 for an appointment. ■



Building the foundation of the Book-Cadillac Hotel.

Reuther Library Endowment

The Reuther Library has established a permanent endowment to provide operating support for the future. In the new digital age, the Reuther will strive to continually collect and preserve the historical records of the American labor movement, modern urban affairs in metropolitan Detroit, and the history of Wayne State University. The endowment will assure that the Reuther is able to provide enhanced digital access to its collections, develop on-line and traveling exhibits and create other educational materials for students, the public, union members, as well as our patrons and researchers from around the world. Support is essential to maintaining the Reuther's reputation as a first-rate research institution and the pre-eminent labor archive in North American. Your gift is an investment in its future. ■

For more information, please contact:

Mike Smith, Director
Walter P. Reuther Library
Wayne State University
Detroit, Michigan 48202
313-577-0415
m.o.smith@wayne.edu

Or, visit our website at: www.reuther.wayne.edu

Retirement News



The Reuther Library Staff bids a fond farewell to Margaret Raucher who retired in September 2007 after serving as the Reuther Library's lead processing archivist. During her 20-year tenure she processed many of the archive's collections and quickly became the library's subject expert. Raucher did not spend all of her time processing, however, she earnestly took on other roles

within the library, including that of an exhibit curator, the coordinator of a backlog processing project, and even a stint as the interim associate director. She topped off her career with one final project that showed her dedication to women's issues. She completed the Tradeswomen's Oral History Project, a series of interviews with 19 women in a variety of trades conducted between 2004 and 2006. That collection is a wonderful enhancement to the Library's labor collections and collections on women. Raucher's knowledge, wit, and clever banter is what the staff will miss the most. The Library staff congratulates Margaret on her retirement and wishes her the best in her new phase of life. ■



For an up-to-date listing of Reuther Library events, log on to our website at
www.reuther.wayne.edu

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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

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