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Lasting Images At Teamsters' Convention

One day last week at the Teamster convention in Florida, two men were getting on an elevator, one a sergeant-at-arms, the other a delegate. Big men. The delegate — the smaller of the two — was asked his size. Six-feet-six, 350 pounds, he replied.

The image of a Teamster is a burly truck driver or warehouseman. Rough and ready. And definitely all man.

Maybe not much longer.

Among the fastest-growing groups in the International Brotherhood of Teamsters are nurses, airline workers, food processors, secretaries.

Of the IBT's 1.6 million members, some 400,000 are women.

One of the most memorable convention snapshots was of Vicki Saporta, a California Teamster, giving her acceptance speech Friday after being nominated for vice president.



Saporta

In 88 years, no woman has held national office in the IBT.

Saporta, director of organizing for the union, said she was told when hired in 1974 that "it was an experiment — if I was successful, it would open

doors for other women.

"Well, for the past 17 years, doors have been swinging open."

Saporta, running on the Shea slate, declared: "If we're paying more than lip service, if we're serious about including all our members, it is time we had a woman on the General Executive Board."

Men who booed as she rose listened as she spoke.

Teamsters may get a woman driver

Vicki Saporta has been truckin' for workers all her life

By Betty Pisk
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

When Vicki Saporta's eighth grade class visited the plant of a nearby mens-wear manufacturer, the other middle school students learned how suits were put together. But Miss Saporta, the daughter of a Rochester, N.Y., tailor, discovered the roots of her lifelong commitment to organized labor, what she calls "my gut and a sense of justice."

"I basically walked through and took apart [the operation]. I asked a lot of questions," she recalls. "By the end of the field trip, they were like, 'Who is this kid?'"

Today, Miss Saporta is the highest-ranking female Teamsters member in North America. As the union's director of organizing since 1983, she's relied on that gut feeling and a laser-like determination to help bring an uncountable number of new members into the union, from accountants to zoo keepers.

Now she wants to lead them. Miss Saporta, 39, is running for one of the five at-large vice presidential slots on the union's general executive board. And if she wins, it will be the first time in the Teamsters' 88-year history that a woman has helped guide this most unruly of labor unions.

To outsiders, the Teamsters' name is synonymous with burly, striking truckers or the missing Jimmy Hoffa, but that's not quite accurate anymore.

For starters, one-third of the 1.5 million-member International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen and Helpers of America is female, a group that is beginning to press its own specific concerns and issues.

For another, the union is cleaning



Vicki Saporta shakes hands and passes out literature outside D.C. Jail where

house under the purview of the Justice Department, which is intent on rooting generations of corruption and mob influence. In compliance with a Justice Department consent decree, the union is holding its first democratic elections of top officers with the participation of the rank-and-file members.

All of which makes Vicki A. Saporta — an Ivy League, charismatic and mediagenic woman — a

highly palatable addition to the old-boy executive board.

"It's hard to look at her and dredge out the Jimmy Hoffa jokes," says Jane Danowitz, executive director of the bipartisan Women's Campaign Fund and a friend of Miss Saporta's since 1975. Electing her "would give them a remodeled image... an image only a woman could give them."

Which is precisely the point



Teamsters represent many corrections workers. She seeks an at-large vice presidency in the union.

made by her biggest detractor, R.V. Durham, who is running for general president on another, all male, slate. In plain language, he calls her a token and says she was chosen because of her gender rather than for her accomplishments. Mr. Durham, 60, told reporters in June that Teamsters women are not ready for the big leagues, and should stay in "the farm teams."

"That token label doesn't stick to

me," she says, detailing her accomplishments within the union. "He's offended every woman Teamster in North America, from the nurse in Newburg, N.Y., to the cannery workers in California who have stood up to harassment and threats and walked picket lines and organized their workplaces!" she steams.

"That we've never had a woman on the board isn't right," says the candidate, frankly feminine and

trim in tailored suits and light make-up. "One third of our membership needs better representation."

If she is elected, her priorities are a renewed emphasis on organizing and contract negotiations; the pressing of women's issues; and grass-roots political organizing to back up DRIVE, the Teamsters' bipartisan \$10 million PAC, the largest

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VICKI

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in the country.

Miss Saporta is a savvy, deeply committed woman, capable of driving her arguments home with the same force and economy of a Teamsters carpenter. Collective bargaining, she says, is the only chance the worker has against corporations and multinationals "demanding concessions they don't really need."

She says, "This isn't about an extra 11 cents an hour, [but about] job security, self-respect and fair compensation."

She tells of a stalled contract negotiation in which management wanted union drivers to accept a \$150 a week pay cut. Miss Saporta targeted the corporate officers' neighborhoods and churches, distributing fliers with the Teamsters' message.

"You bet we took this to a personal level," she says of the union's eventual victory. "When you threaten a livelihood, you're making it personal. We told their neighbors exactly what kind of people they lived next to."

Although trucking and warehousing is still the backbone of the union's membership, the union is making inroads into service industries, health care and high-tech workers, clerical and white-collar positions. Mickey Mouse is a Teamster. So are the corrections officers at the D.C. Jail and the flight attendants on numerous airlines.

Miss Saporta has been involved with the IBT all her adult life. After graduating from Cornell University's prestigious school of industrial and labor relations in 1974, she abandoned thoughts of a law career and badgered the union into creating a full-time position for her. They were skeptical about using a college graduate to organize, rather than lobby, but relented in the force of that soon-to-be-famous determination.

"They said this was an experiment," she says, smiling at the memory of her two-year organizing stint in Burlingame, Calif. "They wanted



Photo by Kevin T. Gilbert The Washington Times

■ "It is possible that if I don't win, I won't be there. I took that risk. But I didn't do this to lose. I plan to win."

— Vicki Saporta

away from her Northwest Washington home some 200 nights out of 365. "You're up for days on end. You have

supposed to be relaxation.

"I'd be racing this boat in the distance, and it didn't know I was racing it, and well, I've stopped that now," she laughs. She says it's natural, having raced for Cornell's sailing team. Her friends speak of her cool head in squalls and intuitive skill on the water.

"She is just a good a sailor as she is an organizer," says Caroline Jacobson. "It's her major escape. I've seen this incredible difference in her before and after she sails. She's like a whole different person."

But the campaign schedule has gotten in the way. "This year I haven't even seen the boat," she says with a shrug. "It could be sunk."

Miss Saporta is pursuing the vice president's position — which pays \$75,000 a year — at her old organizing pace: hitting a city for a day or two at a time, leafleting, speaking, pressing union flesh. It's taken a toll. Her voice is hoarse and she's on antibiotics for the cold that hangs on with Teamster-like temerity.

In the past, appointed delegates would vote every five years for a new general executive board, leaving the rank-and-file out of the electoral process completely. Candidates point out that the new system means campaigning in factories and job sites across America, Canada, Guam and Puerto Rico to a membership that makes this larger than 26 Senate races. So far, says Walter Shea, who is running with Miss Saporta for general president, the five-person slate has raised and spent some \$300,000. He hopes to double that as the campaign swings into its final weeks.

Mr. Shea, who has served as top adviser to the last five Teamsters presidents, says Miss Saporta has an excellent chance of being elected, independent of the slate.

"There are over 300,000 women and she's the only female at-large vice president in the running," he says. Mr. Shea denies the tokenism charge, but couches his praise of Miss Saporta in terms of gender.

"She's the most qualified woman in this union," he says. "She's very formidable. I thought about the other women in this union, and she

to see if a woman could do it."

She lost her first campaign.

Miss Saporta was charged with organizing the concession and hotel workers at Yosemite National Park. She and her team worked day and night for 10 weeks, but it wasn't sufficient. Afterward, she says, people were fired — illegally — for their organizing efforts, losing their jobs and their park housing.

"It's not like you can just find another Yosemite to live in," she says, tearing up at the 17-year-old memory over lunch in a Capitol Hill restaurant. She says she still feels personally responsible.

She won the second battle, she recalls. And the third. "But the ones you win never make up for the ones you lost."

She says she cannot guess her track record, but offers, "I'm the director of organizing because I'm good. I've found my niche."

In 1985, Esquire magazine included her in its issue devoted to the 116 people under 40 who are changing the nation.

"I've watched her work and there are few people around who have her enthusiasm and electricity," says Carolyn Jacobson, director of public relations for the international Bakers Union. "It's amazing to see her in action. She has charisma. It's like — and I mean this in a positive way — she's a one-woman show."

"In person, she's not like that. It's something that happens to her in public," says Ron Seeber, associate dean of the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell, who has known her professionally for a decade. "Vicki always has a purpose, and she can really turn herself on" at the pulpit.

Organizing is a calling for Miss Saporta, but work can be grueling.

"I was organizing in North Carolina when [the 1979 Sally Field movie] "Norma Rae" came out, and I'll tell you, we had much more exciting things going on. I've had people point guns at me at 4 o'clock in the morning. You get threatening phone calls. People try to run you over when you're leafleting.

"Organizing is like a war," says Miss Saporta, who for years was

to outwork the employer, and he's got every advantage. After a while you have to wonder what kind of energy you're actually running on."

The organizer says her body is long-accustomed to getting less than five hours of sleep a night. She wears her silvering black hair in an attractive, low-maintenance style and has organized herself to live out of suitcases.

"You get this feeling in the pit of your stomach if you have to get on one more plane, check into one more hotel," she sighs. "But the work I enjoy doing is with the rank-and-file members. You can't be effective if you're not out there in the field."

Being home only two nights a week has strong-armed her love life.

"Most of the men that I have met in my life are initially attracted to me because I'm independent," she says carefully. "But then they want to get married and they say, 'You'll give this all up and stay home,' and of course I won't. As you get older and you get even more independent, it becomes harder and harder to make the compromises necessary to get married."

Her mother says this single-mindedness was always there.

"She was always good at what she did," homemaker Lea Saporta says of her oldest daughter. "If she was selling Girl Scout cookies, she sold the most cookies. Our temple, Light of Israel, would sell raffle tickets and they were amazed at how much she sold."

"I think I've always been an over-achiever," Miss Saporta says. "I've always gone the extra . . . whatever. For me, that has always paid off. It's not lost on the rank-and-file, either."

Mrs. Saporta, who says she is proud of her daughter and no longer worries "too much" about her, says "she feels that she can make a difference for people by getting them a contract, medical care, whatever they deserve. She wants these people to have good things, I think that's what drives her."

It's clear that something does.

Even out on the Chesapeake in her 30-foot sloop, the "Sail Away," Miss Saporta says her competitive streak can get in the way of what is

far outdistanced the others."

Ballots don't go out until Nov. 8, but Teamsters watchers give Miss Saporta a good chance of getting onto the board — gender notwithstanding. One union official, whose job forbids him from commenting on specific candidates, speculated that her organizing efforts have made her a virtual brand name to many of the rank-and-file members.

If Vicki Saporta is elected with more votes than the other four at-large vice presidents, she will be No. 3 in the Teamsters hierarchy, a position of clout and respect.

But if she doesn't win a seat, her organizing job of 17 years will be endangered. The other candidates for general president have made clear that they will probably appoint their own people to key positions.

"It is possible that if I don't win, I won't be there," she says. "I took that risk. But I didn't do this to lose. I plan to win."

Running against the odds

Woman faces uphill fight for Teamster vote

By SANDRA LIVINGSTON

PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

Vicki Saporta faces a daunting challenge: She is campaigning for an office that represents 1.6 million people in the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico and Guam. Yet her war chest is largely financed by sales of T-shirts and buttons.

She is seeking to break into a "club" that has never had a female member.

And she is running in a first election where voters have a tough time naming more than two of the 59 candidates.

Welcome to the campaign for the executive board of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

The election for 17 top union posts will be in December. Meanwhile, candidates are meeting with workers in union halls and outside plant gates.

Few seem to spend as much time on the road as Saporta, 39, the union's national organizing director. She once spent 250 days a year on the road and now thrives on 19-hour days short on food and long on visits to members. She is one of two women running for vice president. The other woman is Diana Kilnoury from Vancouver, British Columbia.

"I love it," Saporta said during a recent campaign swing through Northeast Ohio. "I'm an organizer and I understand what it takes to get ballots back."

Yet predicting the turnout or outcome of this election is nearly impossible. Never before have rank-and-file Teamsters chosen their top leaders.

Many within the union believe 400,000 to 500,000 of the union's 1.6 million members will mail back their ballots. Until votes are



PHOTOS BY STEPHEN

Vicki Saporta, one of two women campaigning for vice president of the Teamsters, met workers in Solon recently.

counted, the outcome of this race is anyone's guess.

The election was mandated under a 1989 consent agreement between Teamster leaders and the federal government, which sought to rid the union of the influence of organized crime. Included in that agreement was the upcoming government-supervised secret-ballot election.

Not surprisingly, all candidates are calling for a new direction for the union — one that spends money on members rather than private jets.

Saporta is running with Walter Shea, an international vice president who served as executive assistant to four Teamster presidents. Shea is one of three presidential candidates voted onto the ballot at the union's convention in June.

Saporta is confident of a victory — for the slate and for herself.

An intense woman, Saporta ticks off a rapid-fire list of changes she wants to make at the nation's largest union:

- Hire 100 new organizers to fan out across the country.

- Develop a strong membership that is active at the grassroots.

- Use comprehensive campaigns that increase the points the union can push to pressure a company during contract talks.

For example: sending union members to distribute leaflets about contract problems in an executive's neighborhood.

"Only when you demonstrate you can hurt the employer, do you really end up getting respect and tipping the balance back in your favor," she said. "We have an \$87 million

annual budget. We are a match for any national or international corporation."

Saporta has spent more than 17 years as a Teamster organizer, the last eight as the union's organizing director. She was selected for the director's job by the late union president, Jackie Presser. Saporta said Presser initially hesitated about hiring a woman, fearing men wouldn't take her seriously.

But he changed his mind after getting strong praise for her work from other union officials, said Saporta, adding: "He liked my moxie, as he called it, and the fact that I spoke my mind."

She estimated about 30,000 Teamsters have been brought into the union under her direction, including flight attendants at Northwest Airlines who Saporta personally

organized.

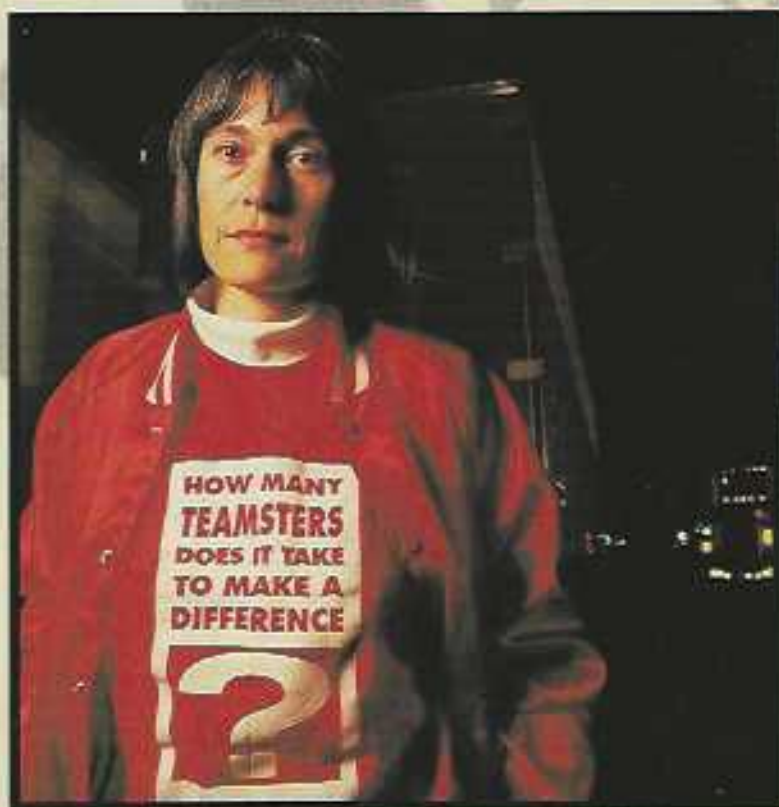
Her campaign for vice president focuses on the general changes she would make, the need to bring a woman into the union's top echelons, and the need to talk about such issues as day care, pay equity, and family leaves.

"Women have made a contribution to this union," Saporta recently told to a group of Teamsters working at American Consumer Products Inc. in Solon. "It's about time you had a voice on the executive board."

Several women workers said they hadn't heard of Saporta but would likely vote for her.

"I feel like women should be represented," said Minnie Brown, a plant worker. Then turning to Saporta, she added, "Good luck from one woman to another."

POLITICALLY CORRECT TEAMSTERS



★
DEMOCRACY
COMES TO
JIMMY HOFFA'S
UNION

By Peter Carlson

Teamsters VP
candidate
Vicki Saporta

TEAMSTER

The largest, richest and historically most corrupt labor union in America is counting the ballots from its first free election this week—and Jimmy Hoffa is probably spinning in his grave

GLASNOST

IN THE COOL SHADE OF A SPREADING OAK TREE, TEAMSTERS' sons tossed Hula-Hoops over a plastic elephant's nose while Teamsters' wives painted butterflies and hearts on the faces of Teamsters' daughters. A few yards away, UPS drivers were barbecuing a huge quantity of pork while a Teamster drove a horse-drawn cart full of giggling kids out across the sun-dappled meadow.

Doug Mims, a truck driver from Atlanta, watched all this and smiled. "Four years ago," he said, "you wouldn't have been able to hold a rally like this without lining the place with armed guards."

Back then, and for decades before that, Teamsters dissidents didn't meet without wondering if they'd be attacked by union goons. Mims began fighting the leadership of his Atlanta local more than a decade ago and, he says, "they brushed me off like a horsefly." But now, a kind of government-enforced democracy has come to the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. In 1988, the Justice Department hit the union with a racketeering suit charging that it had made a "devil's pact with La Cosa Nostra." Fearful of a trial, the Teamsters' leaders agreed to permit a court-appointed administrator to run the first free election of high officials in the 88-year history of the largest, richest—and historically most corrupt—labor union in America.

Now, Mims is running for vice president of the union on a reform slate headed by dissident leader Ron Carey. Standing in this sunny farmyard outside Memphis, he gazed out over a cheerful crowd of several hundred Teamsters, most of them wearing bright red T-shirts that said "Vote for Teamster Pride and Honesty: Ron Carey for General President."

And then a woman strolled by, walking a little white potbellied pig named Ghost, who wore a coat that read "Vote Carey."

An emcee summoned the crowd to the makeshift bandstand for the afternoon's entertainment. First, a couple of local sheriffs led out three police dogs, who demonstrated their ability to sniff out cardboard boxes that smelled like dope. Then Miss Memphis and two other local beauties—all three clad in red

BY PETER CARLSON
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES MCGOON



OPPOSITE PAGE: RON CAREY, A LONGTIME TEAMSTER DISSIDENT LEADER IN NEW YORK, TAKES HIS PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN TO A UNION RALLY OUTSIDE MEMPHIS FEATURING FAMILY FUN AND ENTERTAINMENT. RIGHT: THE LATE PRESIDENT JIMMY HOFFA IS WELCOMED BY HOBSTER ANTHONY PROVENZANO, AT HIS LEFT, TO A 1959 CONVENTION IN NEW JERSEY.



mini-dresses, red high heels and long red gloves—sang "Your Love is Lifting Me Higher." A country band played "Memphis, Tennessee" while Teamsters' wives and children did a cakewalk. And then it was time for the campaign speeches.

As the crowd chanted "Car-ey! Car-ey! Car-ey!," Ron Carey bounded onto the bandstand. President of a Long Island Teamsters local for 23 years, Carey has been a symbol of reform in the union since 1978, when he was portrayed in Steven Brill's book *The Teamsters* as an honest, hard-working man in a union dominated by crooks and hacks. A bulldog of an orator, Carey, who earns less than \$60,000 a year, immediately ripped into the union leadership's bloated salaries and private jets.

"They haven't served your needs!" he bellowed in his high-pitched New York accent. "They've only served the needs of the top leadership. Look at their salaries! Our top leaders—who are now saying they're reformers—they're the very same people who brought this union to the position it's in today!"

"Amen!" somebody said.

"The members are entitled to a clean union! An honest union! That's what this campaign's about. It's about getting your union back! And don't let anybody kid you, they're holding on to this like you wouldn't believe! They won't let go of the cookie jar!"

The Teamsters stood and cheered. "Car-ey! Car-ey! Car-ey!"

THIS ISN'T THE WAY TEAMSTERS TRADITIONALLY CHOOSE their presidents. Historically, a few members of the Mafia have had more say in the matter than the 1.6 million union members.

Jimmy Hoffa, the legendary Teamster boss, rose to power with the help of mobsters, who provided him the muscle needed

to battle company goons in return for a piece of the action. In 1967, when Hoffa went to jail for jury tampering and mail fraud, he handpicked a successor—Frank Fitzsimmons, his former errand boy, a man he once described as "a guy I took off a truck." In 1981, when Fitzsimmons died, Cleveland mobsters Milton "Maishie" Rockman and John "Peanuts" Trocolone traveled to New York to persuade Anthony "Fat Tony" Salerno, boss of the Genovese crime family, to support Roy Williams, a mob-controlled Teamster vice president, for the union's top job. Fat Tony put out the word, and the union's executive board dutifully complied. In 1983, when Williams was sentenced to prison for attempting to bribe Democratic Sen. Howard Cannon of Nevada, Maishie and Peanuts again went to see Fat Tony. This time, they picked Jackie Presser, and the executive board again concurred.

We know these things, and many more, because Presser, who died under indictment in 1988, was not only a mob-connected Teamster boss, he was also an FBI informant. And Williams, facing 10 years behind bars, turned stool pigeon, testifying from prison about three decades of mob control of the union.

In 1988, the Justice Department used the Presser and Williams revelations—plus evidence from many other sources—to file a RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) suit against the union's 18-man executive board and two dozen mobsters with such nicknames as "The Snake," "The Nutcracker," "Matty the Horse," "Jackie the Lackey" and, of course, Maishie, Peanuts and Fat Tony. The 112-page racketeering suit detailed 30 years of Teamsters' corruption: the theft of union funds, the "sweetheart contracts" with mob businesses, the casinos financed by union loans to the mob, the "grossly excessive

The Justice Department refused to back off. Soon, panic was spreadin



PRESIDENTS PAST: FROM LEFT, TEAMSTERS BOSS DAVE BECK LEAVES U.S. DISTRICT COURT IN WASHINGTON AFTER SURRENDERING ON CHARGES OF INCOME-TAX EVASION IN 1959; AN AILING ROY WILLIAMS, CONVICTED IN 1982 OF CONSPIRING TO BRIBE A U.S. SENATOR, IS WHEELED INTO A CHICAGO COURT, WHERE HE RECEIVED A 10-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE; JACKIE PRESSER, WHO WAS FACING CRIMINAL CHARGES FOR UNION-RELATED CORRUPTION AND WAS SECRETLY TALKING TO THE FBI ABOUT HIS MOBSTER TIES, IS CARRIED ON A GILDED SEDAN CHAIR INTO A 1984 TEAMSTERS CONVENTION EXTRAVAGANZA AT A LAS VEGAS HOTEL.

salaries" given to the Teamsters' top brass and their relatives. For 10 gruesome pages, the suit recounted how union members who fought corruption were beaten, shot, bombed and, in one case, stuffed dead into the trunk of a car.

The union was, the lawsuit concluded, "a captive labor organization, which has been infiltrated, dominated, exploited and controlled by La Cosa Nostra figures." The lawsuit demanded that the Teamsters be placed under federal trusteeship.

The union leaders fought the lawsuit with their enormous powers of wealth and political influence. They hired Hill and Knowlton, the giant PR firm, to rally opposition to the lawsuit, and they denounced the government in full-page ads in 15 major newspapers. Backed by the clout of their political action committee fund—by far the largest in America—they persuaded 246 members of the House of Representatives to sign a letter to Edwin Meese, who was then attorney general, protesting the lawsuit. They also persuaded four presidential candidates—Jesse Jackson, Jack Kemp, Al Haig and Paul Simon—to address a union-sponsored rally against the RICO suit.

But the Justice Department refused to back off. Soon, panic was spreading in the "Marble Palace"—the union's huge, ornate headquarters on Capitol Hill—as various Teamster bosses, looking to protect themselves, started trying to cut deals with the feds.

Finally, at 1 o'clock on the morning of March 14, 1989—the day the trial was scheduled to begin—the union leadership capitulated, signing what is known legally as a "consent decree" but could more aptly be described as an unconditional surrender. Under the decree, three court-appointed officials, led by

former federal judge Frederick B. Lacey, were given unprecedented powers over the union: They could oust corrupt Teamster officers, audit union books, veto improper expenditures and oversee two direct secret ballot elections of top union officers, one in 1991 and another in 1996.

Not only that, but the union had to pay for it all.

Since then, the court-appointed overseers have charged 135 Teamster officials—including five vice presidents—with offenses ranging from embezzlement to threatening union members to associating with mobsters. The union fought mightily to defend itself, spending more than \$12 million of its members' money to appeal various cases all the way to the Supreme Court. But it lost and lost and lost. By the fall of 1991, 20 officials had been permanently barred from the union, 32 had resigned, and 24 had been suspended. Many others—including 11 vice presidents and William McCarthy, who had succeeded Presser as president—had announced their intentions to retire at the end of this year.

The party was over. The Teamsters' old, autocratic system had crumbled as quickly and unexpectedly as the Soviet empire. In its place arose a raucous, contentious, colorful and vividly American variety of glasnost.

WHEN OUTGOING PRESIDENT BILLY MCCARTHY STEPPED TO the podium at the Teamsters convention in Orlando last June, the hall erupted in a cacophony of boos and catcalls.

"I don't know why the hell you all boo," McCarthy grumbled when the din finally receded. "I'm getting out anyway."

It was nothing personal. The delegates also booed the rest of

the 'Marble Palace,' the union's huge, ornate headquarters on Capitol Hill.

'For the first time in the history of this union,' Saporta said, holding o

the union leaders as well as the court-appointed administrators. They even booed down a videotaped greeting from President Bush, who had been endorsed, like Reagan and Nixon before him, by the Teamsters' resolutely Republican top brass.

It was a feisty crowd, a far cry from previous Teamsters conventions, which were about as democratic and spontaneous as the famous Nazi rally at Nuremberg. At the 1986 convention, for example, Jackie Presser, who had been indicted for embezzling union funds a week earlier, was carried in a gilded sedan chair into a \$648,000 party in his honor by four muscle-bound men dressed as Roman centurions.

But there was one big difference this year: The 1,935 delegates were not handpicked local leaders; they were members chosen by secret ballots in federally monitored elections. Glee-fully, they passed proposals that had been hooted out of previous conventions. They voted to cap the salaries of the top leaders—some of whom make more than \$500,000 a year—at a slightly more proletarian \$225,000. They voted to sell off the "Teamster Air Force"—the fleet of four jets used as airborne limousines by the union leadership. Then they took up the issue of strike benefits, which had been set at a measly \$45 a week by Teamster bosses who preferred collecting dues to paying benefits. First, one delegate proposed raising the benefits to \$100. Another arose to suggest \$150, and a third saw that bet and raised it to \$200. "Tell the members we're going to pay you \$200 to win the goddam strike!" bellowed John Morris, the Philadelphia Teamsters boss. Amid raucous cheering, the delegates did just that.

At previous conventions, the union's executive board, acting like the old Politburo, would present its candidates for president, secretary-treasurer and the 17 vice presidents, and then

the delegates would dutifully anoint them. But this year, there were six announced candidates for president, and three of them received enough delegate votes to appear on the members' ballots this fall. The biggest vote-getter was R.V. Durham, 60, currently a vice president and McCarthy's personal choice for the office. Finishing second was Walter Shea, 63, who was also a vice president until McCarthy fired him after Shea announced that he would run against Durham. The third was Carey, 55, the "outsider" candidate backed by the dissident group Teamsters for a Democratic Union.

In mid-November, the court-appointed election officials mailed out ballots to nearly 1.6 million Teamsters—more eligible voters than in each of 23 states. This Tuesday, December 10, the ballots are due back in Washington and the vote count will begin.

Meanwhile, the candidates have hit the road, wooing Teamsters scattered in more than 600 locals from Guam to Newfoundland, from the Yukon to Puerto Rico. It's a full-blown, media-age political campaign, complete with handshaking, promise-making, wonderfully nasty personal invective and attack ads that would make even Roger Ailes blush.

"YOU CAN'T DO THAT," THE GUARD SAID.

"Yes, I can," Vicki Saporta replied, and she continued handing her campaign leaflets to truck drivers in the parking lot of a UPS depot outside Cleveland.

"Hi, Vicki Saporta," she told them as they hustled into work. "I'm running for vice president of the international union. Appreciate your support."

The guard watched this, then walked inside and picked up a

THE TEAMSTERS CAMPAIGN: RIGHT, PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL R.V. DURHAM, FOURTH FROM LEFT, THE SILVER-HAIRED UNION VICE PRESIDENT FROM NORTH CAROLINA, JOINS A GATHERING OF TEAMSTER SHOP STEWARDS AND OFFICIALS AT A NEW YORK HOTEL. UPPER MIDDLE, VICKI SAPORTA BRINGS HER CAMPAIGN TO BECOME THE TEAMSTERS' FIRST FEMALE VICE PRESIDENT TO A PHILADELPHIA UNION LOCAL. LOWER MIDDLE, WALTER SHEA, A FORMER UNION VICE PRESIDENT, CAMPAIGNS FOR THE PRESIDENCY AT A PHILADELPHIA UNION HALL WHERE MEMBERS OF TEAMSTERS LOCAL 107, FAR RIGHT, BLOW WHISTLES IN SUPPORT OF HIS CANDIDACY.



a leaflet, 'we have an opportunity to elect a woman to a top position.'

phone. A few minutes later, a guy in a suit emerged and told Saporta she'd have to leave.

"I do this at UPS barns all over the country," she said. Then she walked away to hand out another leaflet. "Hi, Vicki Saporta . . ."

The guy in the suit watched for a while, then walked inside.

"Hey, I do this for a living," Saporta said with a shrug. Small and slender, she doesn't look like a Teamster organizer, but she's been one since 1974, when she graduated from the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations. Now the union's director of organizing, she's among the top women in the labor movement. During her 17 years of recruiting nurses, flight attendants and factory workers to join the Teamsters, she's had countless confrontations with guards and guys in suits, and they don't scare her. "You seize the ground and they call the cops," she said. "By the time the cops arrive, you've talked to 200 more people."

The guy in the suit returned with several other guys in suits. They politely suggested that Saporta leaflet off company property. She politely declined and kept leafleting.

Half an hour later, a cop drove up. "One, you leave the property," he said brusquely. "Or, two, you get arrested."

"But . . ."

The cop didn't want to hear any buts. "You're gonna leave now!"

So she did. Slowly. Leafleting all the way.

"Sometimes it's good to get thrown out—it makes you the underdog," she said as she stood on the sidewalk, waving to the truck drivers as they drove past.

A few minutes later, she was riding to her next campaign

stop. "You know, there's a certain personality type that becomes a cop," she said. Then she stopped abruptly. "Don't write that—we represent policemen."

It's true. Today, the Teamsters represent police officers, prison guards, teachers, nurses, flight attendants, zookeepers, high school principals, even the man inside the Mickey Mouse suit at Disney World. These days, barely 10 percent of the members are truck drivers, and the union's demographics have changed: Nearly a third of the members—more than 400,000—are women. Saporta, who is running on Walter Sbea's slate, is one of two female vice-presidential candidates hoping to become the first women ever to sit on the Teamsters' executive board. The other is Diana Kilmury, a Vancouver truck driver running on the Carey slate.

"For the first time in the history of this union," Saporta said, holding out one of her leaflets, "we have an opportunity to elect a woman to a top position."

She was standing in the warehouse of a book and magazine distributor in Cleveland, talking to a woman who was carrying a huge bundle of magazines. The woman charged past her, trying to catch up to a spot on a fast-moving conveyor belt. She finally reached the spot, piled the magazines on it, then grabbed another bundle and did it again. "You can talk," she said to Saporta as she kept working. "I'm listening."

"It's the first time we have an opportunity to elect a woman," Saporta repeated. "I'd appreciate your support."

"I will, I will," the woman said, still hustling down the line. "What's your name again?"

It was a grim, noisy place piled with boxes full of paperback
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TEAMSTERS

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books and magazines—Reader's Digest, People, Family Circle, Hustler. And all around the room, workers—most of them women, many of them single mothers—were making a living piling bundles on a conveyor belt that kept them constantly running. To these people, the Teamsters union is not a symbol of corruption, it's the organization whose bargaining clout keeps them above the poverty line. "We're up to \$10 an hour," said one. "If the union wasn't here, we'd be getting five."

Escorted by a business agent from the local union, Saporta went downstairs to a smoky little lunchroom decorated with posters advertising the paperbacks the company distributes. One poster contained a smiling photo of Jackie Presser, the late Teamster boss. It was an ad for James Neff's book *Mobbed Up: Jackie Presser's High-Wire Life in the Teamsters, the Mafia and the FBI*. Across the room, four Teamster women were taking their morning break, sipping sodas and smoking cigarettes.

Saporta introduced herself and started campaigning. "This is the first chance we have to elect our top leaders—and the first chance to elect a woman. There are 400,000 women in this union, and it's long overdue that we had some representation."

The women nodded in agreement. "It's 1991," Saporta continued. "It's time we put our issues on the front burner of this union—child care, pay equity, family and medical leave. . . ."

When she finished her speech, Saporta asked if there were any questions.

"Where are the other candidates?" one woman asked. "Don't the others plan on winning?"

"I'm a member of Local 507, and there are no women business agents," another woman said. "I know back in the old days, you needed muscle. But we need brains now. And women have brains."

Up on the wall, Jackie Presser was still smiling. But his union was changing right before his eyes.

VICKI SAPORTA DOESN'T LIKE TO TALK about it—especially not to Teamster voters or newspaper reporters—but Walter Shea, the man at the top of her ticket, is not exactly a fresh new face of reform for the Teamsters.

Shea served as chief aide to every Teamster president since Hoffa. That résumé is both his qualification and his curse. After all, two of those presidents, Hoffa and Williams, went to prison, and a third, Presser, died while under indictment. Where was Shea all that time?

"I was doing all the work they should

have been doing," he said, sounding a little peeved at the question. He was sitting in the back room of a Philadelphia Teamsters hall, the scene of a raucous rally in support of his candidacy. "I wasn't involved with their troubles—Presser's troubles, Roy's troubles, Hoffa's troubles. I worked. I did the things they should have been doing. I had the two phones in my ear every day, talking to people, meeting with people, settling trade union business. I talked to those guys who went to jail. I said, 'Hey, what happened, Jimmy? What's all this stuff about jury tampering? What's all this stuff about mail fraud?' Roy, what's all this shit with bribery?" He said, "It's not true, I'm gonna be exonerated." Same thing with Presser. All right, fine. So I went back to work. . . ."

When Shea talks about his old bosses, you wonder why he worked for them. "Fitzsimmons was lazy and played golf," he said. "Roy Williams hated and was ill-equipped for the job. . . . Presser was not the guy for the job. He was a bad and evil person. . . ."

His conclusion: "We've had some problems topside, but I'm not one of those people. I've got no excess baggage. I don't have any problems with me criminally or I wouldn't be here, believe me."

He does, however, have some problems with some of his running mates. One of his candidates for vice president—Joseph "Joe T" Trerotola, the 82-year-old boss of the New York City Teamsters—withdrawed from the race (and from the union) rather than contest the allegation of "deliberately failing to investigate" mobsters in his union. Meanwhile, last August, Shea's candidate for secretary-treasurer, Danny Ligurotis, the \$442,000-a-year Chicago Teamster boss, shot and killed his 36-year-old son, who was on the union payroll for \$110,000, in the basement of the Teamster City building. Ligurotis, who told police that he was acting in self-defense, has not been charged with any crime, and he remains the No. 2 man on the Shea ticket.

To Shea, the Teamsters' gangster image is wildly exaggerated. "We've been tinted and stained with the same thing we've been tinted and stained with for 30 years—that we're a corrupt organization," he said. "Well, we have people who are corrupt in this union, as we have people corrupt in every walk of life. So what? What the hell did they do to Boesky's firm? Did they put them under a civil RICO suit? We get it. We're the ones who get the stigma."

Plenty of Teamsters would agree with Shea on that, and nearly 500 of them—shop stewards from Philadelphia—were packed into a smoke-filled auditorium a few yards away. Most of them wore Teamsters windbreakers, and many also

wore Teamsters caps and shirts and buttons and belt buckles. They were cheering, stomping their feet and blowing little whistles. The place sounded like a World Series game after a home team home run.

"We need a hard-nose, hard-hittin' union," John Morris bellowed.

"Yeah!" the crowd yelled back. "We need a union that'll stand tall and support \$200 strike benefits!"

"Give 'em hell, John!"

A burly, bald-headed man whose right hand was mangled in a childhood accident outside a coal mine, Morris, 65, the much-loved Pennsylvania Teamster leader, is a union orator in the pound-the-podium-and-bellow style of such legendary labor leaders as Big Bill Haywood and John L. Lewis. Running for vice president on the Shea slate—which is dominated by Northern big-city Teamster bosses—he ripped into Shea's opponent, R.V. Durham, who comes out of a rural local in North Carolina.

"The big cities are different than the Southern right-to-work states," he yelled. "We give 'em their strength! It's us that puts the power into 'em! It's us that puts the fear of God into the employers!"

"Awright, John!" The crowd screamed and blew their whistles.

"You can't have a ridge runner or a stump jumper or a pissant or a pecker-wood runnin' this union!"

"John-ny! John-ny! John-ny!"

Morris introduced the man he called "your next president," and Walter Shea found himself in the unenviable position of trying to follow the Mount Vesuvius of labor oratory. Shea opted to go for nostalgia, evoking the glories of the golden age of Teamster history, back in the days before the indictments and the RICO suit, before the concessionary contracts of the '80s, before trucking deregulation decimated the union, back when the Teamsters had 2.2 million members and organized labor represented more than 30 percent of the country's work force, instead of the current 15 percent.

"We have to get ourselves in a position where we are the force we once were with the employers," Shea said. "And you can't do that with broken-down leaders. . . ."

AMONG THE MORE UNEXPECTED AND entertaining byproducts of the RICO suit and the Teamster election is the transformation of the union's monthly magazine from a predictably dull house organ into one of America's most bizarre and schizophrenic publications.

Before the RICO suit, the International Teamster, like most labor magazines, was filled with self-congratulatory stories illustrated by photos of union bigwigs shaking hands with each other or giving

plaques to each other or delivering speeches to each other. Today, the first half of the magazine remains much the same—President McCarthy's basset-like countenance appears about half a dozen times in each issue—but the second half is, well, different. There, Lacey, the court-appointed administrator, reports on his activities in drily legal but nonetheless fascinating prose:

"... The Investigations Officer has charged Michael L. Boano, the Vice President of Local Union 377 in Youngstown, Ohio, with ... violating Article XIX, section 6(b)(6); to wit, On September 12, 1990, he displayed a handgun and pointed it at a fellow member at a meeting of his local..."

"... [William] Lickert, Sr., President of Local 205, was charged with: making 'bomb threats' to an old age home in an effort to settle a labor dispute; embezzling from his Local; causing improper loans to himself..."

"... Mr. [Robert J.] Feeney was charged with taking part in a scheme, while president of Local 11, to extort money from lunch truck caterers in New Jersey through violence, threats of violence and claims of police corruption..."

"Mr. [Charles 'Chuckie'] O'Brien is charged as follows... To wit, on or about August 15, 1987, you knowingly incurred unauthorized charges on the American Express card account of Teamsters Local 769 in the amount of approximately \$12,187 to charter a private Lear jet..."

Lacey even used the pages of the magazine to reveal how McCarthy had hired Windsor Graphics, a company owned by his son-in-law, to print the magazine at a cost of \$300,000 a month. "I concluded that in actuality, Windsor really was not the lowest bidder," Lacey wrote. "Given all this, I decided to veto future expenditures to Windsor..."

Not surprisingly, Lacey's reports drove the Teamster leaders up the wall, and they fought mightily against them. They asked the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn the section of the consent decree that authorized Lacey's articles, but the court declined. They refused to print the names of union officials charged by the court-appointed investigator, but a federal judge overruled them. They announced that they would turn the monthly magazine into a quarterly, but the judge vetoed that too. Finally, they were reduced to leaving Lacey's reports off the magazine's table of contents, presumably in the hopes that the members wouldn't find them.

When the Teamsters' presidential race began, the magazine was further enlivened by page after page of campaign ads, some of them wonderfully vicious. An ad

for Carey portrayed Durham arm in arm with a convict in prison garb and a mobster holding an Uzi. An ad for Durham portrayed Carey with the word "Scab" scrawled across his face. An ad for Shea portrayed Durham with the word "Management" stamped across his face. An ad for Durham claimed Shea hadn't paid his union dues, and a Shea ad responded, "Durham Lied!" And Jack Cox, running for vice president on the Shea slate, used his ad to attack the current president: "Billy McCarthy is a liar, a traitor and a heartless son of a bitch..."

But the ad that really amused rank-and-file Teamsters—particularly those who'd been reading Lacey's reports—didn't attack anybody. At least not anybody in particular. An ad for Carey, it was a photograph of three pigs with their snouts buried deep in a trough full of greenbacks. The copy read: "They're Feasting On Your Dues!"

R.V. DURHAM HATES THAT AD. HE absolutely detests it. Although it didn't mention him, he takes it as a personal attack and denounces it at every campaign stop. "Unfortunately, we're involved in a very negative campaign, a despicable campaign in which the opposition has portrayed me and my family as hogs at the trough..."

Attacking that ad is about as passionate as Durham gets out on the stump. He is not a firebrand or a spellbinding orator. A gray-haired grandfather in bifocals and a blue blazer, he speaks in a soft, low-key monotone that leaves no room for applause. He is—as his old colleague and new opponent Walter Shea says—"a very bland person."

His presidential campaign is a bit bland too, at least when compared with his rivals'. While Carey's Nashville barbecue was a folksy carnival and Shea's Philadelphia speech a boisterous pep rally, Durham's recent meeting with shop stewards in Manhattan was sedate, almost bureaucratic. It was held in a ballroom in the Roosevelt Hotel, a room with ornate columns and crystal chandeliers. A couple hundred shop stewards and local Teamster officials lined up for steam table roast beef and then sat down for some lukewarm oratory.

"We have to elect people that not only have the ability to lead this union but who have the desire to work with and through the leadership," Durham said. Then, alluding to Carey, he continued, "Unfortunately, one of the opponents is attempting to work around the leadership and go straight to the members, and I wonder, if he's successful, how he would run this union not having the rapport with the leadership..."

Durham has carefully maintained his



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own "rapport with the leadership." A former long-distance truck driver, he was elected president of his North Carolina local—and reelected 10 times—and then he slowly, cautiously, worked his way up through the byzantine bureaucracy of the international union, first as a trustee, then a vice president. Last year, when McCarthy decided not to run for president, he endorsed Durham for the post.

That endorsement set off a vicious internecine battle in the Marble Palace. Shea announced his candidacy, McCarthy promptly fired him, and the executive board divided into two rival camps, amid much name-calling. Durham promptly billed himself as a reformer, but he also studded his slate with old guard Teamster plutocrats, including Arnie Weinmeister, the West Coast boss, who pocketed more than \$600,000 a year in union salaries, and Weldon Mathis, the secretary-treasurer, who made \$275,000 and had three sons on the union payroll, one of them at \$137,000. After Carey, who was already out campaigning, ripped into those salaries, Weinmeister and Mathis decided to withdraw from the race and retire from the union.

But Durham's slate, like Shea's, still has some problems: Three of his vice-presidential running mates have been charged with acts of corruption by the court-appointed investigator, and a fourth, William Hogan Jr., is one-quarter of a family that pulls in more than \$580,000 in Teamster salaries.

Meanwhile, Durham, like Shea, denies that the union is corrupt. "It's a good union," he told the crowd in New York. "I certainly disagree with the opposition that it is corrupt and needs to be dismantled. We don't need to dismantle this union. We simply need to go ahead and to build on the unity and the strength that we currently have. We have good, strong leadership . . ."

"THE AVERAGE GUY HAS NO IDEA WHO'S running," said Dale Fisher, "and most of them don't care."

Fisher had just shaken Vicki Saporita's hand as she came campaigning through the Stanley Air Tools plant in Cleveland. At 41, he's the shop steward in the plant, where he's worked for 14 years. He's also a part-time city councilman in the Cleveland suburb of Lyndhurst. So he knows a few things about Teamsters and about politics. The problem, he says, is that Teamsters aren't used to democracy.

"I'd compare it to the communist countries: Suddenly they have democracy, and they're not sure what to do with it," he said. "We always figured that the union guys picked their own, just like management picked their own—without any say from us. It never crossed our minds."

For years, guys in the plant would come by his workbench, grinning cynically and pointing to yet another newspaper headline about yet another Teamster boss. "Hey, another one got indicted," they'd say, and then they'd go back to work and forget about it. "They figured the top people were corrupt," Fisher said, "but they were getting their pay and their pensions and the health and welfare benefits. That's what they were concerned with. A lot of good comes out of the union. And a lot of people say any union is better than no union because management will always take advantage of the workers."

The problem in the Teamster presidential election, he says, is the same problem you find in the American presidential elections: apathy. "How do you awaken their sleeping interest?" he asked. "How do you get them interested?"

In all three Teamster campaign headquarters, people are asking similar questions. Their polls tell them the same thing that Fisher's instincts tell him: Although each candidate has thousands of ardent supporters, most Teamsters don't know who's running and don't much care. Nobody expects even half of the 1.6 million members to vote, and most are predicting that only a quarter or a third will mail their ballots back to the federal election office.

"Apathy is what concerns us more than anything," said Durham. "If you only get 20 to 30 percent of the people voting in a three-way race, anything can happen."

That's about the only prediction that anyone involved in the campaign will make: *Anything can happen*. There has never been a Teamster presidential election before, and consequently there is no yardstick to use in predicting this one. All three candidates are trying to identify their supporters and get them to vote. For the "insider" candidates—Durham and Shea—the strategy has been to woo local union officials and hope they can pull out their members' votes. Carey, the outsider running against the entrenched officials, is relying on his own relentless grass-roots campaigning and the small but influential dissident group Teamsters for a Democratic Union.

Both strategies raise unanswered questions: Are local bosses popular enough to influence the votes of their members? Will alienated and angry Teamsters vote for Carey, or will they simply ignore the election? Will the split among the insiders throw the election to Carey? Nobody knows.

But no matter who wins the election, the Teamsters have already been changed forever, observers of the union agree. After the consent decree, the expulsion of scores of corrupt officials and the election campaign, the Teamsters will never again be the brutal, autocratic and

mob-controlled union it was only four years ago.

"It's going to be very, very difficult to turn back the clock," said Lacey. "I don't think you're ever going to see the old ways return."

"Once there's an expansion of these sort of rights, it's very hard to retract or turn back," said Michael Holland, the court-appointed election monitor. "I don't think it's institutionalized all the way through, but all the candidates support rank-and-file voting, and that is institutionalized."

"They've already changed the Teamsters dramatically: They've infused the rank and file with the hope that they can change their union," said James Neff, author of *Mobbed Up*. "It will never go back to the old days because there are democratic election procedures and they get a choice now. They can throw the rascals out."

STANDING ATOP THE MAKESHIFT BANDstand at his Memphis rally, Ron Carey looked out over a field full of UPS drivers, long-distance truckers, car haulers, factory workers and their wives, husbands and kids, most of them clad in red Ron Carey T-shirts and many of them sunburned from a long Indian summer day of carnival games, cakewalks, barbecue eating and beer drinking.

"We have something they don't know how to address!" Carey hollered to the crowd. "They don't know how to figure it out. You know what's out here! I feel it! There's a spirit! There's a heart! It's beating! And they can't understand that. They don't know how to deal with it! They're throwing money at it!"

"Yeah!" the crowd cheered.

"They're throwing the leadership at it!" Carey continued. "They tell the leadership in the local unions: 'You must go out there and bring votes in, because if you don't, you'll never be able to work with Ron Carey.' And they're right! Because lots of 'em won't work with me, that's for sure!"

Carey is not in John Morris's class as a labor orator, but he's getting there. He's been doing it for two years now. During the week he's home, running his local in Queens, and on weekends he's on the road campaigning. In 1990, he hit 46 states in 44 weekends, and he's going at the same pace this year. A second-generation UPS driver, Carey is obsessed with cleaning up the Teamsters. In 1968, he won the presidency of his local union by campaigning against corruption. Now, he's hoping to become president of the international union the same way.

He finished his speech and stepped off the stage to another chant of "Car-ey! Car-ey!" Then an auctioneer started rais-

ing campaign funds by hawking items made by Teamster wives—big, gooey cakes, a Christmas centerpiece, hand-painted sweatshirts and a photo album with a homemade cloth cover bordered with fluffy blue ruffles and topped with a hand-sewn Teamsters logo. There was even an oil painting—an autumn landscape by Aaron Belk, a Memphis loading dock worker who's running for vice president on Carey's slate.

Painter, Teamster and chairman of the board of his Methodist church, Belk is also an amateur student of T-shirt sociology. He stood in the field, explaining how you can tell a Teamster's job by the size of his Ron Carey T-shirt: The big guys with potbellies and extra-large shirts are long-distance drivers; the skinny guys are UPS loading dock workers, who are whittled thin by the company's frenzied work pace. "They can get into the medium shirts," he said, "because they run 'em so fast."

Diana Kilmury agreed, but she put it a bit differently: Truck loaders are thin and muscular, and truck drivers are big and burly. "As you can see," she said with a laugh, "I'm a truck driver."

She's also a vice-presidential candidate and a pretty good raconteur. She stood there, entertaining a small crowd with the story of the incident that made her semi-famous among Teamsters. It happened at the 1981 Teamster convention, when Kilmury, a low-level local official from Vancouver, Canada, dared to stand up and propose that the union form an ethics committee to investigate corruption. "I stood there with a goon on either side of me—and I do mean a goon—while 2,000 of them screamed for my blood."

As Kilmury told her story, a Teamster who'd obviously contributed generously to the campaign via the beer vendor, came over to say goodbye to her and stayed long enough to explain that the message on his cap—"Keep the South Beautiful, Put a Yankee on a Bus"—didn't apply to her because Canadians were not, technically, Yankees. Kilmury laughed and shook his hand.

Meanwhile, the auctioneer was still up on the bandstand, trying to raise money. "All this is going to the Ron Carey campaign, don't forget that," he said. "Halloween is coming, and you see a lot of skeletons around. They represent a Teamster trying to live on his pension."

Then he opened up the bidding on an electric can opener.

It was getting late now, the trees casting long, cold shadows across the sunny field. A woman came over to Kilmury, hugged her and wished her luck. Then she asked shyly, "What will you do if you lose?"

"We'll run again in '96," Kilmury said. She had a big smile on her face. ■

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