

IATSE 748



The newsletter with “*The Edge*”

Welcome to the first IATSE Local 748 Newsletter for 2015 - *The Edge*. The E-board and members of the local felt it was important to reintroduce this form of outreach, to help all freelancers who work under the negotiated contract understand more widely about the union, its members, elected officials and the rules governing its activities.

As the banner at the top of our newsletter declares:

“DEDICATED TO THIS IDEAL: HONEST INFORMATION MAKES EVERYONE FREE.”

The heart of any live TV broadcast - the main control area where the Producer and Director and Technical Director sit.

From the President's desk



Mike Figueroa - President

Members,

I would like to take a minute to give a "State of the Union" address.

Our local union has to be one of the strongest in the country. It has been a pleasure for me to be President. Every issue we have faced in the past 2 years has been resolved positively for us.

Our strength is in providing healthcare, an annuity and a pension for all our freelancers not just members. Every time one of us works a union crewed show money is contributed by the employer on our behalf to each of these entities. With the state of healthcare where it is today, I believe our healthcare provides a better alternative and I feel very fortunate to be able to access it.

Another strength is our workers. We put on top notch shows for all the major networks and have the best this country has to provide in technicians right here in Arizona. Who in turn travel all over the world because of their abilities.

Our weakness is in our failure to not be grateful for what we have. So I am appealing to you to have a good attitude at work and ask yourselves what you can do to make this a better working community and union. Participate, be upbeat, be proud of Arizona and be proud of this union!

This E board is a very open panel. Feel free to come to us about anything. We also have a new local website to provide information for most questions and if you can't find it there we will direct you and help you find the answers you are looking for.

The international also has a website that provides information about the benefits you receive from the union, member or not.

I want to ask those that aren't members to rally consider joining, because you are given these benefits anyway, but they are provided to you because of the Union and its a matter of character. What do you stand for as an individual?

To members, I ask that you reach out and tell others about the benefits to the community and why they should join and not just take advantage of a good thing without stepping up an being apart of the solutions.

Once again, I am really happy with where we are and how we resolve issues. I am confident that with anything we face right now or in the future there will also be a satisfactory outcome.

Respectfully,

Mike Figueroa - President Local 748

Why We Exist

Eric Falkner - Business Agent

Community.

It is a simple and complicated concept. Community is dangerous. Community is powerful. Community is protective.

Unions were created to give a community of employees a voice. Our local is over a decade old and our community has grown very large. When it was founded, there was only the NBA and NFL. Most of our freelancers had to have full time jobs and our community was small. Since then, we have grown to support many full-time freelance employees, and we have produced many of the nations' most talented traveling freelancers. Many of our freelancers (myself included) moved here or came into the community after the union existed. Many of us do not know--or have forgotten--why we started the local union in the first place.

Recently, I was flown by the International IATSE Union to Indianapolis to speak with their local freelance community about the process of organizing. Being friends with many of them, I know their plight. Their community is where ours was over a decade ago. A local crewer uses their power to control the freelancers. Many have been blackballed and had their livelihoods threatened because they did something to upset the crewer. It reminded me of my days living in Nashville where, over the years, local crewers toss aside freelancers to save \$25. The meeting was a spirited discussion of where the local community is at. They are angry and unified. They are coming together as a community.

We were there. Southwest TV had pushed the local community to a breaking point and we too became unified. A group of freelancers gathered people together to discuss their issues, and their group grew. The night I was there, there were about 30 freelancers. Many of us have forgotten or didn't know that John James gathered freelancers at his house and it eventually led to our local being formed.

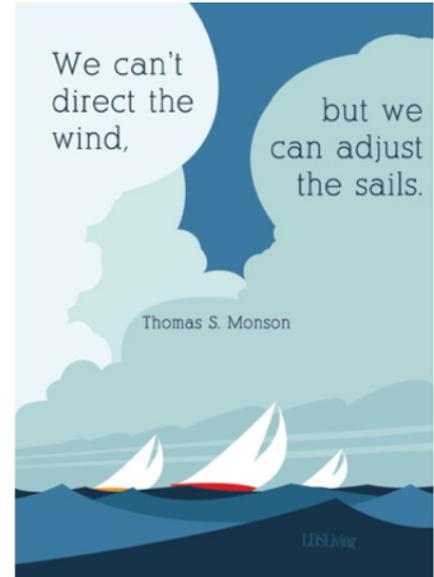
“Unions were created to give a community of employees a voice.”

- ERIC FALKNER

Which brings me back to my original question: why did Local 748 form? Simple. Community. A community that was tired of being taken advantage of came together to form the local. It helped level the playing field between employer and employee and it also brought the side benefit of employee subsidized healthcare and retirement benefits. Many of us have become spoiled by the benefits of our CBA (Collective Bargaining Agreement) and have forgotten how bad it really was before our union brought the community together. The talk of community is

what brought Indianapolis freelancers to choose IATSE as their representing body as they seek to form their own union. Milwaukee chose the same path a few years ago and their community is also in the process of growing.

Take a moment to think about our community and where we have come from. We have our crazies, our know-it-alls, our artists, our genius and our crazy uncles, but the best part is we are still all family. We are a community that desires to produce high quality television, provide for our families, and support each other. We should support each other and support our union crewers. They are just as much a part of our community as each freelancer. Let us not forget where we have come from and let us continue to come together to bring a better future to freelance production in Arizona.



Interview with an “Original”

Dennis Lamb

Dennis Lamb, was one of the “original” freelancers working in our broadcast market. Some think of Dennis as our “Mascot” - the fun loving nebbish A-2 who everyone knows and loves. Originally trained by Jeff Hitz, Dennis goes back to the time the Phoenix Suns were on local cable playing at the Coliseum. He manually pointed a Shotgun microphone at center court in 1981 for “court sounds” - all for \$25 a day. He loved it. He is now in his 34th Suns season, all from those meager beginnings and an offer, “You want to learn some of this audio stuff? We’ll pay you.”

There are many, if not thousands of stories about Dennis and his adventures in the business. But, this professional had a day job to make sure he could make ends meet for the first 17 years of his career.

“*The Edge*” interviewed Dennis to get his perspective on how things have changed from when he started.

Edge Newsletter So at the very beginning, this was not your main income source?

Dennis Lamb I tell people this all the time, I had a day job for 17 years. The first day I did it (work on the Suns broadcast) I thought this is incredible, they're paying me to do this? If I can make a living doing this that would be incredible! It was that much of a joy for me to do. I tell people all the time, we work nights and weekends and holidays. That's not an easy thing to do, year in and year out, when you're trying to raise a family.

E.N. Raising a family is always a huge challenge and scary one in many ways especially since you had a day job to make sure you had income to cover your family's needs and expenses. Obviously health-insurance was an issue for you. How did you handle the health issue for your young family growing up?

D.L. You know we had, well, we were lucky. You know Urgent Care? We happen to luck out when Nolan was real little he cracked his head open to the tune of 31 stitches and we were lucky to find a really good doctor at Urgent Care. But after Nolan we were lucky nothing major happened. We just paid for it as it came along. Of course the kids got most of the care - we parents went without. Cavities were paid for on the kids, but not us. We were lucky, because, you know, they were not real sickly kids.

E.N. So your approach was you found a good reasonable doctor, but you basically handle it on a cash bases - event by event. So if something large or catastrophic happened, a heavy hospitalization or something came along, would you have been prepared?

D.L. Oh my gosh - No. And I don't know what we would have done. As an aside, we didn't have insurance to have the children, Nolan was perfect - nothing wrong with him. But Andrea was pre-mature.

I got a job, after she was born, the next year doing the Good Will Games. I worked 21 days, and I took that entire 21 days, and paid Andrea off, because she was 8 weeks pre-mature and our Hospital bill was . . . Yikes!

E.N. And that was probably the closest thing to a big Hospital expense. You finally secured insurance for your family?

D.L. Well yeah. We couldn't get our teeth fixed, they needed braces and stuff, cavities and stuff, we just didn't have the money for that, we just didn't have the money for that.

E.N. So what did you do?

D.L. We just . . . We just didn't do anything. Oh sure, when they had cavities, we paid for that, but our teeth, our health, ya know, we sacrificed our health so the kids would have it.

E.N. Ah - You traded your health for your kids health...

D.L. We will say this too, we are some of the luckiest people on Earth to have Unionized when we did. We got health insurance and in one calendar year three of us had catastrophic, death saving procedures, me, Giannini, and Jeffry Hitz, the man who taught me the trade in the first place. There was a kidney transplant, a liver transplant and open heart surgery. Wow. The first year the union was going, after two years of development and the first year of operation, and look what the union did for all of us. We think about this all the time. What would have happened to us? We - we would have given up everything. We would be living in an apartment or something . . . by now.



**Kevin Kellog, Dennis Lamb, Ralph Kelso -
Diamondbacks**

E.N. So the innovation of the health insurance through the Union and the benefits it offered came at just the right time...

D.L. The timing was everything, we just, we just still can not say how lucky we are...How lucky is that?

E.N. Hmmm. Well now let's explore another thing about the past. You are famous for your end of Spring Training Bar-B-Q's. How did that come about?

D.L. I'm a real social persona, and again, it goes back to that, when there was only 35 games for the whole year, and only one really tiny crew, when we do spring training and the weather was so perfect - everything was so perfect to induce camaraderie that it was just a natural. And then it grew, as we got more people and more crews, it just grew with the crews. The next spring training was even bigger. I'm just a social person, and I like the camaraderie. I like who I work with. I really like that team work, cause it takes a team to do this.

And that's another thing that intrigued me about it, everybody has 100% confidence that the next person in the craft, in their department or along with it, is going to do their job 100%. And that is such a cool feeling. The broadcast only last a couple of hours, and it is the coolest thing in the whole wide world.

It brings everybody to one heartbeat . . . and it just seems natural to do that, because, what we did before on Bar-B-Q's was we would meet at a bar someplace after the broadcast and pat ourselves on the back, the entire crew, on what a good job we did. We were teaching each other how to do the job better. We talked about what we learned and what we didn't learn, and we all talked about how to make it better than before. But it was all positive stuff, we all talked about the good things of it. And I always liked that too, that camaraderie of what we do. Everybody *can't* do this. . . No, not everyone can, and I just like everybody to be together. It's during the social times we learn from one another.



Hear no evil, speak no evil . . .

E.N. How long into your Suns career before you got to do your first Spring Training game?

D.L. Two years.

E.N. How did they find out about you?

D.L. Well that Suns crew. . . We really only had one crew here in town. One crew that was really doing any of the work. You know, only one, full blown "Ace" crew. And I was lucky to be apart of that great, original crew. Lucky again.

E.N. Would you say it is fair to say your only as good as your last job and who meets you and sees you?

D.L. Boy is that the truth and that's been true for ever and ever. I've been in this a long time and nobody remembers what you did last season. But you know, I'll tell ya, if you do your job 100% then your invisible, but if there is something that is not quite clicking right, boy your noticed right away. Then that's when the noticing comes about, but these days things are different. Now that being said, when I work at a Network level, that seems to be different. You don't get to mess up a lot at a network level. If you aren't 100% all the time, then they just get someone else, it will be 100%. But on the local level it just doesn't seem to be that way. Some people just think the job will be there no matter how well they do their job, but that really is not the case. People notice and it affects what work your offered.

E.N. Now years have passed for you, what would you say has changed over that time?

D.L. It was Maw and Paw back in those days . . . it's Corporate now.

E.N. Is that good or bad?

D.L. It's good and bad. In those days you dealt with the key people. The people who were really in charge were the ones you deal with. Everybody made their own deals with those Maw and Paw people. Now I see the Corporate influence has brought us a more level playing field when it comes to what freelancers are getting for their work. Which is interesting.

E.N. Now because of the Corporate influence, would you say the changes you've seen is because of the Corporate aspect?

D.L. Well it's more back and white. It's a definite job now, and they want to make things black and white not a grey area we were in because we were artist. Not everyone can do this TV like we do like this. We were always considered artist in the sense that they did give us a little lee-way on how we dressed and behaved. The corporate seems to - you know - you walk the corporate line. When the Maw/Paws had it, they gave us a little more room because we were considered artist not technicians. They didn't want us showing up like slobs, but if we did our jobs 100% good, the outside stuff didn't seem to matter as much. Now, it seems to matter more.

E.N. So your saying there is a change in protocol, the way that the job is expected to be handled by the people who employ you.

D.L. Well they want to make it a desk job, a nine to five job, but there is creativity in what we do. It's not Black and White. The corporate thing did not help the creativity of the job. They don't like that, they don't think like we do. And with the Maw and Paw, that did not seem to be an issue, the crews.

E.N. Would you agree with this assessment - that in the early days it was a community from the top to the bottom, and now days it's a community that works for the corporate world?

D.L. Yeah - everybody is an individual, we're not as a "team" so much anymore. We used to hang together, everybody at the same time, we all had dinner together and that doesn't happen so much anymore. It wasn't everybody going their own way and doing their own thing. We were definitely "we are all in this together" stuff.

E.N. Let's talk about some of the other aspects that have come along with the union. Because their is a contract, there is protocol for disciplining or adjusting someones work ethic. How was that in the early days if someone came in who did not work well with the crew or the client?

D.L. Well in those days there were so few jobs and once you got the work everybody was good. But to get that work, everybody was taking care of themselves. They were saying and doing anything they could to get a job. There was a lot of bad mouthing other freelancers all in order to protect what ever job everyone had. I guess I'm still not good at that - on how to get a job.



E.N. Well your talking about marketing yourself. For me I remember there was a time when if you were overheard saying something negative about the equipment or the truck, Southwest TV would take you off the next two jobs.

D.L. Yeah I took a lunch one time with a California crew I was working with and someone thought I wasn't supposed to take a lunch. So the next thing I know I didn't get paid for that day. And I didn't even know about it until I didn't get paid.

E.N. And if you decided to do something about it what would your recourse be? What would you do?

D.L. There was noting I could do, other than not go to lunch again. Make sure I watched my P's and Q's and not do anything or say anything that would make me loose my deal.

E.N. So now that your working under a contract and something like that happens, how do you feel?

D.L. Well yeah, see, that is one of the really good things about why we unionized. See to me, I was such a little it'sy-bitsy peon, but because we're Unionized, my peon now isn't a peon . . . I have a voice. And that's one of the best things our union gives us. It doesn't matter if your a Utility or a TD - You still get to say something. If your feeling your being taken advantage of or somebody is doing something that is unfair to you, that you don't feel it's right, weather it is or not, then you have a recourse to take. That's part of the Union.



E.N. So the Union has given you a way to protect yourself without having to spend a large amount of money for legal representation, would that be right?

D.L. Or, more important than that, not feel afraid that I am gong to lose my job and not get any work.

E.N. Lose your job unfairly?

D.L. Yeah I don't lose my job because I said something, because I said, 'Hey this is wrong. I don't feel it's right to be treated this way.' And now I can say that and not worry about losing my job for a while.

E.N. So this means you can be honest about how to improve work conditions and the craftsmanship of your job?

D.L. Yeah, that's a good way to say that because, I don't fear for losing my job if I say something.

E.N. Well you've seen a lot of changes and stuff. And you went full time when Baseball came along?

D.L. Yeah, that's right.

E.N. What's the one thing you miss the most from your early days?

D.L. The camaraderie.

E.N. What's the one thing you think can be improved since the early days?

D.L. Hmm. That's a difficult question. I really don't know how to answer that.

E.N. I mean we have some of the finest equipment as compared to what we started with and what we now have is light years ahead in it's ability to help us do our jobs. In many ways the equipment has simplified what we do because it is much more reliable and not as delicate. So I don't think it is equipment. Would you say the area that always needs improvement is the people and crew and how they interact with each other?

“We have resources on our side to keep up with their resources.”

D.L. Well, because I am a social person and I like that camaraderie, I like rooting for people and being on their side. But I hesitated to say that because over the years we work with a lot of the same people all the time and we can get petty with each other. And I think that's so wrong, I don't like that at all. I don't know how to address that, how to take care of that.

- DENNIS LAMB

I mean we all know how lucky we are, we have come so incredibly far since 1981. I mean I just can't believe how my life has been enriched from 1981 to now. But people are still people, and that doesn't change from 1981 to now. And I don't know how to do that. There are some companies that take retreats - the Picnic's that we have - I think those things are very important, I have realized, the farther away I get from not doing them.

E.N. Kinda like a safety valve?

D.L. Well, people can be themselves when they are not at work. We become more human with each other. And I think when we become more human with each other then we root for each other more and we don't worry about the small stuff. Getting together outside of work is an important thing. That's why I do the chicken dinners. It puts everybody in a good mood, everybody is on their good behavior, and the broadcast seems to be one of the better ones when I do that. No matter what the score is, we do a much better job after a shared chicken dinner.

E.N. Final question, would you continue in this business locally if you did not have the union?

D.L. Oh Gosh, I can't imagine that now. I can't imagine. That's why I pound on my family for so long - it's "look at how good we have it." You guys need to support this, whether you agree with anything or not, you gotta support it. Toni and Andrea just applied for membership in the Union because they realize they are on the outside looking in, like a lot of the new people. My family was lucky because they had me, I was a member of the union, they see the process I've come through and see how important I feel it is to keep this union. It's more important than ever to keep it up for as long as we can. And so that's what I have finally got them to understand, how important this thing is.

We can't do this without it (the union), I really feel we can not do this market without it - because it will go back to where 5% of the people will make all the money and 95% of the people don't who do the work.

E.N. So, if I can summarize for you then, because it's so corporate we have to have a kind of corporate answer - which would be the union?

D.L. Oh, that's a really good one, yeah. I like that.

Yeah, because it has changed from Maw and Paw to Corporate, and we need to change from Maw and Paw to Corporate to keep up and that's what our union allows us to do. It allows us to keep up with "Corporate" and that's how I kinda look at it. We have resources on our side to keep up with their resources.

E.N. Well Dennis, we've been talking for 35 minutes. Thanks for being the first on this interview for our new newsletter.

D.L. I hope I'm worthy enough and I said things that will help.

E.N. That conversation was made over the telephone with Dennis Lamb, A2 and member of IATSE Local 748 on February 19, 2015. Next time, we will ask him for some of his famous "Dennis" stories on the job.

Guest Commentary

Andrea Lamb

New and young freelancers: Do you plan on living for ever? I know I don't.

In my perspective this is what having the union health benefit means to me. I was raised by technicians who started in the industry with no benefits. They had to worry about paying doctors bills out of pocket, and how to financially raise their children, among other things.

No one should ever look at a cut and assess if it is worth the few thousand dollars it is going to take to go to the emergency room or not. As I grew, I realized there was more to life than the dollar in hand. Was paid retirement ever in the cards for my parents like it is for so many of my friends parents? What would happen if someone needed surgery? Would we have to give up our house to pay the bills?

Then IATSE local 748 came about. What the union has done for me? Saved my family and friends. I have heard stories of my co-workers not getting paid for months on end or being so afraid they will lose their job, they kept working for free. This is something I have never experienced because of our union. How many people never went in for a check up from the doctor to make sure their organs were still working? Again, I have never *not* gone to the doctor with an ailment as an adult because I have health insurance and that is because of our union. Because of our union, the kids of the members, and freelancers working under a union contract, now know their parents will have some kind of retirement waiting for them. They will not be worrying about who will hire a retired TV tech for enough money that they can pay for their life.

“I realized there was more to life than the dollar in hand.”

- ANDREA LAMB

Local 748 has saved lives and people's well-being long after they walk off of TV compound. I have named a few things the union has done for me and my fellow co-workers. It is up to the next generation of technicians to keep our “well-being” alive. I am part of a generation that will have a full pension once we retire. If our senior guys didn't stand up for a fair share, a lot of them wouldn't be here to train us. Please join the union before something tragic happens and you need the help you are entitled to. I was raised in a TV compound and everyone is a family member to me. Be a part of the family and share the love and benefits that so many people have worked hard to get for us.

The editors view

John James

Finding the Balance . . .



Management.

Labor.

Each has a natural orientation, an innate purpose and action that affects what they are and how they think.

The battle between Labor and Management is a timeless one, a simple one to understand.

Management wants to maximize profit. Without profit the owner or management of the business would not, could not exist. Labor wants to maximize how much compensation they receive for their effort under management's directive. Labor trades directed life force for compensation that allows labor to survive.

So, it is a story of survival for all involved and it was not always a balanced one.

Management, not very long ago, pursued profit at all costs. The results were sweat shops, 7 day work weeks, child labor, unsafe work conditions, low pay and basically very little respect. In some

parts of the world this is still the case. But in America, one major event helped changed all of that and resulted in a federal law protecting the right of labor to organize and negotiate with Management - The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire.

From Wikipedia:

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in Manhattan, New York City on March 25, 1911 was the deadliest industrial disaster in the history of the city, and one of the deadliest in U.S. history. The fire caused the deaths of 146 garment workers – 123 women and 23 men – who died from the fire, smoke inhalation, or falling or jumping to their deaths. Most of the victims were recent Jewish and Italian immigrant women aged 16 to 23; of the victims whose ages are known, the oldest victim was Providenza Panno at 43, and the youngest were 14-year-olds Kate Leone and "Sara" Rosaria Maltese.

Because the owners had locked the doors to the stairwells and exits, a common practice used to prevent workers from taking unauthorized breaks and pilferage, many of the workers who could not escape the burning building jumped from the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors to the streets below. The fire led to legislation requiring improved factory safety standards and helped spur the growth of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, which fought for better working conditions for sweatshop workers.

These were the sisters, girlfriends, and mothers of families from all over New York City. Bread winners. To try and describe the tragic consequences at a human level is impossible to do in this article, but we can guess. It takes a "Titanic" event to make people take action and make sure this kind of horrible disaster never happens again.

From Wikipedia (Continued):

Rose Schneiderman, a prominent socialist and union activist, used the fire as an argument for factory workers to organize: "I would be a traitor to these poor burned bodies if I came here to talk good fellowship. We have tried you good people of the public and we have found you wanting.... We have tried you citizens; we are trying you now, and you have a couple of dollars for the sorrowing mothers, brothers and sisters by way of a charity gift. But every time the workers come out in the only way they know to protest against conditions which are unbearable, the strong hand of the law is allowed to press down heavily upon us.

Public officials have only words of warning to us—warning that we must be intensely peaceable, and they have the workhouse just back of all their warnings. The strong hand of the law beats us back, when we rise, into the conditions that make life unbearable.

I can't talk fellowship to you who are gathered here. Too much blood has been spilled. I know from my experience it is up to the working people to save themselves. The only way they can save themselves is by a strong working-class movement."

Those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it themselves. Many of the conditions and benefits we have at our work place today were hard earned and recent - even if "recent" is just over 12 years ago when the process of organizing Local 748 was started.

This newsletter - *The Edge* - Will be issued periodically or when we have enough interesting information to print. The purpose of this newsletter is to inform, educate and pay respect to the unique work force who's special skills create many hours of live television entertainment. Those talented craftsmen and women who are represented by IATSE Local 748.

Together we bargain, divided we beg....

John S. James, Editor, 748 Newsletter *The Edge*

Important Links

- Web Site IATSE 748: www.iatse748.com
- Flickr Photo Web Site: www.flickr.com/photos/iatse748/
- Twitter: www.twitter.com/iatse748
- Phoenix Suns: www.suns.com
- Phoenix Coyotes: www.arizonacoyotes.com
- Arizona Diamondbacks: www.dbacks.com
- Arizona Cardinals: www.azcardinals.com
- ASU: www.thesundevils.com
- U of A: www.arizonaathletics.com
- Fox Sports Arizona: www.foxsportsarizona.com
- Burke Brothers Production: www.burkebrothersproductions.com
- TRO Crewing: www.trocrewing.com

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And the countless hours of volunteer work by everyday members who attend meetings and volunteer their time. Thank You.