

To Mom



**Manuel L.
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In 1958, our family immigrated to the United States. Dad was a professor of engineering, and launched into his aerospace career. I was two years old, and my brother Ricardo was born one month after we arrived.

Mom started her educational career in San Diego and earned her Ph.D. in 1968 from the University of Southern California. She then started a 25-year teaching career at Cal State Los Angeles. Mom taught more than the classes she was assigned. She loved career counseling and mentoring, and shared that it added to her fulfillment. She

traveled the world as a writer, a poet, and an inspiration to colleagues and students, attending many conferences as a guest speaker.

During her career and the 30 years after she retired, she often received thank-you letters from her students far and wide. I recall one such note of gratitude from a graduate who pursued a career in law. He wrote a beautiful note thanking her for her guidance and attributed his success to her mentoring. This note accompanied his invitation for her to join him for his swearing-in ceremony as a federal judge.

Mom passed away in late January. I posted a few items on Facebook and found myself reading and re-reading the kind messages left for our family by many of you. My family and I thank you all.

What does this message about Mom have to do with our union?

Teach others, with no strings attached. Prepare your local officers for the future so that when they take over, your branch is in good hands.

If you are a leader in your branch, ask yourself if you are spending enough time and resources preparing the next generation of unionists in your branch. What are the long-term goals of the branch, and how do you plan to achieve those goals? Who will be involved in teaching that next generation?

My parents were, and my children are, educators.

Are we passing on the experience gained through the positions we have held in the branch? If not, it's time to plot out a long-term plan. How do we translate all that we have learned through experience?

Where to begin, if not already doing this important work?

When I served as an officer of my branch in the 1980s, I decided to review the grievance workload and assess the capabilities of our stewards, for the purpose of developing a more comprehensive shop steward training program.

What skills do our stewards have? How do we prepare them when they walk through the doors and say that they want to be a shop steward?

Back then, I felt it necessary to develop a rotation of three classes which we gave every month. This allowed any new steward to step in and learn: 1) Article 15, the mechanics of the grievance procedure; 2) Articles 17 and 31, the rights of the union relating to information/investigation/time to conduct steward activities; and 3) Article 16, how to protect employees against unjust discipline.

When I prepared this material, I referred to these three segments as the basic building blocks, which every steward must be able to master before stepping in to conduct the duties of a shop steward.

To this day, 37 years after I prepared this material, I receive calls from newer branch officers and stewards who are making every effort to learn and enforce the contract. Many have indicated that their branch has no formal training and that they are left to read the contract on their own.

If this is the case in your branch, you should reach out to your national business agent (NBA), and ask what training they have available and when. If you do not know who your NBA is, go to our website (nalc.org/union-administration/nalc-regions) and you can find their business address and contact information.

NALC has a proud history of representing the membership. That is our job. We do it best when everyone at every level is trained and able to enforce the contract as bargained.



Mom, we love you and will miss you always.