

Organizing Victory in Georgia

Courage Under Fire



Soon after the vote for IAM representation, Eagle employees, IAM representatives and Eagle group management got to work to hammer out a first contract. IAM Representatives, from right, IAM Negotiating Committee member Johnnie Newman; Southern Territory Grand Lodge Rep. Wayne Camp and Special Rep. Joe Greaser; Negotiating Committee Chairman John Bradley; Vice-Chairman Ed Hoffman and District 96 Directing Business Representative Tony Wilson.

Standing steadfast like the famous infantry division they support, employees at Eagle Group in Fort Stewart, GA, voted overwhelmingly to join the IAM, paving the way for a new local lodge with about 600 members.

Fort Stewart is home to the Army's fabled 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized), nicknamed the "Rock of the Marne" for holding their ground during a crucial World War I battle. Units of the 3rd ID were among the first to reach Baghdad in the Iraq war and the division has served more time there than any division

in the Army.

Fort Stewart's Eagle workers, many of them 3rd ID veterans, maintain everything from small generators to the giant M-1 tanks, Humvees, Bradley fighting vehicles and more than 10,000 pieces of equipment used by Army units around the world.

The Right Union

When Eagle Group employees wanted better working conditions, they researched several unions online. Besides the common issues of wages, pensions and health care costs, Eagle

employees had equally important concerns about winning fair and equal treatment for job assignments, layoffs, work schedules and more. They recognized the IAM's experience representing both Service Contract Act and regular federal workers and asked for help.

In January, 2006, Grand Lodge Representative (GLR) Ray Moffatt from the IAM Organizing Department and IAM District 96 staff held their first meeting with Eagle employees and the organizing drive began.

But spreading the word about the benefits of union

membership wasn't easy. The 280,000-acre Fort Stewart, along with Hunter Army Airfield about 40 miles away, is the largest armor training base east of the Mississippi river. "Once we got started, we found out there were work areas we didn't know about spread out over twenty locations on two bases," said Component Repair Program Technician Ed Hoffman. "It took a lot of volunteers to talk to co-workers and explain that joining the IAM was the way to straighten out the problems we had at the base."

Getting support for the IAM went slowly at first. But after a successful organizing drive at Ahntech, another Service Contract group on the base, Eagle employees saw the benefits of a union contract and the drive at Eagle picked up steam.

Renewed Effort

The Organizing Department's Moffatt, GLR Al Granado and Apprentice Organizer Mike Cooke along with Southern Territory staff spearheaded the renewed effort. "We conducted a house calling campaign under some very difficult conditions," said Granado. "The area is rural and many roads had no names. Post office boxes were common for addresses, but everyone stuck with it."

The hard work paid off and on November 9, 2006, like the

When Eagle Group employees wanted better working conditions, they chose the IAM for its experience representing federal and Service Contract Act employees.

determined soldiers of the 3rd ID, the employees at Eagle held firm and voted 331 to 181 for the IAM.

First Contract

The new IAM members then elected their negotiating committee and got down to business. In less than three months, the IAM Negotiating Committee met with Eagle management and hammered out a first contract that Eagle

employees voted to accept.

The new contract contains an average nine percent increase the first year; four percent increases in the second and third years; the IAM pension plan; improved vacation and sick time benefits and seniority provisions to promote fair treatment.

"We worked around the clock to get Eagle employees a good contract and resolve the issues that sparked the organizing drive," said Southern Territory Special Representative Joe Greaser. "The Eagle employees showed a lot of courage," said IAM President Tom Buffenbarger. "Congratulations to them and to all who worked on this election that brings respect on the job for the men and women who maintain the equipment used by our soldiers."



Workers in Savannah, GA load 3rd Infantry Division (ID) mechanized equipment for shipment to Iraq. Workers at Eagle Group at Fort Stewart, GA maintain the Bradley Fighting Vehicles, M-1 tanks, Humvees and other equipment used by the 3rd ID soldiers.

AP/Wide World Photos