

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS

**LOCAL NO. 756**

DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA



**COMMEMORATIVE  
HISTORY BOOK**

**2021**



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**I.B.E.W. 756**

CHARTERED JUNE 18, 1936

## OUR STRENGTH ALLOWS LOCAL 756 TO CONTINUE ITS MISSION

I.B.E.W. Local Union 756 is now in its 85th year of serving Volusia and Flagler counties as well as the Space Coast and Air Force stations. Along the way, Local 756 has gone through many ups and downs. We have seen everything from expeditions to the moon to Space Shuttle launches, and we are currently building the next phase of launch platforms for travel to Mars.

Our members continue to work hard to make Local 756 stronger and to help working families have a decent way of life, despite the constant battles against right-to-work laws and other anti-worker legislation in the State of Florida. All the while, Daytona has one of the lowest wage packages in the entire state, so we also keep fighting for higher pay and benefits and to keep our wages prevailing at the Space Center.



I am proud to say that we are currently 400 members strong and growing, as we seek and train new apprentices who will become highly skilled journeymen and organize journeymen who want a better life.

I would like to give thanks to all our active and retired members who have worked hard day and night, near and far, to make this local what it is today. As we all know, it does not matter how large the local is; what matters is the strength of its members.

On behalf of all the officers of Local 756, I wish every member and retiree who has been and will remain committed to the local and organized labor many more successful years.

Happy 85th anniversary, Local 756.

Fraternally,

Matthew S. Nelson, Business Manager  
I.B.E.W. Local No. 756, Daytona Beach

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# HISTORY OF I.B.E.W. LOCAL No. 756 AT 85 YEARS A POWERFUL BOOS AND THE NATION

# TER FOR DAYTONA 'S 'SPACE COAST'



## 'THE LEADING SPIRIT' OF LOCAL 756

Two I.B.E.W. Local No. 756 charter members and several other retired members gathered at a meeting in the local's union hall on May 29, 1974, agreed that "the leading spirit" behind the formation of Local 756 in 1936 was **Brother John La Tour Sr.** Born in Italy on March 31, 1897, Brother La Tour was 9 years old when he immigrated to the United States with his parents. He was a charter member of the local and served as its first president and business manager before becoming an electrical contractor; he also served as the City of Daytona Beach's building and electrical inspector during the late 1930s. Brother La Tour passed away on April 9, 1953, in Daytona Beach at the age of 56.



John La Tour Sr.  
(Photo courtesy of  
Penny Spaziani.)

**M**ore than eight years after electrical workers in Daytona Beach were last organized in a local union of the **International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers** (I.B.E.W.), a group of the city's inside electricians joined together and went on strike against the city's electrical contractors in early 1936 to gain a raise to a single, common wage. Having been paid anywhere from 37 to 65 cents per hour based on the whim of the employing contractor at the time the electrician was hired, the group held out for and won an across-the-board pay scale of 75 cents per hour for all journeyman inside wiremen in the city.

Realizing the power of their united front, the electricians soon after met to discuss reforming a local affiliated with the I.B.E.W.

They also knew that in order for a new local to survive, it would have to overcome the pitfalls of two previous unsuccessful attempts at sustaining a local union in the decidedly anti-union city – as well as the effects of the lingering Great Depression, the catastrophic nationwide economic collapse that began with the stock-market crash of October 1929 and lasted through the 1930s.

Electrical workers in Daytona Beach had first organized and received a charter from the I.B.E.W. designating the group as **Local No. 531** on July 18, 1923, to serve both inside wiremen and outside linemen. However, the local did not last a year and was defunct in early 1924.





I.B.E.W. Local 756 charter, dated June 18, 1936, and signed by I.B.E.W. General President Daniel W. Tracy (who served in that position from 1933 into 1940 and again from 1947 into 1954) and I.B.E.W. Secretary Gustave M. Bugnizet (who served in that position from 1925 into 1947).

The union chartered another Local 531 for the city's electricians and linemen on November 5, 1925, during the beginning of a real-estate boom in Daytona Beach that produced a large number of homes throughout the city. But the following year, a bank failure that drained the local's funds; efforts by the city's Builders' Exchange to "kill us" (as the local declared in the December 1926 issue of the I.B.E.W. *Journal* magazine) when it locked out all union labor from worksites for seven weeks beginning in June; the disbanding of the city's Building Trades Council; and the end of the influx of residential construction all took its toll on the local. Consequently, while the second iteration of Local 531 endured into 1927, it did not last through the year and was defunct before 1928.

### GAINING A FOOTHOLD & GROWING THE LOCAL

Having applied for a charter with the I.B.E.W., seven of the 14 Daytona Beach electricians who were seeking to re-organize a local union met on June 29, 1936, at the **Tea for Two** restaurant at 48 South Ocean Avenue in the city to receive the charter. One of the men, **John La Tour Sr.**, had for some time been discussing the possibility of forming a local with I.B.E.W. Fifth District International Vice-President Gilbert X. Barker, who was also in attendance that evening and presented the group with its charter, retroactively dated **June 18, 1936**, to represent inside electricians in Daytona Beach as **Local No. 756**.

Brother La Tour and the other six electricians at the meeting – **Emory O. Lyons**, **Fred Newcomb Jr.**, **Raymond E. Parker**, **Harold E. Sherman**, **Edwin R. Utter Sr.** and **Cecil O. Westfall** – contributed \$5 to \$10 each to cover the traveling expenses of Brother Barker, who had come from Atlanta to install the new local. The newly conferred I.B.E.W. electricians and

I.B.E.W. founder and first president **Brother Henry Miller** reportedly went without food and other necessities and instead used his earnings to travel the country to organize local unions in various cities after he and a small group had officially formed the **National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers** during a convention on November 21, 1891 in St. Louis. At its 1899 convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the union officially changed its name to the **International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers** after it had added a local in Ottawa, Ontario.

Brother Miller passed away on July 10, 1896, while working as head lineman for the Potomac Electric Power Company after he was shocked, fell from a ladder and died the next morning from a concussion. He was only 38 years old.

the seven other charter members each then paid the \$7 initiation fee and \$3 for monthly dues to the union.

Afterwards, contractors A. C. Gause Electric Company, Daytona Electric Company, Olson Electric Company, Rex Electric and Wetherell Electric Company signed onto the local's 75-cents-per-hour agreement. "There wasn't any difficulty in signing these shops," charter member **Brother Robert E. Lee** recalled in an interview on May 29, 1974. "They were just as interested in it as we were."

Brother La Tour served as Local 756's first president while Brother Westfall handled secretary-treasurer duties, and together they transacted most of the small local's business. Meetings were initially held in the **Carpenters' Hall** at Fairview Avenue and North Beach Street, and the local's first "helpers" (or apprentices) were friends or relatives of members and were paid 20 to 25 cents per hour.

Work for the fledgling local's electricians during its first years primarily consisted of residential jobs as there was little commercial construction in the area at the time. Members were mostly employed throughout the late



## LOCAL 756 CHARTER MEMBERS

These 14 men signed the charter granted to Local 756 by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers on June 18, 1936.

Russel H. Earnest\*

Joseph J. Gleason

Eugene A. Hatcher

Robert E. Lee

David E. Lowrie

Emory O. Lyons

Harry C. Miller

Fred Newcomb Jr.

Raymond E. Parker

Harold E. Sherman

Garth B. Squire

John La Tour, Sr.

Edwin R. Utter, Sr.

Cecil O. Westfall

(\*Brother Earnest's first name is misspelled on the charter.)

1930s and into the 1940s wiring newly built houses and older homes that were being remodeled, but they also performed a large amount of “trouble-shooting” of commercial and residential wiring and occasionally worked on new, four- or 10-unit apartments, which were considered “big jobs.”

Meanwhile, Local 756 negotiated its first agreement with contractors in early 1937 during a cordial dinner meeting and gained a 90-cent-per-hour wage scale and time-and-a-half overtime for work performed beyond the five-day, eight-hour workweek. “We all went someplace for a dinner, all of the electricians and all of the contractors,” Brother Westfall stated during a May 29, 1974, interview while recalling the meeting, “and everyone paid for his own meal.”

Working conditions for the electricians during that time were also agreeable. “Everything was lovely,” he further recollected. “We didn’t worry about conditions.”

Some of the larger jobs on which the local’s members worked at the end of the decade and into the 1940s included construction of the **Streamline Hotel**, which would open in 1940 (and several years later on December 14, 1947, would host the initial meeting at which NASCAR – the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing – was created). Among other key jobs employing the union electricians at the time was construction of the **Daytona Beach Water Plant**, while several members were employed by neon-sign shops in the area as assemblers and fabricators of neon signs.

Construction of **Naval Air Station Banana River** on Cape Canaveral in Brevard County just south of Cocoa Beach beginning in 1939 was a relative windfall for Local 756, as the I.B.E.W. awarded jurisdiction of the electrical work on the facility to the Daytona Beach local. Work on the U.S. Navy airfield and seaplane base, which would become **Patrick Air Force Base** in 1950 and in 2021 is now **Patrick Space Force Base**, included installation of runways, airplane hangars, support buildings, seaplane parking areas and seaplane ramps into the Banana River before it was commissioned in October 1940.

With membership and employment slowly increasing, Local 756 purchased its first union hall in early 1939 when it bought the home at **124 Emmet Street** in Daytona Beach from contractor Carl Wetherell of Wetherell Electric. Using the building for its offices and school rooms for apprentice classes, the local continued to hold its membership meetings in the Carpenters’ Hall.

Additionally, by 1940 the I.B.E.W. had extended Local 756’s jurisdictional territory down to Melbourne in the south and up to Bunnell in the north.

## ANSWERING THE CALL FOR WAR PRODUCTION

The outbreak of **World War II** in Europe in 1939 and the eventual entry of the United States into the global conflict following the December 7, 1941, Japanese attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, brought a large amount of military-related work to the Local 756 jurisdiction. However, many of the local members were called to military duty during the war through the National Guard and other branches of service, taking many skilled union electricians from the local’s work rolls.

Throughout the war, most of the electrical construction in and around Daytona Beach was confined to projects with military priority. After the U.S. War Department designated the city as the main training station for the **Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps** (WAAC) in 1942, Local 756 labor was involved in constructing the base before the first of some 20,000 WAAC recruits arrived that October. While the headquarters facility was established at the Wingate Building in downtown Daytona Beach and the initial WAACs were housed in the Osceola Hotel and a local hospital, according to the Museum of Florida History, additional buildings were soon built by the military in the city’s Welch area – which would become **Daytona Beach Community College** and **Mary Karl Vocational School** after the war. (Within a year, the WAAC was made a full part of the Army and was re-designated as the *Women’s Army Corps {WAC}*, according to the *Museum of Florida History*; but in early 1944, the *Daytona Beach training center was closed when the WACs moved to a larger facility at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.*)

Similarly, Naval Air Station Banana River was greatly expanded for the war effort using Local 756 member electricians. Work there included installing new landing strips in 1943 and erecting a bombing-and-torpedo school and a



I.B.E.W. Fifth District Vice-President Gilbert X. Barker, who assisted with organizing Local 756 and obtaining its charter from the international union in 1936.

major aircraft repair-and-maintenance facility, as well as auxiliary airfields in the surrounding countryside to enhance the various military-related activities taking place at Banana River. Those actions included maritime patrol aviation operations against German submarines; air search-and-rescue operations; patrol-bomber bombardier training; seaplane-pilot training; and communications research, according to an article in the April 26, 2021, issue of the *Space Coast Daily News*.

Expansion of the two large military installations within the Local 756 jurisdiction afforded a great amount of work for its members, and during the war, the Local 756 wage scale also escalated to a \$1.25-per-hour journeyman rate in 1944. A new agreement with contractors on February 1, 1945, that was approved by the National War Labor Board and went into effect February 15 raised the journeyman scale to \$1.50 per hour before the war ended in November that year.



## LOCAL HELPED FORM STATE ORGANIZATION

During the annual convention of the Florida Federation of Labor held in Jacksonville on May 6, 7 and 8, 1939, Local 756 officers **Joseph J. Gleason**, **John La Tour Sr.** and **Cecil O. Westfall** attended a conference of the majority of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (I.B.E.W.) locals in the state to discuss organizing a statewide organization for all of the union's locals. The delegates subsequently ratified a set of bylaws and a constitution that had already been drafted, establishing the **Florida State Electrical Workers Association**.

One of the "chief aims" of the group was to "weld all of the local unions chartered in the state into a smooth-working unit for the advancement of the industry," an article in the April 1939 I.B.E.W. *Journal* explained.

To that end, one of the initial primary functions of the new organization was to quickly supply electrical workers from affiliated locals to other locals in need of manpower. Among the group's first acts was working for the adoption of a state electrical licensing and inspection law for the State of Florida.

Another new agreement that went into effect on January 1, 1947, further increased the local's journeyman-electrician wage scale to \$2 per hour. The contract also provided the local's apprentices with hourly pay ranging from 75 cents for first-year to \$1.25 for fourth-year apprentices.

Additionally, the I.B.E.W. and the **National Electrical Contractors Association** (NECA) on September 3, 1946, established the **National Electrical Benefit Fund** (N.E.B.F.). In accordance with their National Employees Benefit Agreement, contractors signatory with I.B.E.W. locals, including Local 756, would contribute 1 percent of their payrolls for I.B.E.W. member employees into the fund, which would be used for retirement pensions.

But from its founding in 1936 to 1947, Local 756 had only taken in an additional total of 32 members, and the end of World War II and its military-related jobs resulted in a significant

drop in manhours worked by the local's electricians. Consequently, the local's treasury became so depleted that **Business Manager John Waters** and **Financial Secretary Howard E. Canfield** each were compelled to loan the local \$500 in June 1946 until the war bonds it had purchased a few years earlier could be cashed that August.

The local also did not have the funds or manpower to properly police and man jobs in and around Cocoa. As a result, the I.B.E.W. in 1947 transferred that area and most of Brevard County into the jurisdiction of Orlando-based **Local No. 606**, although work at the Banana River naval station remained under Local 756 control.

On June 4, 1947, however, the local's charter was amended to designate it for "mixed" inside and outside electrical-worker classifications so that the local could represent the few linemen working within its jurisdiction, in addition to the electricians already comprising its membership.

## LOCAL TAKES FLIGHT ALONG WITH THE CAPE

When **Brother Robert H. Palmer** was elected business manager of Local 756 in June 1948, taking over for Brother Canfield after he had served in the position for two years, the local had less than 100 members and, at times, its treasury did not have enough money to pay the business manager. The local's union hall was a rented portion of the old jail at the former WAC base that it shared with painters' local union, and aside from the business manager, the local had no office staff.

But the following year in May 1949, the U.S. Congress passed legislation to establish Cape Canaveral as the country's missile testing site, ushering in an ongoing relationship with Local 756 with what would become the nation's premiere launch area on Florida's new "Space Coast." (On June 1, 1948, the Navy had

*"Local 756 has been involved in the construction end of every launch facility at the Kennedy Space Center and the Cape since the early 1950s, and we are proud of it."*

— Local 756 Press Secretary Louis Hedgecock, October 1979 I.B.E.W. *Journal*

transferred the former Naval Air Station Banana River to the Air Force, which renamed the base the **Joint Long Range Proving Ground**. In August 1950, the facility was renamed **Patrick Air Force Base {A.F.B.}** in honor of U.S. Army Major General Mason Patrick.)

Work began at the proving ground in May 1950 to build the Cape's first paved access road and first permanent launch site. Two months later on July 24, a V-2 rocket named Bumper 8 was the first rocket launched at the Long Range Proving Ground when it took flight from Launch Complex Pad 3.

Local 756's roughly 100 members were sparsely used for the missile program when it was in its infancy. That, coupled with a prevailing

anti-union climate in Daytona Beach and much of Florida (which had become a so-called "right-to-work" state by statute in 1943 before a constitutional amendment in 1968 would cement the anti-union rules and regulations into its laws) stifled employment for the local to the point where in 1951 it attempted to cut Saturday work and limit its business manager to 36 hours on the job per week.

However, after the Air Force established the **Air Force Missile Test Center** in 1951 at Patrick A.F.B., between then and 1958, Cape Canaveral and the rocket program expanded tremendously, providing Local 756 members with an abundance of employment. Initially, many Local 756 electricians worked on construction of the center's **Central Control Building**, which was



Local 756 member Brother Niles F. Guzewich at work for signatory contractor Olson Electric Company in 1940.





A Local 756 parade float, advertising the local's signatory electrical contractors, sometime during 1956 or 1958.

completed in 1951, along with launch pads 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for the launching of the Lark, Snark and Matador missiles.

Work in its jurisdiction also picked up elsewhere in the second half of 1951, with members employed on projects including a small power plant and a cement plant.

Into 1952, more employment at Patrick came for the local with remodeling of launch pads for new missile testing, including the supersonic Bomarc missiles, the first world's first long-range, anti-aircraft, surface-to-air (SAM) missiles. Subsequently, the local initially did not have enough electricians to man the extensive work being generated by the Air Force base and its rocket program.

But also that year, Local 756 secured a new agreement with its employing contractors of the **North Florida Chapter of NECA** on October 24 that provided a 15-cent hourly raise for journeyman electricians to \$2.65 per hour and linemen to \$2.90 per hour. According to

Brother Westfall, it was the first time the local used NECA "to force the local contractors to sign" a contract.

As employment conditions remained strong throughout the ensuing two years, in 1954 the local moved from its cramped offices in the former prison and into the new **Carpenters' Hall** on North Beach Street. Its headquarters would remain in that location into 1961.

The local also gained a 15-cent hourly wage increase in 1954 and another 10-cent-per-hour raise in 1955. Despite an ongoing battle with non-union labor in its jurisdiction, the union's membership, which numbered nearly 200 by 1955, remained busy with abundant work throughout those years and 1956.

Significant jobs for Local 756 electricians on Cape Canaveral that year included construction of launch pads 12 and 14 for the **Atlas** missile, the first functioning intercontinental ballistic missile (I.C.B.M.) developed by the United States when it became

operational in October 1959. Meanwhile, construction work in the Cocoa Beach area was booming, providing more employment opportunities for the local's members.

A four-day wage dispute between Local 756 and its employers ended April 6, 1956, after the contractors agreed to pay the union electricians their requested 15-cent-per-hour wage increase. The new contract with NECA boosted the local's journeyman-wireman scale to \$3.15 per hour, retroactive to April 1, when the previous agreement had expired.

With work and employment remaining robust, that year Local 756 affiliated with the **Brevard County Building Trades Council**.

Despite periodic layoffs at Patrick A.F.B. during 1957 and 1958, work on the **Thor** and **Titan** missile complexes and smaller residential and commercial projects in Daytona Beach helped keep members employed. The local also gained a new journeyman wage rate of \$3.65 per hour in a new contract in 1957 and rebuffed a move that year by some of its members and members of Local 606 to set up another I.B.E.W. local on Cape Canaveral.



Local 756 members (front row, left to right) Clem Newman, Richard Brown and Louie Hedgecock; and (back row) Claude Vaughn, J.B. Smith, Freddy Codian and Jim Wynn at work in the Launch Complex 19 blockhouse at NASA's launch facilities on Cape Canaveral in February 1959.



But 125 members of Local 756 led a three-day wildcat strike on the site of the Titan missile project beginning May 19, 1958, which saw some 500 union construction workers walk off the job, according to the May 22 *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*. The union electricians touched off the walkout to protest the use of some 15 civil-service electricians on the job, the newspaper reported, before the issue was remedied.

As work at Patrick and on various cement plants in its area picked up in late 1958, despite non-union electricians working at the base, the Local 756 membership grew to more than 360 wiremen, linemen and apprentices. Regardless, as employment opportunities continued to increase into 1959, the local experienced a shortage of wiremen for the flourishing work in Daytona Beach.

Another disagreement over a wage increase that April stalled contract negotiations between the local and its employing contractors, who by April 11 had begun hiring non-union electricians to man some projects, according to that day's *Morning Journal*. Seeking a 15-cent raise to its \$3.50-per-hour journeyman rate while member companies of the **Halifax Area Electrical Contractors Association** were only willing to renew the current wage, the local's 40 members working for affiliated contractors ultimately went on strike on June 17. A week later, a new agreement was reached that provided the \$3.65-per-hour wage, but it also stipulated that the pay scale for residential and small industrial and commercial work for which the "total cost is \$15,000 or less" would remain at \$3.50 per hour.



Local 756 members install conduit during construction of a new blockhouse for the NASA Saturn-missile launch site on Cape Canaveral in 1961.

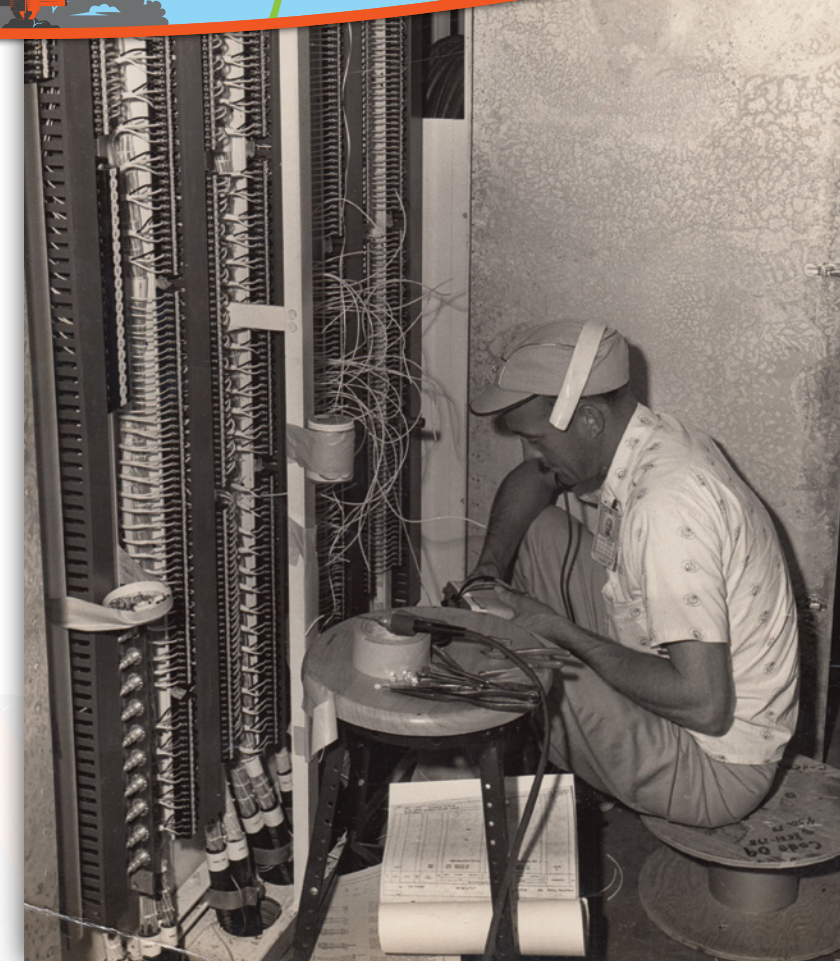
## GAINS POWERED BY THE SPRINT TO SPACE

The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union following World War II had manifested itself by the mid-1950s into the "Space Race" competition between the two world superpowers as each vied for spaceflight superiority. It was further intensified when U.S. President John F. Kennedy declared on May 25, 1961, that "this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before the decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth."

The heated contest initially gave Florida's Space Coast a sudden jolt in wealth and a flood of development and jobs, including housing construction, in the late 1950s and early 1960s. During that time, Local 756 members and brother electrical workers from its sister I.B.E.W. locals who traveled into the Daytona Beach jurisdiction performed more than 90 percent of the electrical work at Patrick A.F.B. and its **Air Force Missile Test Center**, which had been created in 1951.

Meanwhile, the local's officers and members worked hard through a whirlwind organizing drive to bring more electrical workers into its organization. They were aided by the flood of housing work that resulted in a need for more residential wiremen in Daytona Beach, which the local's manpower alone could not fulfill and, therefore, was a source of employment for more traveling I.B.E.W. members as well as a vehicle to grow its membership.

With those efforts and the methodical, careful handling of the local's funds, the local's membership, number of signatory shops and treasury increased. Subsequently, the local's officers and members began exploring options for a union-hall facility of their own, after which in late 1957 the local purchased two separate pieces of land on North Ridgewood



A Local 756 member wires the new Launch Complex 32 blockhouse at the Air Force Missile Test Center on Patrick Air Force Base in March 1961.

Avenue in Daytona Beach. The local used the old, two-story home at 260 North Ridgewood for a business office beginning that year while still holding meetings in the Carpenters' Hall.

By 1960, the local decided to have an architect, Frank R. Walton, draw plans for a new union hall and office building to be located on the second parcel at 211 North Ridgewood. After more than a year of planning and construction overseen by the local's **Building Committee**, Local 756 dedicated its new, ultra-modern, half-million-dollar **I.B.E.W. Building** headquarters and union hall on April 26, 1961.

The three-story building featured a 500-person meeting hall on its top floor, a solar screen to shield the entire structure from the sun and 23,710 square feet of total floor area. During the dedication ceremony, I.B.E.W. Fifth District Vice-President Barker, who 25



## Local 756 Trade Classifications

Local 756 was designated an **Inside Electrical Wiremen** local when it was chartered by the I.B.E.W. on June 18, 1936.

The I.B.E.W. added the **Outside Electrical Linemen** classification to the local's jurisdiction on June 4, 1947, making it a "mixed" inside-outside local.

On July 29, 1975, the union added **Electric Signs** to the local's classifications.

The Outside designation was removed from the local's trade classifications on March 5, 1990.

As of June 18, 2021, the 85th anniversary date of its charter, Local 756 represents the following trade classifications within its jurisdiction:

- **Inside Electrical**
- **Electric Signs**

years earlier had installed the local with its new charter, declared, "This is the best building owned by a local union in the Fifth District."

Local 756 also gained a new, two-year agreement with its contractors to begin the decade that provided basic journeyman-wireman wage scales of \$3.70 per hour the

first year beginning April 1, 1960, and \$3.85 per hour the second year beginning April 1, 1961. The residential and small-industrial and -commercial jobs hourly rate was set at \$3.65 for the first year and then \$3.80 for the second year.

The Space Race intensified with the Soviet Union's first successful satellite launch of Sputnik 1 on October 4, 1957, and its first human spaceflight and orbital flight around the Earth by Yuri Gagarin on April 12, 1961; and the United States' formation of the **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** (NASA) in 1958

and its first successful test firing of a Titan missile on February 6, 1959. Employment for Local 756 members on the nation's rocket and space programs likewise proliferated in the 1960s, and many union electricians during the early years of the decade helped build many



During the dedication ceremony and open house for the new I.B.E.W. Local 756 Building on April 26, 1961, Local 756 Executive Board members (left to right) W. A. Bernard, A.O. Bush, Treasurer L.A. Parker, Recording Secretary Claude C. Vaughn, Vice-President Paul Graham, President Robert E. Lee and Business Manager Bob Palmer stand with the dedication plaque.

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LOCAL UNION 756 IBEW 211 NORTH RIDGEWOOD					
DAYTONA BEACH FLO=					
ON BEHALF OF THE BROTHERHOOD'S ENTIRE MEMBERSHIP OF 771,000 MAY I EXTEND HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS TO THE MEMBERS OF YOUR LOCAL UNION AND YOUR FELLOW WORKERS FOR THE ESSENTIAL PART THEY PLAYED IN MAKING TODAY'S HISTORIC SPACE FLIGHT POSSIBLE.					
I FEAR THAT THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SO READY TO CRITICIZE THE DELAYS DURING THE PROGRAM WILL BE TOO BUSY TODAY TO TAKE NOTE OF THE FACT THAT WITHOUT THE WORK OF THE SKILLED WORKMEN AT THE CAPE CANAVERAL BASE, TODAY'S EVENT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE. BEST WISHES=					
GORDON M FREEMAN					
INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT...					
THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE					





Local 756 bowling team, 1961.



Local 756 bowling team, 1965.

of the missile launch pads along the coast that together came to be known as "Missile Row."

But on November 14, 1960, while working on construction of the massive launch facilities for the **Saturn** and **Centaur** space rockets, Local 756 went on strike against NASA when the federal government brought in civil-service employees to perform electrical work on equipment for the Saturn rocket program blockhouse. Joined by 17 members of the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters local union, 43 union electricians walked off the job in protest that day.

NASA filed unfair labor-practice charges against the union and asked the National Labor Relations Board (N.L.R.B.) to grant an injunction to halt the strike, according to the November 19 *Morning Journal*. Two weeks after the Local 756 members first stopped working, they returned to work pending a study into the dispute by a joint committee of Labor and Commerce Department investigators.

Soon after in June 1961, the National Building Trades, including the I.B.E.W., made a no-strike, no-lockout pledge with NASA for work on all missile bases across the United States, including those on Cape Canaveral. As part of the agreement, a **Cape Canaveral Labor-Management Disputes Committee** was established to peacefully settle disagreements between labor and management on NASA projects.

In the wake of such labor disputes, Local 756 was made to defend itself against accusations that the local and other unions called strikes on space-program jobs "to throw projects behind schedule and thus force the payment of overtime wages to meet target dates," the April 28, 1961, *Morning Journal*

## Sister Edith Whiting LONGTIME OFFICE MANAGER GAVE INVALUABLE ASSISTANCE



Local 756 longtime office manager Sister Edith Whiting at work in her office at the local's new office building in 1961.

For nearly four decades, **Sister Edith Whiting** served as the Local 756 office manager after Business Manager Bob Palmer hired her on January 17, 1954. Before she retired on May 29, 1993, Sister Whiting worked with four different business managers during her tenure.

Because of her many years of dedicated service to the local, Sister Whiting was made an honorary lifetime member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (I.B.E.W.) on January 17, 1989. She was also given honorary lifetime membership in the Local 756 Retirees Club on December 8, 1988.

The local held its 1993 summer picnic in honor of Sister Whiting on the occasion of her retirement. Among the many gifts bestowed upon her, the Local 756 membership presented her with an all-expenses trip to Ireland and grand tour of the island, which included spending money from the local's signatory contractors.

An avid equestrian, Sister Whiting was a founding member of the Florida Horseman's Association and was the first person to win its Florida 100 Competitive Trail Ride through the sandy hills of the Ocala National Forest in 1951. She also won the race in 1952 and 1953. The association's Edith Whiting Horsemanship Award-Florida 100 was named in her honor.

Sister Whiting passed away on April 2, 2005. A memorial in the August I.B.E.W. *Journal* read:

**"She was a good friend to all and will be missed."**



Sister Edith Whiting receives a lifetime membership with the I.B.E.W. from International Representative Dan Rosetti on January 17, 1989, at the Local 756 union hall for her long and dedicated service as office manager for the local.



reported. Testifying before the U.S. Senate Investigations Subcommittee on April 27, Business Manager Palmer said that the local's members are "patriotic Americans 'just as interested as anyone else' in seeing the U.S. outstrip Russia's missile space-flight achievements."

Consequently, amendments were made to the standing contract between Local 756 and the Daytona Beach Division of NECA that went into effect on May 17, placing a limit on overtime wages in return for giving electricians daily subsistence payments and differentials for night work, the June 2, 1961, *Morning Journal* reported. Under the negotiated contract changes, electricians working on Cape

Canaveral were limited to 20 hours of overtime per week and were not permitted to work more than one shift in a 24-hour period, while the union pledged to furnish sufficient workers to avoid excessive overtime and not strike space-program projects.

Then on February 20, 1962, the Friendship 7 mission's Mercury spacecraft was sent into space from **Launch Complex 14**, which had been wired by Local 756 members, aboard an Atlas rocket; inside, astronaut John Glenn became the first American to orbit Earth, circling the globe three times in 4 hours, 55 minutes and 23 seconds. Later that day, **I.B.E.W. International General President Gordon M. Freeman** sent a telegram to Local 756 containing these words



NASA's Vertical Assembly Building, which would be renamed the Vehicle Assembly Building, under construction with Local 756 members installing the electrical work in 1965.



The I.B.E.W. Local 756 Building at 211 North Ridgewood Avenue shortly after it opened in 1961.

of praise for its role in that day's launch:

*"On behalf of the Brotherhood's entire membership ... may I extend heartiest congratulations to the members of your local union and your fellow workers for the essential part they played in making today's historic space flight possible."*

## DEDICATION ENERGIZES A NATION'S MOONSHOT

**A**fter the Saturn-Apollo launch facilities for NASA's Moon program, known as **Project Apollo**, began to grow out of a previously barren wilderness of palmetto scrub and swampland on Cape Canaveral in the early 1960s, many Local 756 members would be employed throughout the decade on construction of those NASA structures, including **Launch Complex 37** (LC-37). In particular, the union electricians wired the complex's new Saturn blockhouse, whose

## LOCAL 756 UNION HALLS

### Daytona Beach Labor Temple Carpenters' Hall

512 North Beach Street  
Daytona Beach  
1936 into 1939

### Local 756 Union Hall

124 Emmett Street  
Daytona Beach

### Meetings at Electricians Temple

538 West Street  
Daytona Beach  
1939 into 1943

### Carpenters' Hall

512 North Beach Street  
Daytona Beach  
1943 into 1952

### Local 756 Union Hall Electricians' Club

Willis Avenue  
Daytona Beach  
1952 into 1954

### Carpenters' Hall

919 North Beach Street  
Daytona Beach  
1954 into 1957

### Local 756 Union Hall

260 North Ridgewood Avenue

### Meetings at Carpenters' Hall

919 North Beach Street  
Daytona Beach  
1957 into 1961

### I.B.E.W. Local 756 Building

211 North Ridgewood Avenue  
Daytona Beach  
1961 into 1985

### Local 756 Union Hall (Temporary)

619 Beville Road  
South Daytona

### Meetings at C.W.A. Union Hall

4638 Clyde Morris Boulevard  
Port Orange  
1985 into 1986

### Local No. 756 Union Hall

5901 Airport Road  
(Road name changed in 2004)  
5901 South Williamson Boulevard  
Port Orange  
1986 to present





During the 10th Annual Local 756/Daytona Beach Electrical Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee graduation ceremony on June 27, 1970, at the local's I.B.E.W. Building, International Representative John B. Smith (far left), Local 756 President Ernie Pastor (second from left) and Local 756 Business Manager Dan Rosetti (far right) congratulate that year's outstanding apprentices, (left to right) Robert E. Brown, outstanding apprentice, and James R. Utter, runner-up.

cableways and conduit would hold the control and power wires feeding two separate firing pads for LC-37 – which along with **Launch Complex 34** (LC-34) would be used from 1961 through 1968 to launch Saturn rockets as part of the country's efforts to land the first humans on the Moon.

Ultimately, the program would be the largest construction project the local ever experienced, as union electrical workers were also involved in

the building of **Launch Complex 39** (LC-39) and its **Vertical Assembly Building** (V.A.B.), which would be renamed the **Vehicle Assembly Building** in February 1965. Work there included construction of the launch umbilical towers; the arming tower; the crawlerway and crawler to carry mobile launcher platforms between the V.A.B. and the launch pads; and the launch control center.

Local 756 **Press Secretary Louis Hedgecock**

later proclaimed in the October 1975 *Journal*:

*"The memory of this immense project will stay with us for a lifetime."*

While work for its roughly 400 members on the Cape and in Daytona Beach and all of Volusia County remained strong, the local and its contractors agreed to a first-ever three-year-long contract on January 3, 1962, following what were described by negotiators on both sides as "the most peaceful negotiations in many years," the *Morning Journal* reported the following day. After four months of contract talks, the local accepted a 10-cent-per-hour annual wage increase for its journeyman electricians and a 2.6-percent annual increase for its apprentices and other classifications. Starting April 1, the agreement would raise the local's journeyman rate from \$3.85 to \$4.15 per hour for its final year.

During that period, construction of the

V.A.B. for the vertical assembly of the Apollo/Saturn-V space vehicle began in August 1963. The largest single-story building in the world and the tallest building in Florida after it was completed in 1966, work on the V.A.B. and associated support facilities, including various launch pads, brought more prosperity to Local 756 along with full employment for its members and a large number of traveling I.B.E.W. brothers.

But the local did find it necessary at times to push back against NASA contractors over work conditions; for instance, on March 8, 1965, its members working on LC-34 walked off their jobs to protest the use of a non-union subcontractor for work on conversion of the launch complex for a Saturn rocket. After defying two temporary injunctions, the electricians returned to the project on March 18 after a U.S. District Court cited the local for contempt and ordered its members back to work or be subject to fines.



Elected officers of Local 756 in 1971 were (left to right) Executive Board member Dow Graham, Treasurer Tom Cates, Executive Board member Bob Wolfe, Recording Secretary Frank Dymmek, President Ernie Pastor, Business Manager Don Carter, Assistant Business Manager John Scott, Executive Board member Don Morgan and Vice-President Bob Iler.



## LOCAL 756 BUSINESS MANAGERS

Brother John La Tour Sr. served as Local 756's first president and Brother Cecil O. Westfall served as its first financial secretary/treasurer at the local's inception in 1936 and into 1939. Because the local's membership was relatively small during that time, the union and the local did not deem it necessary for Local 756 to have a business manager.

With the demands of several military projects and an impending world war, Local 756 appointed Brother La Tour its first business manager in 1939, although the position would usually be unpaid for several years (for him and his predecessors). A change to its bylaws in 1954 designated the local's business manager a four-year post.

### Business Managers

**John La Tour Sr.**  
1939 into 1943

**Edwin R. Utter Sr.**  
1943 into 1945

### Business Managers/ Financial Secretary-Treasurers

**Howard E. Canfield**  
1947 into 1948

**Robert H. "Bob" Palmer**  
1948 into 1964  
(Died while in office.)

**Daniel Rosetti**  
1964 into 1971

**Donald L. Carter**  
1971 into 1977

**John Waters**  
1945 into 1946

**Howard E. Canfield**  
1946 into 1947

**Don E. Morgan**  
1977 into 1998

**Stephen R. Williams**  
1998 into 2012

**Daniel P. Hunt**  
2012 into 2019

**Matthew S. Nelson**  
2019 to current



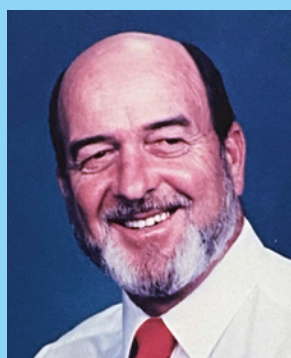
Robert H. "Bob" Palmer



Daniel Rosetti



Donald L. Carter



Don E. Morgan



Stephen R. Williams



Daniel P. Hunt

Tragedy had also struck Local 756 when Business Manager Palmer passed away while still in office on January 4, 1964. He was 48 years old.

Under new **Business Manager Daniel Rosetti**, the local was able to secure another new, three-year agreement with contractors that went into effect April 1, 1964. The contract raised the local's journeyman basic wage scale to \$4.20 per hour the first year, \$4.35 per hour the second year and \$4.55 per hour the final year.

The pact for the first time also set up a new scale for shift work at Cape Canaveral, adding hourly increases to the basic scale for members working the second-shift (4 p.m. to midnight) and the third shift (midnight to 8 a.m.). As such, members were paid \$5.23 per hour for second-shift work and \$5.46 per hour for third-shift work during the third year of the contract.

What's more, the agreement established the local's very first healthcare benefit for its membership. With the subsidy, employers

were to contribute an additional 15-cents-per-hour worked by the local's electricians and apprentices into the local's new **Health and Welfare Trust Fund** to provide healthcare insurance to members.

From the mid-1960s through much of the balance of the decade, Local 756 also controlled about 80 percent of the electrical jobs in the Greater Daytona Beach area. In fact, the local's more than 500 members handled most residential electrical work in its jurisdiction in 1966 and during the following years.

The local was also able to secure a new, two-year agreement for its outside linemen with the **Southeastern Line Constructors Chapter of NECA** beginning April 1, 1967. The pact provided wages for journeyman linemen of \$4.75 per hour initially to \$5.35 per hour over its final six months.

A new, two-year contract for the local's wiremen effective April 1, 1968, likewise raised the pay scale of the local's journeyman inside electricians to \$4.90 per hour for the first year



Local 756/Daytona Beach Electrical Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee graduates and new journeyman electricians of the local shown after their graduation ceremony in 1975 were (front row, left to right) Thomas G. Rodgers, Stephen Courteaux, W. Gregory Cush, Don L. Helms and Donald B. Sweeney; and (back row) Paul Canetti, John F. Barnhart Jr., Joy Deen, W. Larry Frohock, H. Wakeman Gailley, Raymond F. Drozd, Jerry W. Luke, Greg F. Stone, Henry J. Lammers and Lee I. Sams. Not pictured was Terry Reynolds.





and then to \$5.15 per hour for the second year beginning April 1, 1969. The agreement also set cable-splicer wages at \$5.15 per hour and \$5.40 per hour, respectively, for each year and increased employers' contributions into the local's Health and Welfare Fund to 25 cents per hour.

More than a decade of dedicated participation by Local 756 skilled electricians culminated on July 16, 1969, when **Apollo 11** was launched from LC-39 Launch Pad A at the NASA **John F. Kennedy Space Center**, which had been renamed from the Launch Operations Center on November 29, 1963 (following the assassination of the 35th president on November 22). Four days later on July 20, the Saturn V rocket's lunar module "Eagle" landed on the Moon and Commander Neil Armstrong became the first human to walk on its surface.

## PROGRESS THROTTLED AMID TOUGH TIMES

Local 756 began the 1970s with a new contract with the Daytona Division of the North Florida Chapter of NECA that provided an identical wage for the local's journeyman wiremen and linemen ranging from \$5.55 per hour beginning April 1, 1970, to \$7.35 per hour for the final five months ending March 1, 1973. Employers would also

keep contributing 25 cents per hour into the local's Health and Welfare Fund and 1 percent of their payrolls into the N.E.B.F.

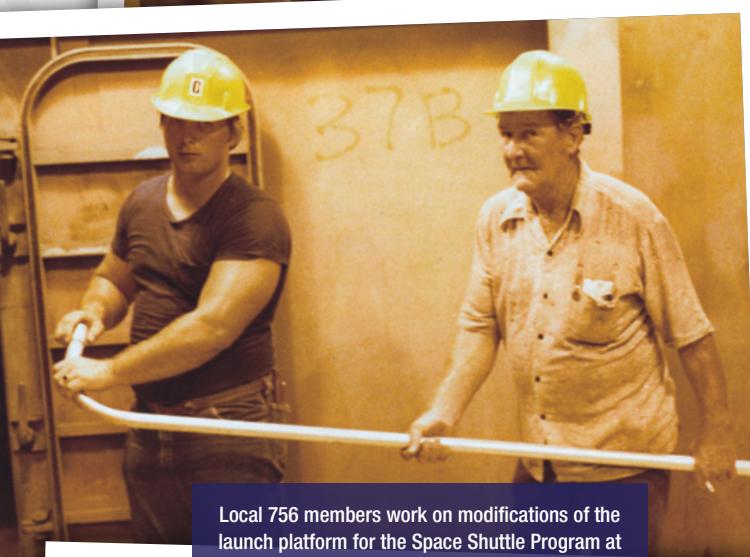
As a building boom in Daytona Beach throughout much of the first half of the decade kept the local's roughly 500 members busy wiring mostly small commercial and residential projects and new condominiums and high-rise hotels along the beach, the local's wages continued to climb. A new, two-year contract in June 1974 included a wage increase that was slightly more than the 5.5 percent standard set by the President Richard M. Nixon administration's Federal Pay Board.

The agreement also established the new **I.B.E.W. Local Union No. 756 Pension Fund**, another first for the local, that went into effect August 1, 1974. After a committee worked on formulating the pension retirement benefit for about a year and the local negotiated for the new contract, the membership voted to put 5 percent of its gross wages into "the best plan the committee could come up with," the local reported in that June's *Journal*.

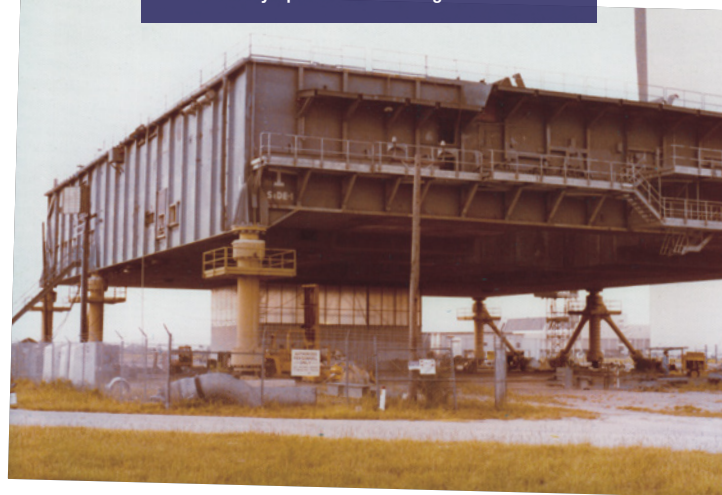
At that time, the biggest job on which Local 756 members were working was the **Volusia Mall** in Daytona Beach, the largest retail shopping center in the county. The local's electricians wired all of its large department stores, such as Ivey's, May-Cohens and Sears, as well as the mall proper and many of its smaller stores and restaurants.

But employment for the local slowed dramatically throughout the mid-1970s after the mall opened on October 15, 1974, and work elsewhere subsided because of the energy crisis, tight funding for new construction, a lack of materials and projects being completed. What's more, in 1974 the Florida State Legislature removed prevailing-wage scales from school construction, resulting in most of the new schools in the local's jurisdiction being built by non-union contractors.

Subsequently, many of the local's members traveled to jurisdictions of other I.B.E.W. locals for employment during much of that period – so much so that **Brother Steve Williams**, who would serve as Local 756 business manager



Local 756 members work on modifications of the launch platform for the Space Shuttle Program at the Kennedy Space Center during the late 1970s.



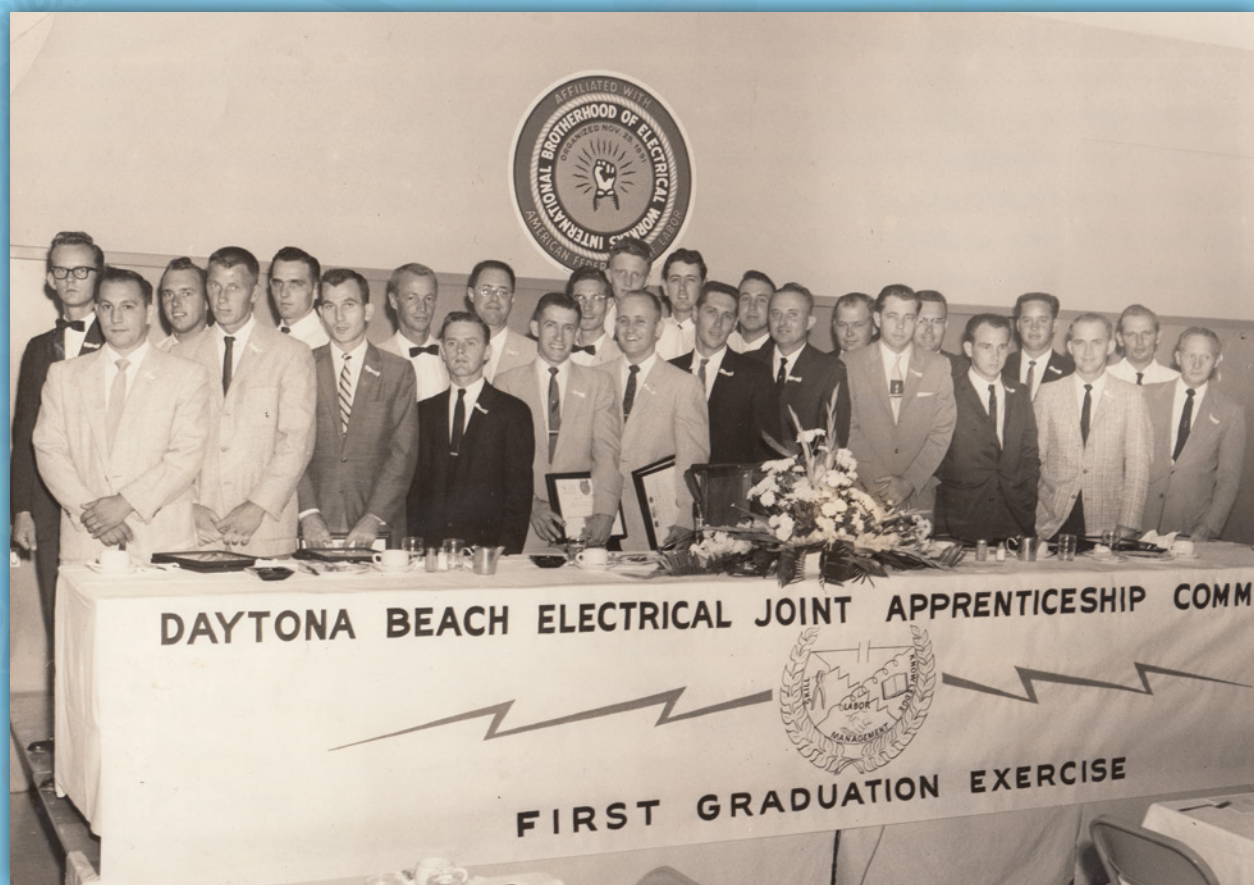
Local 756 members working for Olson Electric Company on its new contract at the Kennedy Space Center in 1978 are (front row, left to right) Jim Hays, John Scott, Steve Sullens and Jim Brown; and (back row) Jim Wynn, Terrel Smith, Ernie Pastor and Jim Hayes (along with project manager Lou Poley and government inspector Bill Spencer).



## Local 756 Training and Education

# ADVANCING ITS MEMBERSHIP

# ALONG WITH ITS INDUSTRY



The first Local 756/Daytona Beach Electrical Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee graduating class in 1961 consisted of (left to right) Charles Rehle, John Scott, Pete Davies, Clem Newmen, Frank Walsh, Wilbut Wright, Pat Cain, George Severense, Earl Detwieler, (unknown), Bill Clarida, Dick Brown, Norby Sebaneller, Jim Brown, LeRoy Hawkins, D.F. Phillips, Darl Mallet, Fred Due, Dow Graham, Brad Doughty, Lon Davis, Tom Kerrick and Red Keller.

When International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (I.B.E.W.) Local No. 756 was first operational in June 1936, most of its apprentices – or “helpers,” as they were often referred at that time – were friends or relatives of members and were paid 20 to 25 cents per hour to assist the local’s journeyman electricians on jobs. “We did have a few (apprentices), but most of the shops operated with one man or two men,” Local 756 charter member **Brother Cecil O. Westfall** recalled in an interview on May 29, 1974. “If we needed any help, we just went out and picked someone up to help us.”

Within a year of being chartered, however, the local began to recruit helpers from among young men who were finishing high school. “We had to talk contractors into doing this,” Brother

Westfall explained. “But it wasn’t hard to do because there were boys who wanted to learn the trade and they would work.”

While on-the-job training working alongside journeyman members was the primary means for apprentices to learn the electrical trade, by 1939 the local had set up a school for apprentices at its meeting hall on West Street in Daytona Beach, which consisted of occasional classes in the evenings on electrical topics. That year, for instance, the local provided a class on neon lighting and manufacturing in its building after setting up a complete lab of equipment and materials for the school. Local 756 member **Brother Fred Newcomb** had attended a course on the subject provided by the University of Florida in conjunction with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

## DAYTONA BEACH J.A.T.C.– LOCAL 756 TRAINING DIRECTORS

**Dominick J. “Rusty” Stelltano**  
August 2, 1965 to September 1990

**E. Holmes Davis**  
September 1990 to August 2000

**Gail Jackson Bell**  
August 2000 into 2004

**Vivian Levine**  
2004 to May 2006

**C. Scott Jarvis**  
May 2006 to May 2018

**Robert Cruz**  
September 2018 to present

Local 756 **President John La Tour Sr.** stated in the January 26, 1939, *Daytona Beach Morning Journal* that the local had set up its school “to enable electrical workers to keep pace with the rapid development of neon lighting and to do the work they are called upon to do.”

Soon after, the local and its contractors set up the **Daytona Beach Electrical Joint Apprentice Training Committee** (J.A.T.C.) to oversee the local’s education of its apprentices and to fund its training programs. By 1951, the J.A.T.C. was seeking instructors to teach at its apprentice school, which in 1952 began offering an electronics class.

By the late 1950s, Local 756 and the J.A.T.C. and established a formal, four-year apprenticeship program in conjunction with the I.B.E.W. and the National Electrical J.A.T.C. Classes for the program, which still centered around on-the-job training, were held at the **Mary Karl Vocational School** at Daytona Beach Junior College (*which became Daytona Beach Community College and then Daytona State College in 2008*) and were taught by the local’s journeyman electricians.



Left to right: Daytona Beach J.A.T.C. former training director Brother Holmes Davis, former instructor Ed Kilby, former training director Brother Rusty Stelltano and former training director Brother Scott Jarvis.

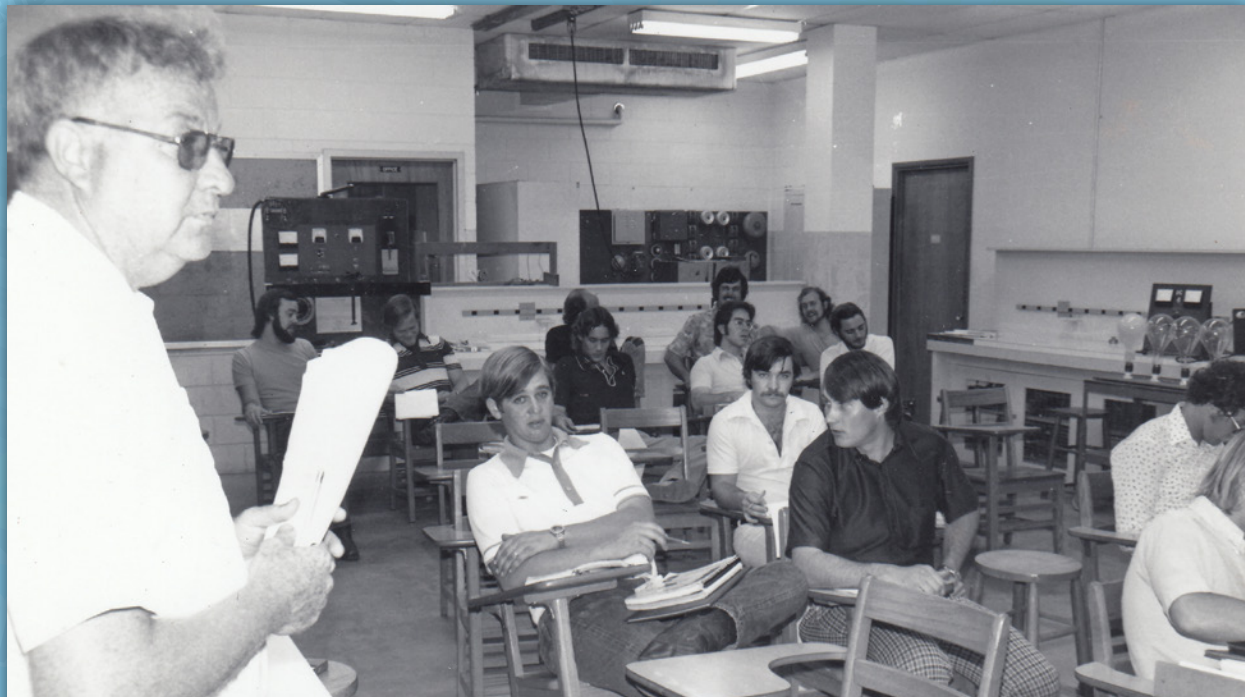
When **Sister Gloria Anderson** became one of five apprentices to graduate the Daytona Beach J.A.T.C. apprentice-training program in 1984, she also became the **first-ever female graduate** of the school. Sister Anderson advanced from apprentice to journeyman electrician as an employee of Olson Electric at NASA’s Kennedy Space Center, where she worked as an “elastomeric encapsulation technician” on the potting and molding process of multi-conductor cable connectors.



## Local 756 Training and Education

# ADVANCING ITS MEMBERSHIP

# ALONG WITH ITS INDUSTRY



A Local 756/Daytona Beach Electrical Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee class at the Mary Karl Vocational School during 1975.

The Daytona Beach Electrical J.A.T.C. graduated its first class of apprentices in 1961. However, it would be four more years before the J.A.T.C. hired its first training director, **Brother Dominick J. "Rusty" Stellitano**, who would build the Local 756 training program from the ground up over the next 30 years, including incorporating a computer system into the training.

By the 1990s, the J.A.T.C. had expanded its training program into a comprehensive five-year curriculum. Classes and labs for the program were being held at **Daytona Beach Community College**.

In 2001, the J.A.T.C. moved its in-class programs to the new, state-of-the-art **Advanced Technology Center** technical

college in Daytona Beach, which was a partnership project of the Volusia and Flagler county school districts and Daytona Beach Community College. At that time, the Daytona Beach Electrical J.A.T.C. was the largest apprenticeship program affiliated with the community college.

Now operated under the I.B.E.W.-NECA joint **Electrical Training Alliance of Daytona Beach** and administered out of headquarters on Commonwealth Boulevard in Port Orange since 2006, the apprenticeship and training program in 2021 has jurisdiction over Florida's Putnam, Brevard, Flagler, Lake and Volusia counties. Its apprenticeship program consists of a five-year term covering 8,000 hours of supervised employment and 180 hours per year of related classroom instruction.

Graduation to journeyman-level electrician requires an apprentice to satisfactorily complete the National Electrical J.A.T.C. Five-Year Inside Wireman Apprenticeship course material, which covers industry topics including AC and DC Theory; Job Safety; Blueprint Reading; Conduit Bending; Solid State Electronics; Digital Electronics; Category 5 Wiring; Motor Controls; Optical Fiber; and National Electrical Code.

When current Electrical Training Alliance of Daytona Beach **Training Director Robert Cruz**, a 27-year I.B.E.W. member, took over the position in September 2018, he became the **first-ever Hispanic I.B.E.W. training program director** in the entire State of Florida.



Electrical Training Alliance of Daytona Beach apprentices at work recently on a jobsite.





While working for Olson Electric Company at the Kennedy Space Center in 1978, Local 756 member Jim "Zero" Hays removes a plug connector from a potting mold.

from 1998 into 2012, recalled in a March 2021 interview, "Our local was considered a traveling local for a long time."

Adding to the local's distress, costs for maintenance on its 13-year-old union hall were steadily exceeding income from rental of the third-floor space for various purposes such as meetings, conventions and dances, which "did not quite work out as it was planned," the local acknowledged in the January 1975 *Journal*. Exploring ways to remedy that situation, the local even formed an **Electrical Workers Building Corporation** to look into selling its building (which it would avoid for another 10 years).

In early 1975, the local also set up a **Budget Committee** to pare its operating expenses wherever possible as incoming funds continued to decrease with the local's increased unemployment.

The outside-lineman members of Local 756

were kept busy in 1974 and 1975, however, by contractor Commonwealth Electric's construction of a 240-kilovolt high line from Williamson Boulevard substation in Daytona Beach to the substation in the City of Bunnell, and from there to the new **Putnam Power Plant** being built in the City of Palatka.

The local's inside wiremen were put to work in good numbers in late 1975 on the Florida Power & Light Company's Putnam plant, a power-at-combined-energies (PACE) facility that used a combination of gas and steam for electrical generation, taking up some of the local's employment slack. The six-generating-unit, 520-total-megawatt powerhouse job reached its peak in manpower in

early 1976, at which time 48 journeymen and 15 apprentices from Local 756 were employed on the project before it was completed the following year.

Employment conditions in the Daytona Beach area remained bleak throughout much of 1976, during which many members worked out of the jurisdiction in such places as Louisiana, Texas, Ohio and Minnesota. Several Local 756 members also worked at that time on the new state capitol building in Tallahassee within the jurisdiction of I.B.E.W. **Local No. 1965**.

## NEW HOPE IGNITED WITH SPACE SHUTTLE

Local 756's condition had "reached a new low," as Brother Hedgecock described it in the July 1975 *Journal*, after the first construction packages bid on the new NASA **Space Shuttle Program** at the Kennedy Space

Center earlier that year were awarded to a non-union general contractor and a non-union electrical subcontractor. The local had been looking to the start of the program to help alleviate its poor employment at the time.

Officially initiated in 1972 under its formal title, the **Space Transportation System**, the shuttle project was NASA's mission to build and launch "humankind's first reusable spacecraft" that would, as NASA describes, "launch like a rocket and land like a plane." The winged, crewed spacecraft would be the first to achieve orbit and landing, and the only reusable space vehicle to make multiple flights into orbit.

The Space Shuttle Program began to provide more employment for Local 756 as the second half of the 1970s progressed. In particular, in 1977 **Dianne Electric**, which was owned by Local 756 **Brother Jerry Wilkes**, completed a job in the Vehicle Assembly Building that primarily involved instrumentation work and consisted, in part, of installing 1,000 feet of cable tray and setting five terminal distributors.

Also that year, members working for I.B.E.W.-signatory contractor **Cleveland Consolidated** modified **Mobile Launch Platform No. 1**, one of three two-story structures originally constructed to support the Saturn rockets used in the Apollo and Skylab (the first United States space station) programs, which were altered to support the space-shuttle stack throughout its build-up and launch processes. Local 756 electricians also worked on modifications of LC-39 Pad A for the space-shuttle launches in 1978, which included a sound-suppression water system and side-flame deflectors for the shuttle.

Contractors **E. C. Ernst** and the **Catalytic Construction Company** also employed Local 756 members on construction of the shuttle launch facilities, including Pad A, during that time.

Work and employment for the local remained slow, however, during much of 1977. Despite

the federal Council on Industrial Relations cutting the local's wages on small commercial and residential electrical jobs valued at under \$100,000 down to \$7.50 per hour that year, the local still lost some smaller contractors from its collective bargaining agreement.

Those that did sign the local's contract that year, which went into effect March 1, 1977, agreed to a base journeyman wage scale of \$8.74 per hour. Additionally, the contract included a new **"Zone 1"** scale of \$9.19 per hour for work more than 40 miles from the union hall, including Cape Canaveral and the Kennedy Space Center. The contractors would further contribute 45 cents per hour for health and welfare; 48 cents per hour for pensions; 24 cents per hour for the union's apprentice-training program; and 1 percent of payrolls to the N.E.B.F.



Local 756 Brother Pat Cain Sr. gives directions during the local's annual summer picnic in 1981.





Local 756 brothers (left to right) Earl Detweiler, Don Graham, "Rusty" Stellitano and Pete Davies enjoy the local's annual summer picnic in 1982.

Sporadic work on the Cape and at the space center in support of the Space Shuttle Program continued in 1978 and 1979, including members working for **Olson Electric** in 1978 on fabricating wire harnesses and electric cable assemblies – work the local's members had previously performed on-site for many years. The contract instead was worked at Olson's facilities in Daytona Beach, giving the union electricians the first opportunity to do the work off-site and supply union-made, government-furnished equipment to the space center.

Various NASA projects were completed during that time, however, after which Local 756 members were laid off. Addressing the layoffs, Press Secretary Hedgecock noted in the April 1978 *Journal*, "This has added to our out-of-work list, which never seems to get down impressively."

Meanwhile, after three months of "haggling with the contractors," the local reached agreement on a one-year contract that went

into effect on March 1, 1978, after negotiations for the first time in many years did not go before the Council on Industrial Relations for arbitration. The local ended up with increases from \$7.50 to \$8.15 per hour for contracts under \$100,000, which increased after June 1 to \$8.65; from \$8.74 to \$9.15 per hour for contracts over \$100,000; and from \$9.19 to \$9.60 per hour for zone pay. The agreement also provided an additional 10-cents-per-hour contribution to the Pension Fund, bringing the benefit up to 58 cents per hour worked.

The work situation for the local's roughly 475 members did not change significantly in late 1978 over the previous months, as NASA LC-39 Pad B and **Mobile Launch Platform No. 2** modification jobs on which union electricians were employed were not as large as anticipated by the local. While Local 756 members were working on the mobile launcher alterations, it was some time before a substantial number of union electricians were placed on the job.

"Our town contractors have picked up work, but there are so few of them and so many rats (non-union contractors) that we have barely made a dent in the construction activity that is going on," Brother Hedgecock wrote in the January 1979 *Journal* while giving an assessment of the local's condition. "It hurts to think that a few years ago, we controlled 75 percent of the work here and now we have way less than the 25 percent the rats had then."

However, into 1979, the local's work situation improved as Catalytic Construction, which annually had the service and maintenance contract with NASA, took on members for projects, and other new contracts got underway at the space center, as well – although throughout the year, hirings would usually only offset layoffs of Local 756 members. What's more, a new, one-year agreement settled long before the March 1 deadline that year gained the local a 75-cent hourly increase for in-town work to \$9.29 per hour for journeymen and a \$1.07 hourly increase to



Local 756 members participate in a picket in May 1984.



## VOLUNTEERISM EFFORTS HAVE INCLUDED HISTORIC BUILDING

Throughout its 85-year history, Local 756 has been involved in a multitude of charitable and community causes in and around Daytona Beach. Among its many more-recent benevolent efforts, the local has participated in **Habitat for Humanity**, annual blood drives for the **American Red Cross**, and the **I.B.E.W. Labor Day Solidarity Motorcycle Ride** to benefit St. Jude Children's Hospital.

One of the more-unique of the countless volunteer projects on which the local's members have worked since it was founded in 1936 was renovation of the historic News-Journal building on Orange Avenue after it was donated in 1978 for use as the new home of the **Halifax Historical Society Museum**. However, after the newspaper and a printing company afterward for years had indiscriminately added circuits to serve newly installed equipment without putting in larger panels, feeders and breakers to take care of the increased electrical load, the Daytona Beach electrical inspector declared the building's wiring unsafe and ordered that it be brought up to code.

On Saturday, August 23, 1980, volunteers from Local 756, along with some of its union contractors, spent the day removing unneeded electrical circuits and installing proper equipment to bring the building's wiring up to safety standards. *(Despite the best efforts of volunteers like Local 756 members, the building remained in a constant state of repair and the historical society was never able to fully move into it; eventually, the museum was moved into the former Merchants Bank building on Beach Street in 1984, where it is still located.)*

Zone 1 pay to \$10.56 per hour for journeymen.

Also that year, the local established its own a **Political Action Committee** to improve members' political knowledge and work toward forming a voting bloc with other labor organizations in the area, thereby improving the local's political standing. At its outset, the committee was tasked with joining the national fight against repeal of the federal Davis-Bacon prevailing-wage law in the wake of Florida's repeal of its own prevailing-wage statute.

The local's work scene showed new signs of life as it moved into the 1980s and the Space Shuttle Program approached its target maiden-

launch date, including work on LC-39 Pad B in early 1980. Line work in the local's jurisdiction also picked up considerably and looked more promising for Local 756 outside linemen than it had over the previous few years.

All of the Daytona Beach contractors signatory with the local continued to hold their own as the year advanced, but larger construction jobs in the area went to non-union companies while most of those projects were too big for the local's union contractors to bid. Work on the Cape dropped significantly, as well, and by October, according to that month's *Journal*, Catalytic's NASA support contract "was down to bare bones."

Another one-year contract extension with its contractors was settled long before the March 1, 1981, expiration of the current agreement when the two sides reached a deal on January 26. The pact provided a total 10-percent increase in pay and benefits, equal to \$1 per hour, for residential work and a total 10-1/2-percent increase, equal to \$1.20 per hour, for work on the Cape and any power-plant jobs a contractor might obtain.

At long last, on April 12, 1981, NASA launched the space shuttle **Columbia** on the program's first voyage into orbit. Lifted off from the modified LC-39 Pad A with a crew of two, the shuttle undertook a 54-hour space flight of 36 orbits while astronauts Robert L. Crippen and John W. Young conducted tests on the ship before successfully landing at Edwards Air Force Base in California on April 14.

While the previous decade had presented many challenges to the local, the Space Shuttle Program had been – and would continue to be – a boon for Local 756. Its members and their skills made possible the modifications and changes necessary to accommodate the shuttle orbiter, along with its massive external fuel tank and two solid rocket boosters. The change-arounds took several years and involved vast modifications of the facilities that had once

launched the 10-story-high Saturn-V Moon rocket to facilities capable of accommodating space shuttles.

Alterations and changes to the point of almost building from scratch were made on the mobile launchers, the bays of the V.A.B. and launch pads 39-A and 39-B, most all of which were performed under contractors that employed Local 756 electricians. Reflecting on the role the local played in initially getting the space-shuttle project off the ground and Columbia safely back to Earth, Brother Hedgecock wrote in the July 1981 *Journal*:

*"All of us felt a sense of pride and accomplishment with the perfect launch and flight of the Columbia on that Sunday morning of April 12. It was a payoff with bonuses after the years of work it took to prepare the launch facilities for the launch itself."*

## RIVALS BRING LOCAL BACK DOWN TO EARTH

In the spring of 1981, the new Local 756 **Advertising Committee** purchased a billboard in Daytona Beach that promoted the local at the Kennedy Space Center and in the city, stating, "QUALITY IS IMPORTANT NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE!" It was one of several ways, including newspaper ads and a booth at the annual home show in the city, the committee was publicizing union craftsmanship and warning the public about poor electrical work.

By that time, however, Local 756 controlled just a small percentage of the electrical construction work within its jurisdiction, and its struggles would continue throughout much of the decade. "Unfortunately, as is the case with a lot of other local unions, we lost sight of our purpose and the 'country club syndrome' set in," Brother Williams later explained in an



Local 756 members work on construction of the local's new union hall on Port Orange in 1986.







The newly completed Local 756 Union Hall in 1986.

August 15, 1989, Situation Assessment report to the I.B.E.W. international office he wrote as an officer of the local. "Members were job hopping from one overtime job to another. The needs of the contractors, to some degree, were not a priority. Our town work suffered severely due to most members wanting to work the big jobs at the Cape where the money was plentiful and the work was less stressful. These factors, plus others, led us to our current situation."

Work for the local's members in its jurisdiction remained poor during the summer and fall of 1981 as high interest rates slowed construction, forcing local contractors into giving employees time off or simply laying them off. Meanwhile, employment on the Cape was static, although during the month of August, Catalytic had so much work that the local had to call in travelers to man the jobs.

Catalytic Construction had for years won the service and maintenance contract at the Kennedy Space Center (which was hinged with Boeing Services International's contract

with NASA for maintaining and servicing the center's facilities), for which it employed union members from all of the building-trades craft. But by September 1981, Catalytic was laying off Local 756 members at the center.

Although Olson Electric employed some of the local's electricians on its LC-39 Pad B and **Orbiter Processing Facility** operations, throughout the remainder of the year the local's work situation did not improve. Fortunately, I.B.E.W. Local 606; **Local No. 323** in West Palm Beach; **Local No. 915** in Tampa; and especially **Local No. 1205** in Gainesville with jobs at a paper mill and the new Seminole Power Plant helped eased the Local 756's condition somewhat by providing work for many of its members.

The following summer, as available manhours continued to diminish, **Business Manager Don Morgan** announced to the local's Executive Board that the local's employment situation was the worst he had seen in the last 20 years. Although a large amount of construction and renovations was underway within the local's

jurisdiction, especially with a recently approved \$60-million bond for new school construction, most of it went to the non-union electrical sector.

With difficult employment conditions persisting into and throughout 1982 and 1983 as non-union elements continued to encroach upon the robust electrical-construction market in the Daytona Beach area, Local 756 gained a relatively slight 5-percent increase to its wages in April 1983 in a new agreement with its employing contractors. The local did, however, obtain a new **Vacation Fund** with contribution check-offs from members' paychecks going into its credit union for future use.

The awarding of the \$13-million contract for modification of a mobile launcher platform

## OLD-TIMERS' GROUP 37 YEARS OLD

The **Local 756 Retirees Club** held its very first meeting on April 12, 1984, during a meeting at the local's union hall. That evening, the club's initial elected officers were **President Russell Awe**; **Vice-President Ray Wellman**; **Secretary-Treasurer James Harrison**; and **Sergeant-at-Arms Bill Clarida**.

Four decades later, the local has nearly 140 retired members in 2021.

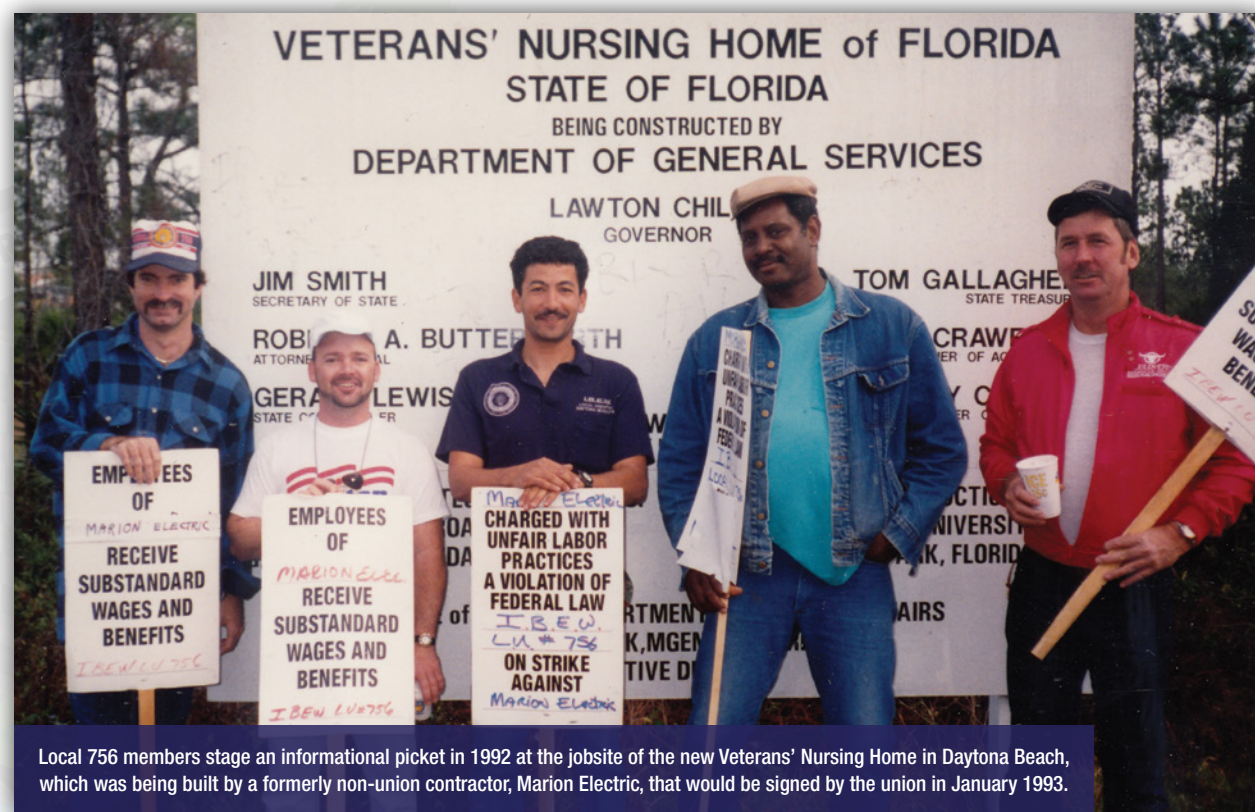
at the Kennedy Space Center to **Bechtel Corporation** in early 1984 stoked the local's optimism. In fact, the job was secured by the union-friendly contractor, in part, through the efforts of Business Manager Morgan and his counterpart with United Association Plumbers Local No. 295, both of whom took "whatever steps necessary to ensure that the project went union," according to Local 756's article in the February 1984 *Journal*.

But the local's respite was short-lived, as the



NASA's Space Station Processing Facility under construction with Local 756 members installing the electrical work in 1991 in the Kennedy Space Center. (NASA photo.)





Local 756 members stage an informational picket in 1992 at the jobsite of the new Veterans' Nursing Home in Daytona Beach, which was being built by a formerly non-union contractor, Marion Electric, that would be signed by the union in January 1993.

Catalytic contract at the Kennedy Space Center was terminated on May 6 that year soon after the Lockheed Corporation won the Shuttle Processing Contract from Boeing Services. Lockheed then informed the I.B.E.W. that the contract under which the union had been working would not be rebid. Without those space-center maintenance manhours, **Press Secretary Fred C. Symons** warned in the June 1984 *Journal*, "Much of this local's revenue, and that of the other building-trades unions involved, will cease."

The local was able to settle a new, two-year contract that went into effect March 1, 1985, with an initial journeyman base pay rate for in-town work of \$12.38 per hour and a Zone 1 rate of \$14.90 per hour. Additional increases of 25 cents every six months would eventually raise the base scale to \$13.13 per hour on September 1, 1986, for the final half-year; and a 50-cent raise on March 1, 1986, would increase the zone scale to \$15.40 per hour.

By mid-1985, the 450-member Local 756 had seen its share of the electrical work in the Greater Daytona Beach Area decline to about 10 percent, down from 80 percent just 20 years earlier. In an attempt to help its contractors compete with their non-union counterparts, that year the local began using pre-apprentice workers on jobs to lower the average manhours wage rate. Explaining the new tactic, Local 756 **Assistant Business Manager Al Bidault** told the September 2 *Morning Journal*, "We are doing things now we never conceived of doing a few years ago just to hang in there."

Against most indicators, work picked up significantly for Local 756 that year, and at one point in early summer its out-of-work "bench" was cleared for the first time in a long time. In particular, employment at the space center improved dramatically when the local signed two new contractors, **Massachusetts Electric** and **Dynalelectric**, each of which had sizable jobs on the Cape "and had their sights set on others," Brother Symons reported in the

*Journal* that June. What's more, for the first time in seven years, Florida Power Corporation (now Duke Energy) gave work to one of the local's union line contractors, creating some employment for the local's linemen on the 35-mile transmission-line job going from the City of Deland toward the City of Ocala.

Conversely, the work picture in and around Daytona Beach was "bleak at best," according to the local's press secretary. As non-union contractors continued their incursions into the local's jurisdiction and efforts to organize them and non-union electricians into the I.B.E.W. remained futile, several Local 756 signatory electrical shops had to reduce their number of employees.

Sporadic, short-term hiring at the space center into 1986, primarily on launch pads between launches, and then a temporary shutdown of the Space Shuttle Program after the shuttle **Challenger** broke apart 73 seconds into its flight on January 28, 1986, killing all seven crew members aboard, further hampered the local's employment. Into that summer, the local's work picture was "bleak," as **Press Secretary Stephen E. Ching** described it in

that June's *Journal*, with most of the industrial work in its jurisdiction going non-union, forcing many Local 756 members to travel for employment.

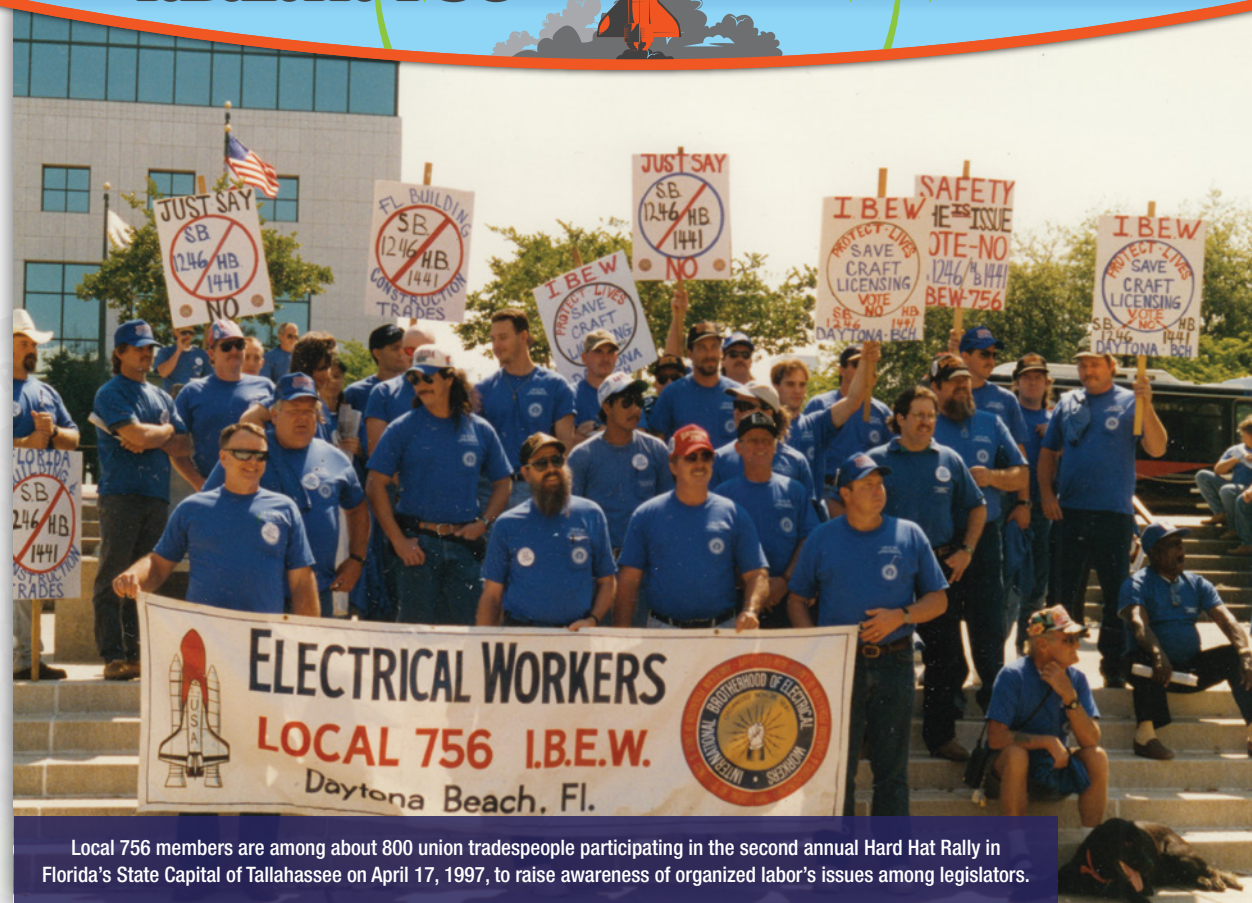
As the local's membership dropped below 400 members in late 1986, during that time it pushed hard to "enlighten not only NASA but several politicians within our jurisdiction that quality construction cannot be sacrificed," as **Brother Ching** reported in the February 1987 *Journal*. Regardless, a bid for a significant modification project on Launch Complex 41 at **Cape Canaveral Air Force Station** was awarded in November 1986 to a non-union contractor.

The local was, whoever, able to move into the new, permanent **Local 756 Union Hall** on Airport Road in Port Orange it had built for its offices and meeting space. After having been located in temporary headquarters on Beville Road in South Daytona for nearly two years after selling its office building on North Ridgewood Avenue, Local 756 dedicated its new union hall in December 1986. (*The local continues to be located in the facility in 2021, although the road on which it is located has since been renamed South Williamson Boulevard.*)



Local 756 longtime members (front row, left to right) Buck Jackson, Steve Williams, John Scott, Paul Graham, Herb Long and Al Bidault; and (back row) Charlie Willis, Dan Rosetti, Don Morgan, Don Carter, Bob Iler and Rube Comb display their I.B.E.W. service-time awards following a ceremony in 1995





Local 756 members are among about 800 union tradespeople participating in the second annual Hard Hat Rally in Florida's State Capital of Tallahassee on April 17, 1997, to raise awareness of organized labor's issues among legislators.

## RECOVERING TERRITORY THROUGH ORGANIZING

By the late 1980s, Local 756 was committed to regaining work it had commanded 25 years earlier. As such, the local, having learned from its mistakes, was very active in organizing its jurisdiction to increase its skilled membership and the number of contractors that would hire its electricians.

"We do not intend to ever go back to the country club mentality that led us to our present situation," Brother Williams declared in his August 15, 1989, Situation Assessment to the I.B.E.W. "Our attitudes are positive and we are aware of the challenging times that confront us. With organizing efforts still in its infancy, we have already made an impact on our jurisdiction."

To those ends, the local and its NECA contractors put a **Residential Agreement** into place beginning September 1, 1987, that set a lower wage for journeyman wiremen working

on residential projects at \$8.50 per hour the first year and then \$9 per hour the second year beginning September 1, 1988. Earlier that year, in another effort to create more productivity and better competitiveness for the contractors and better conditions and wages for union members, the two parties also formed a **Labor-Management Committee** to review, discuss and find solutions to issues the employees and employers were facing.

Meanwhile, employment for Local 756 members had improved in 1987 after several new construction projects broke ground in its jurisdiction during the first half of the year and Olson Electric had picked up the six-month maintenance contract from Lockheed for the Kennedy Space Center later that year. With two of its contractors already working on launch pads and support buildings and Olson starting construction on a three-story office building at the space center, more good news came when NASA set the next launch date of its Space Shuttle Program – the first since the Challenger disaster – for the first week of June

1988, which created more work to prepare the launch site.

Its employment satiation having stabilized into the next year, the local and its contractors agreed on a new contract effective March 1, 1989, that set the base journeyman-wireman wage scale at \$13.73 per hour and the Zone 1 wage scale at \$16 per hour for the following year. The employers would make additional contributions of \$1.05 per hour into the Health and Welfare Fund and \$1.20 per hour into the Pension Fund; 1 percent of payroll into the **Industry Fund**, which had been put into effect on July 1, 1977, to promote union electrical labor; 3 percent of payroll into the N.B.E.F.; 1 percent into the Training Fund; and 4 cents per hour into the local's Political Action Committee Fund.

The next year, the I.B.E.W. relieved Local 756 of its jurisdiction over linemen in its area, as few had been organized into the local and work for those members had been scarce. After the local's bylaws were amended on March 5, 1990, to eliminate the outside-lineman classification, it represented about 400 active and 150 retired inside wiremen and electric-sign members within its area – which at that time consisted of the Kennedy Space Center; Cape Canaveral Air Force Station; Patrick Air Force Base; the downrange islands in the **Atlantic Missile Test Range**; and most all of Volusia and Flagler Counties.

The local also signed a few new contractors in the West Indies Islands in early 1990, although construction of an oil refinery there went to a non-union contractor that year.

Its Negotiating Committee was then successful in its quest to provide the local with a 30-month-long agreement when the Daytona Beach Division, North Florida Chapter of NECA signed on to a new contract that went into effect March 1, 1990. The pact initially set the base journeyman wage rate at \$13.88 per hour and the Zone 1 rate at \$16.15 per hour

## MEMBER FIRST TRADESMAN TO BE HONORED BY NASA

Local 756 Brother Byron B. "Pete" Cox was honored by NASA upon his retirement in 1992 for his 30 years of dedicated service to the space program, becoming the first construction tradesman to receive the award. Among his contributions, Brother Cox designed, built and installed a specialized cap as part of the lightning protection system for space-shuttle launch pads at the Kennedy Space Center, as well as critical float switches on the hammerhead cranes atop the space-shuttle launch towers.

An I.B.E.W. member for 38 years before retiring that year, Brother Cox served the local in several capacities, including chief steward and Executive Board member for three terms. In the 1960s, he was instrumental in setting up the local's retirement and health-and-welfare insurance programs.

before it eventually raised those scales to \$14.28 per hour and \$16.55 per hour, respectively, on March 1, 1992.

Work in the local's area also steadily picked up during that time, bolstered by construction of the **Space Station Processing Facility** (S.S.P.F.) in the Kennedy Space Center industrial area beginning in March 1991. Built for processing the International Space Station flight hardware, the three-story S.S.P.F. employed many Local 756 members who wired some of the latest technology; installed modern fiberoptics; and fabricated, assembled and installed control cabinets, interface panels and mounts for monitors, cameras and countdown clocks in the facility before it opened in June 1994.

Work was also being performed at the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in support of NASA's **Mars Exploration Program**. The Mars Pathfinder exploration vehicle would be launched from the station on December 4, 1996, for an eight-month journey before it touched down on Mars on July 4, 1997.

By June 1991, more than 300 members and several travelers from other I.B.E.W. locals were employed within the Local 756 jurisdiction, a



marked improvement from just a couple years earlier, even though the State of Florida passed legislation that year that did away with licensing requirements for journeyman electricians. Despite that adverse development, employment improved to the point where Press Secretary Ching was able to announce in the following year's June 1992 issue of the *Journal*, "Our travelers are able to come home after many years on the road, (and) we've employed several hundred travelers."

## MAKING ITS CASE & NOT BACKING DOWN

*"We give each and every contractor the opportunity to sign our agreement and receive highly skilled journeyman wiremen. In return, we uphold a higher standard of living for our members and their families. We protect our area from infiltration of non-union contractors determined to pay substandard wages."*

By the time Press Secretary Ching wrote that explanation of the advantages for contractors being signatory to Local 756 in the August 1994 *Journal*, the local's organizing campaigns were proving effective. Before that July, the local had signed 15 new contractors and enlisted about 75 new journeyman-level members during the first years of the decade.

Organizing remained a primary focus of the local in the 1990s, and to boost its capacity to organize non-union electrical workers, early that decade the local was offering its members I.B.E.W.-sanctioned **COMET** (Construction Organizing Membership Education Training) courses twice monthly to teach them proper organizing tactics to make them effective (if not official) "organizers"



## ORGANIZING EFFORTS RECOGNIZED

Local 756 received the prestigious **1994 Henry Miller Award** in recognition of its outstanding organizing achievements. I.B.E.W. Fifth District International Vice-President H. Wade Gurley presented the award to the local at the Fifth District Progress Meeting that year.

while out in the field. Those strategies included "salting" – union members working on non-union jobsites with the aim of recruiting its workers into the union – through which the local gained several organizing victories, including signing a previously non-union contractor, Marion Electric, on January 28, 1993, after several members had "salted" its job on a veterans' nursing home.

As Local 756 maintained its push to combat non-union contractors, it won an N.L.R.B. decision in late 1993 against one of those firms for unfair labor practices during a brief organizing campaign. The local was awarded \$25,000 as a result of the favorable judgement – which Brother Ching noted in the January 1994 *Journal* "proved once again that we are taking the correct actions."

That summer, the local's contractors signed two new significant jobs in its area, construction of a new Super Wal-Mart store in Ormond Beach and a new Builders Square home-improvement store in Daytona Beach, as the result of its continued organizing campaign. The local also gained three new signatory contractors that summer alone after members salted several large jobs in the local's area.

Another tool to entice electricians to join the union was the local's collectively bargained contract with the area division of the North Florida Chapter of NECA, which the two parties renegotiated again in 1994. That three-year agreement went into effect on September 1 with a total first-year, base/in-town wage-and-benefits package of \$17.55 per hour and Zone 1/Kennedy Space Center wage-and-benefits package of \$20.64 per hour. The contract then added total annual increases of 30 cents each year to the base rate and 50 cents each year to the zone rate.

The local and its contractors also included a **Market Recovery Agreement** through negotiations "for the purpose of regaining lost market share." The agreement, which applied to



Brother Buddy Hart sits in for Santa with assistance from Brother Keith Roberts for the Local 756 Christmas Party on December 2, 2006, the first the local had held in many years. Santa and his elf arrived at the party on a fire truck and distributed gifts for all the children in attendance.

all firms that would sign a letter of assent, put in place employment conditions on all work inside the Local 756 jurisdiction, such as placing no restrictions on an employer's requirements for its work-crew composition or foreman duties, to make union labor more attractive to project owners and non-union contractors.

As work in its jurisdiction sustained solid employment for the local into and throughout much of 1997, it signed another new, three-year agreement that went into effect September 1 that year. The contract initially provided the local's journeyman wiremen with an increased base pay of \$14.25 per hour and Zone 1 wage of \$17.25 per hour for the first year. During the final year beginning September 1, 2000, the contract provided a base pay of \$16.50 per hour and Zone 1 wage of \$19.50 per hour, plus hourly contractor contributions of \$2.45 for health and welfare, \$2 for pensions, \$1.85 for training and 4 cents for political action; and 3 percent of payrolls contributions for the N.E.B.F.

The local then won a long-standing unfair-labor-practices case regarding the NASA Space





Three generations of Local 756 membership, (front row, left to right) Brother Bill Sweeney, Brother Parker Sweeney and Brother Steve Sweeney, pose together during Parker's swearing-in ceremony in May 2018. Joining them are (back row) Recording Secretary JR, President Bernardo Ibarra and Business Manager Dan Hunt.

Station Processing Facility against Meisner Electric Company on January 8, 1998, in which the N.L.R.B. after nearly five years verified that I.B.E.W. members cannot be discharged for organizing activities. In another case during that period, the N.L.R.B. also ruled in favor of the local against Gayfers department store, confirming that members working for **Baroco Electric Construction Company** had the right to handbill Gayfers' customers and could not be charged with trespassing because they were legally at the store as employees of the contractor – a ruling that became national case law.

A relative boom in commercial projects in the Daytona Beach area, including motels, condominiums, drug stores and a second Wal-Mart, bolstered employment for union electrical workers through 1998 and 1999. Several industrial projects in the Local 756 jurisdiction, including water, waste-water and power plants, that were necessary to support the continued growth in the community, further

increased available manhours for Local 756 members. Together, those projects and others such as the new Justice Center in Deland even created a shortage of skilled electrical labor.

Additionally, a large job on Launch Complex 37 at the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station was awarded to **Raytheon Construction**, whose project agreement stipulated that all of the work would be performed by union tradespeople, including electrical workers. Ongoing expansions at the Kennedy Space Center, the Air Force Station and Patrick Air Force Base, including work on Launch Complex 41 and an agreement with **Sverdrup Technology Inc.** for federal Davis-Bacon Act prevailing-wage work at six other complexes, kept the local's members busy on the Cape, as well.

To further bolster the local's promising future, Business Manager Williams and his staff in the late 1990s – and throughout the 2000s – put all electrical contractors on notice “that it was not against the law to be a represented worker.” Through legal use of the National Labor Relations Act, the local also made certain that electrical construction work being performed in Daytona Beach by union or non-union workers was subject to quality standards – and those standards would be set by Local 756.

## ENGAGING EMPLOYERS TO BETTER CONDITIONS

Several high-profile construction projects in the Daytona Beach/Volusia County area, work at the Kennedy Space Center and major launch-complex renovations at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station helped most all of the Local 756 membership enjoy full employment into the early years of the new “Y2K” millennium. Many of the local's nearly 500 members and traveling I.B.E.W. brothers and sisters were working into 2001 for **Woodson & Associates** on LC-37, **Sachs Electric** on LC-41 and Olson Electric on the courthouse in Deland.

The local's organizing efforts likewise escalated, gaining several successes and even making some progress from its failures. For instance, after the local lost a union-representation election at Carter Electric Company, a major non-union competitor with many qualified electricians, employees were given wage and benefit increases as a result of the union challenge and some key employees were stripped from the company by the local and employed under its collective-bargaining agreement.

But after two years of near-constant full employment for the local and many travelers, work slowed after the jobs at the space center were nearing completion in mid-2002. A national recession further hampered opportunities, and as a result, more than 100 Local 756 electricians were seeking work by October of that year, while several others not employed on the few commercial projects in Daytona Beach were working with other I.B.E.W. locals.

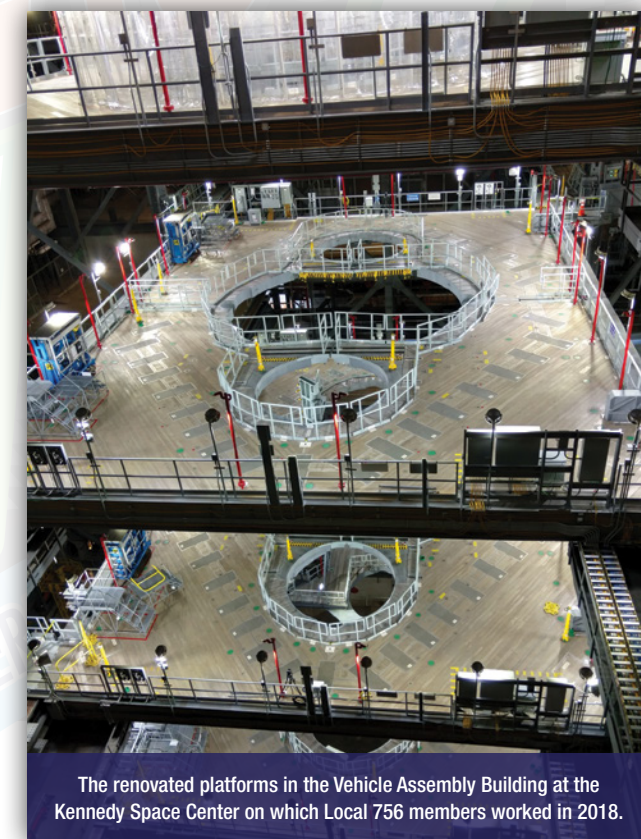
Employment remained sluggish throughout 2003 and 2004 both in town and on the Cape, with the lull occasionally interrupted by smaller commercial and residential jobs and changeover and maintenance work on launch pads at the space center. In the aftermath of the space shuttle Columbia tragedy on February 1, 2003, when the craft broke apart during re-entry near the end of its 28th mission, killing all seven astronauts aboard, the shuttle program experienced some delays.

Construction in 2005 of the large, state-of-the-art **Operations Support Building II**, the first facility at the Kennedy Space Center to have a switchgear with redundant feeders and a switchgear used as a proving ground for LC-39 space-shuttle launch pads A and B, provided manhours for many of the local's electricians. The facility, which would be remotely operated and communicate real time with the Launch Control Complex, would

serve as mission conference area for future shuttle launches and planning support for the International Space Station.

Also that year, some of the local's contractors picked up condominium projects in Daytona Beach, supplying more manhours for its members. Adding to the available manhours, by September housing construction in its jurisdiction was “at full throttle,” as Local 756 **Organizer Bill Sweeney** announced in that month's issue of the local's newsletter, *The Side-Cutter*, and work had commenced on several big-box stores such as Wal-Mart, Home Depot and Gayfers.

Praising a new, three-year contract between the local and its contractors that went into effect on September 1, Business Manager Williams wrote in the newsletter, “Our signatory employers as well as our membership are progressive and recognize the importance of labor/management cooperation and



The renovated platforms in the Vehicle Assembly Building at the Kennedy Space Center on which Local 756 members worked in 2018.



partnership. This local union and our employers understand and agree that the key to our joint success is continued training and education. ... The results of these shared beliefs have resulted in a fair wage package for a three-year contract."

The agreement initially provided a \$19.55-per-hour Base Zone journeyman wage scale and \$26.59 total hourly package for commercial work; a \$17.50-per-hour Base Zone journeyman wage scale and \$20.43 total hourly package for residential work; and a \$23.50 journeyman wage scale and \$30.66 total hourly package for Zone 1 work. Annual increases would bring the total wage-and-benefits packages for the third year beginning September 1, 2007, to \$28.19 per hour for base commercial work, \$22.43 per hour for base residential work and \$32.66 per hour for Zone 1 work on the Cape.

Local 756 and the I.B.E.W. then rang in the new 2006 year with the launch of a comprehensive program to enhance

membership and employment opportunities in the State of Florida and Daytona Beach. Under the direction of **International General President Edwin D. Hill**, representatives were assigned to facilitate the **"Florida Initiative,"** which included the creation of a new, employable and permanent Construction Wireman-Construction Electrician classification. The goal of the effort was to allow those qualified non-union electrical workers to have access to electrical construction referrals through local unions as well as membership in the I.B.E.W., and at the same time allow employers to remain competitive by establishing composite crew structures at lower costs.

As predicted by union officials over the previous decade, the busy electrical industry in Local 756's jurisdiction was severely strapped by a shortage of skilled manpower in 2006. That year, the local's more than 430-strong membership was kept busy with in-town work on commercial jobs as well as new school construction and additions, while Cape contractors employed members on projects including modifications to LC-39 Pad A.

School projects the following summer involved several Local 756 signatory contractors, resulting in even more manhours being available for union electricians. Many of those employers utilized the new Construction Wireman-Construction Electrician classification under the Florida Initiative to secure those jobs, helping to further improve the local's employment conditions.

Construction work in Daytona Beach and throughout the state and the nation curtailed sharply in late 2007 and 2008 during a severe worldwide financial crisis, dubbed the "Great Recession," that originated in the United States with the collapse of its housing market. The situation was exacerbated by

a stock-market crash in September 2008, further hampering Local 756 employment, which would not fully recover for the next roughly six years.

But the local was able to gain a new contract agreement that year that commenced September 1 – albeit for modest total overall increases in wages and benefits because of the struggling economy. For the third and final year of the pact beginning September 1, 2010, annual increases raised the total packages for Base Zone commercial work to \$29.75 per hour, for Base Zone residential work to \$23.88 per hour and for Zone 1/Cape Canaveral work to \$34.99 per hour.

## LAUNCHING ITSELF TOWARD THE FUTURE

**S**low work through much of 2009 and into 2010 was compounded by the impending retirement of the space shuttle fleet in preparation for the end of the Space Shuttle Program in 2011. However, Cape Canaveral Air Force Station and the Kennedy Space Center were planning for some major changes with the newfound interest in future commercial space missions.

"The work at the Cape will depend on whether politicians properly fund the space industry," **Press Secretary Dan Hunt** forewarned in the February 2011 I.B.E.W. *Electrical Worker* (the re-named and re-formatted *Journal*). "The growing trend is for so-called 'privatization,' which is code for union busting and lower wages."

Regardless, that summer, Local 756 was able to secure work at the Kennedy Space Center that fulfilled its promise after a slow start. In particular, a large number of electricians worked on the Mars Exploration Program and NASA's new **Space Launch System/Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle**, a heavy-lift rocket for deep-space exploration, during the early 2010s.



The Local 756 retirees (left to right) Dennis Swanson (45 years of service), Peter S. Parise (70 years) and Joseph H. Gardner (60 years) stand together after receiving their I.B.E.W. service awards during a local meeting in September 2019.

Additionally, during that period the local signed a new company, TP Electric of White, Georgia, that was securing work building Super Wal-Mart stores in the region – a market in which the local had not been involved on any considerable basis since the 1990s. Subsequently, members worked on a fast-paced project for a new Super Wal-Mart in New Smyrna Beach in 2011, whose foreman, who had many years' experience running non-union projects, stated was "one of the most productive and smooth-running jobs he has run," Brother Hunt noted in that August's *Electrical Worker*.

Meanwhile, **Atlantis** made the final launch of the Space Shuttle Program on July 8, 2011, from LC-39 Pad A at the Kennedy Space Center, starting a 12-day mission to repair and upgrade the Hubble Space Telescope. The shuttle landed back at the space center on July 21, officially closing the program and another chapter of the nation's space-exploration history made possible by I.B.E.W. electrical workers.

Back on Earth, while the local still struggled to maintain employment of much of its membership, beginning in mid-2011 seven



A Local 756 member works on updates for Launch Complex 39's Pad B in 2018.





Local 756 apprentice Ryan Combs-Ansorge was the local's fourth-year top apprentice in November 2020.

of its electricians and three apprentices were involved for nearly a year in a unique project in the Daytona Beach jurisdiction while working for signatory contractor **Sterling & Associates** at Daytona Flexible Packaging. Inventor of the juice-drink beverage pouch, the company expanded its plant to include multiple types of premixed-beverage packaging, which required stainless-steel conduit and Class 1 explosion-proof wiring methods to run "24/7" around-the-clock – and the local's members helped finish the project months in advance of expected completion in early 2012.

That year, with the work picture in Daytona Beach "very slow," as former press secretary and

new interim Business Manager Hunt reported in the December 2012 *Electrical Worker*, and members traveling on the road to jurisdictions such as neighboring Local 606 in Orlando, Local 756 was able to negotiate a new, three-year contract with NECA in July. But with the construction market still struggling to recover from the late 2000s economic crisis and the local likewise laboring, its active membership dropped down to about 220 electricians at that time.

The proverbial switch was thrown in 2013, however, when work for the local's commercial contractors picked up in the wake of a building surge and work at Cape Canaveral soared as NASA was preparing for the "next generation" of flight. With large commercial projects ongoing in its jurisdiction and new ones on the drawing board, Local 756 was finally fully recovering from the effects of the Great Recession from more than half a decade earlier. As conditions continued to improve, Business Manager Hunt declared in the February 2014 *Electrical Worker*, "The 2013 work picture was an improvement from recent years."

Signatory contractors actively bid both in town and at the space center in 2014, while union contractors from jurisdictions of other I.B.E.W. locals bid on the work there, as well. Meanwhile, NASA and the Air Force were reaching out to private commercial companies to design and launch future space endeavors, which would create construction opportunities, while NASA was also planning to construct a new headquarters facility to replace the decades-old structure in which it had been working from since the days of the Apollo Program.

NASA also continued with development of its heavy-lift rocket system utilizing the V.A.B., the Mobile Launcher and LC-39 Pad B.

## GREEN, YELLOW FLAGS To Local's 85TH YEAR

For the first time since the 1970s, Local 756 member electricians were put to work in 2014 at the legendary **Daytona International Speedway**, although the bulk of the project's electrical work was awarded to a non-union contractor. Nevertheless, signatory contractor **Giles Electric** was awarded a small scope of a massive, 2-1/2-year renovation of the home of the epic NASCAR track, which it began in October with a crew of union employees.

With the local's commercial work also holding steady that year and appearing it would continue into 2015, Business Manager Hunt optimistically proclaimed in the December 2014 *Electrical Worker*, "Industrial work at the NASA Space Center is not at the levels we previously enjoyed; however, space flight is not

dead and signatory contractors continue to bid on projects there."

A new, three-year agreement with the Daytona Beach Division, North Florida Chapter of NECA in 2015 raised the local's journeyman wage scale to \$17.75 per hour in the Base Zone and \$26.29 per hour in Zone 1, while providing total 75-cent-per-hour pay-and-benefits increases for each of the next two years. The contract also set new fringe-benefit contributions, including \$6.73 and then \$6.98 per hour worked beginning January 4, 2016, into the Health and Welfare Fund; and \$1.75 per hour for Base Zone work and \$2.75 per hour for Zone 1 work into the Pension Fund of journeymen.

Throughout the second half of the 2010s and into the 2020s, during which it would celebrate its 85th charter anniversary in June 2021, Local 756 experienced a resurgence along



New Local 756 members are sworn-into the union during a October 2020 local meeting (while wearing their facemasks during the COVID-19 pandemic).



with its jurisdiction. Subsequently, the local's membership rose to 266 active electricians and apprentices at one point in 2016.

During that time, exponential growth of the Greater Daytona Beach Region created a large amount of public work for the local's members, including building, expanding and modernizing city and county government buildings, wastewater treatment plants and other necessary infrastructure. In addition to ongoing employment at the Kennedy Space Center, in-town jobs such as school and residential work, which involved all construction and no maintenance projects, bolstered the local's employment condition. Work at colleges in the area, including dorm projects at **Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University** in Daytona Beach, further improved the local's manhours.

After Business Manager Hunt employed a new organizer for the local, its membership again jumped to about 320 active journeymen and apprentices in July 2019. The growth was accomplished and sustained despite recent anti-union laws passed in the Florida State

Legislature that made it more difficult to recruit new members and, therefore, for the local to meet manpower demands.

Nevertheless, members worked on the facilities that would send the **Mars 2020** rover mission to the "red planet" as part of NASA's Mars Exploration Program. The rover Perseverance and the robotic, coaxial helicopter Ingenuity launched from Cape Canaveral **Space Launch Complex 41** (SLC-41), which previously was LC-41, on July 30, 2020, and landed on Mars on February 18, 2021.

The local was also involved in the "Next Generation of Flight" on the Cape at its inception, including construction of a new mobile launch platform under general contractor Bechtel Corporation. The endeavor would also mean replacing LC-39 pads A and B with suitable launch towers; retrofitting the Vehicle Assembly Building to match new rocket designs; and upgrading 60-year-old infrastructure throughout the support facilities, all of which translated into manhours for the skilled trades.



Local 756 crew working at Blue Origin launch pad complex at Cape Canaveral during the fall of 2021.

Despite fears that privatization of launch programs on the Cape would leave union craftspeople on the outside of its construction, Local 756 members worked and continue to be employed on the **Blue Origin launch pad**, the world's largest pad. Started in mid-2019, the complete rebuild of Launch Complex 36 at the renamed **Cape Canaveral Space Force Station** under Amazon company owner Jeff Bezos is being undertaken for his powerful New Glenn rocket, which will initially launch large, commercial satellites into orbit.

But like most all of the United States, the deadly coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic beginning in early 2020 stifled Local 756 both at home and out in the field. With the health and safety of its membership a priority, the local implemented the practice of social distancing at its union hall and on jobsites, closed its offices and training school, and cancelled meetings throughout the year and into 2021. However, as it has done for the past 85 years, Local 756 continued to serve its signatory contractors, the Space Coast programs and its 300 active and nearly 100 retired members – as it will continue to do into the immediate and distant future, the true "final frontier." ■

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*"When the local was young, we'd have oyster roasts. We would get them ourselves, and we would bring them back and roast them ourselves. And we'd have fish fries. We would go out and catch them, bring them back and clean them, and we'd have a fish fry. And the guys that were doing it, they would have the best time .... We would really have a ball, everyone enjoying themselves. But I think that's what caused this local to build up and the interest that everybody takes in it, particularly when it was young."*

I.B.E.W. Local No. 756 Retiree Brother Max W. Griswold, May 29, 1974  
(Brother Griswold passed away January 15, 1978, at age 71.)





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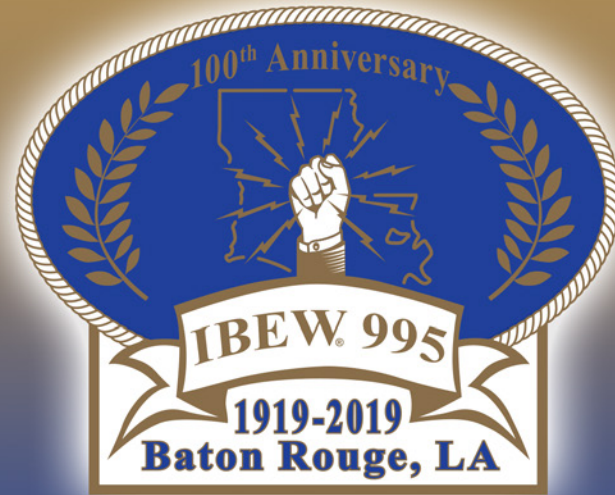
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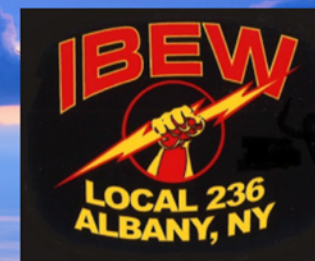
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