



Tom Gillespie
Steamfitter Local 33



Denny Reeves
Plumber Local 33

Clips from the Local 33 TV commercials that began airing in 1984.



**Quality Work
Craftsmanship
Fair Wages
Health Care
Retirement Funds
Brotherhood**



Don Sullivan
Training Coordinator
Plumbers & Steamfitters #33



second half of the decade. In fact, employment and overall union membership continued to decline – with the local’s roster dropping below 600 in early 1986 after peaking at 712 just six years earlier while Iowa State Building and Construction Trades Council membership continued to dwindle, as well.

Still, Local 33 not only continued marketing on television, it pushed the envelope on the productions, even featuring prominent business leaders beginning in late 1987. Three highly regarded area business leaders, James Hubble III, president of Hubble Realty Company; Jack Taylor, president of Ringland Johnson Crowley construction company; and Charles Stroh, chairman of Stroh Corporation mechanical contracting, appeared in Local 33 spots that first aired during the December 12, 1987, broadcast of the University of Iowa-Arizona University basketball game on KDSM-TV.

Two years later, the local produced a commercial starring Iowa’s two U.S. senators: Democrat Tom Harkin and Republican Chuck Grassley, a

conservative who was not known for his pro-union support. First aired during a Chicago Cubs-San Francisco Giants baseball game on October 4, 1989, Brother Sullivan explained that Grassley was included in the commercial because the local was “trying to make this non-political. ... It’s strictly business.”

Before the end of the 1980s, the local’s efforts were paying dividends, as work in its jurisdiction was excellent most times while contractors were consistently calling for manpower.

FORTIFYING IN THE WAKE OF DISASTER

“Pat Dorrian ... reported on the positive comments about our TV ads. Reported the local is in much better shape going into the ‘90s than we were going into the 80s.”

While Local 33 Business Representative Dorrian was giving the Business Manager’s report to the local’s January 3, 1990, regular general membership meeting, he also noted that work in the area was “very good” for wintertime – so much so that the local was finding work for U.A. traveling members.

Despite its vastly improved condition, during the 1990s, Local 33 continued to take on the challenges of recapturing and holding larger portions of the construction-market share, industry contractors, and union membership among plumbers and steamfitters. With those goals in its sights, the local became one of the first U.A. locals in the nation to undertake an aggressive organizing campaign before the International Office required its locals to do so through its **COMET (Construction**



Aftermath of the Des Moines Flood of 1993, which practically submerged the Local 33 union hall and training center on Bell Avenue.



Some of the Local 33 flood cleanup crew.

Local 33 celebrated its **100th Anniversary** in 1991 with a gala banquet and dinner dance that was attended by 1,000 people, including Des Moines Mayor and Local 33 member John "Pat" Dorrian and U.S. Congressman Neal Smith.



The Local 33 float takes part in a parade in 1994.

Organizing Membership Education Training) program beginning in 1994.

By the end of the decade, Local 33 would have three full-time organizers funded entirely by the local. What's more, each organizer and the local's business representatives were COMET trainers who could provide continual education on organizing to their membership.

During what became a very active period of time for the local, the 1990s also saw it become the first construction-craft local in Des Moines with **paid holidays** for its members. Soon after, the local realized another first in the entire state when it established a **collectively bargained drug-testing program** for members with its contractors.

However, the devastating **Great Flood of 1993**, one of the most costly in U.S. history during which the Des Moines and the Raccoon rivers overran their levees, hit the City of Des Moines, including Local 33, particularly hard beginning July 9. Brother Dorrian, by that time the local's business manager,



A tug-of-war contest during the Local 33 family picnic in 1994.



Santa Claus listens to children during the Local 33 Christmas party in 1994.



Local 33 members march in a parade in 1996.

United Association Local 405 of Mason City, Iowa, was consolidated with Local 33 on October 1, 1997.

reflected in the July 12 *Register* on the extensive flood damage to the local:

"We're wiped out. All of our records and files are lost. We set things up on desks, but it came up higher than that. There was no chance of getting things out, it came so fast. ... When you have 100 years of records in the daily business portion lost, it's kind of devastating. It gives you a sick feeling in the pit of the stomach. ... But we have to keep going forward and can't look back."

While getting cleaned up and back on track, Local 33's members continued to work on projects that included the new, \$16 million Iowa National Guard headquarters building at Camp Dodge in Johnston, Iowa. The 27-month job was completed in October 1994.

Soon after, the local won a relatively small but hugely important victory in January 1995 when the U.S. Department of Labor ruled that Proctor Mechanical Company of Des Moines owed more than \$13,000 in back wages to Local 33 employees who had worked on the National Guard headquarters. In reaching its decision, the Labor Department found that Proctor had not paid the proper prevailing wages on the federally funded project.

By the end of the decade, the century and the millennium, Local 33 had nearly 1,100 members in 57 counties in central Iowa and other parts of the state. However, for much of the last years of the 1990s, the local only controlled just over 25-percent of the piping construction market throughout its jurisdiction.

United Association Local 18 of Sioux City, Iowa, was merged into Local 33 on May 1, 1998.

POWERING INTO ANOTHER NEW ERA

While most all of the Building Trades unions in Des Moines were strapped by poor employment levels to begin the new "Y2K" millennium, including Local 33 throughout much of its jurisdiction, on January 3, 2002, the unions secured a labor-friendly Project Labor Agreement for construction of the new, \$208 million **Iowa Events Center** in the city. The contract included standard pay rates for union and non-union workers, as well as a promise by the unions not to strike for the duration of the 2-1/2-year construction schedule.

But while labor leaders had hoped the project would begin by early spring that year, it was delayed by challenges to the P.L.A. by the Master Builders of Iowa. However, on November 14, 2002, the Iowa Supreme Court upheld the implementation of the agreement – which would then become the first public P.L.A. ever utilized in the state.

When work began soon after, a substantial number of Local 33 members would work for Waldinger Corporation, which was awarded the \$23 million mechanical contract, on what was the largest publicly funded project in Iowa history. When completed, the Events Center consisted of the remodeled **Community Choice Credit Union Convention Center** (formerly Veterans Memorial Auditorium), the existing Polk County Convention Complex, the new **Hy-Vee Hall** and the new **Wells Fargo Arena**.

Two major energy-producing projects, which would help power the Iowa Events Center, were also built at that time under P.L.A.s with the help of Local 33 skilled tradespeople. The \$400 million, 565-megawatt **Emory Generating Station** in Mason City, completed two weeks ahead of schedule in May 2004, was the first plant built by Alliant Energy under its Power