

Edward Tchakalian

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD RECIPIENT

Edward Tchakalian was born in 1926. During the early years of the 1900's, his parents and their families had fled massacres by the Turkish government and discrimination and revolution in Russia. A long train ride brought them from Siberia to Harbin, China, where his parents met and married. They moved to Shanghai where Edward and his two younger brothers were born and raised.

After establishing a chain of bakeries in Shanghai, Edward's family fled the Chinese Revolution in 1948. They immigrated to the United States entering in San Francisco, California. Shortly after arrival, Edward joined the Merchant Marines and traveled the world. Upon his return, Edward was inducted in the Armed Forces of America, where he served in Korea from 1951 to 1952 in an artillery division, earning a Commendation Ribbon.

With the help of the G.I. Bill, Ed received a Bachelor of Arts from San Francisco State, and then pursued graduate studies in labor economics at the University of California at Berkeley.

In 1959 he married his Jacqueline. Their beloved children, Leon and Maureen were born in 1960 and 1962, respectively.

In 1964 Edward joined government employment within the State of California, starting as a researcher for the Industrial Welfare Commission (IWC). It was during this time that he was sent to Central California to learn about conditions affecting agricultural workers by spending weeks with Cesar Chavez. Two years later, Edward entered the Department of Industrial Welfare (later known as the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement, DLSE) as a Labor Standards Enforcement Agent. During this employment, Edward was able to help California workers, including farm workers in the San Jose/Monterey area, and later, works in the garment industry in San Francisco and Los Angeles. During his career with the DLSE, Edward managed a busy office and achieved the rank of Senior Deputy Labor Commissioner. Throughout his tenure with the Agency he served in several offices.



Ed retired from government in 1989. He resumed his interest in learning languages, concentrating on Armenian and improving his proficiency in Spanish. He also resumed his interest in literature and took much delight in reading classics in Spanish.

In 1990 Edward was hired by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union as an organizer. In addition to working locally, Ed participated in campaigns in Texas and Wisconsin, where he joined in a hunger strike.

In 1999 he returned to DLSE on a temporary basis and was assigned to follow up on dozens of claims filed by a new loudmouth advocate group: the Maintenance Cooperation Trust Fund (MCTF). Ed initiated the Agencies investigation into uncovering a statewide scheme of paying janitors sub-minimum wages for long hours of work within the chains of Ralphs, Albertsons and Vons. These investigations lead to a 5-year courtroom battle, which was recently settled for 22.4 million dollars.

After his brief return with the Agency Edward was hired by the MCTF, an organization established by SEIU Local 1877. He has been with the MCTF for the last 5 years and continues in his current position as Case Manager. Ed's invaluable experience and life wisdom has made a formidable influence on his co-workers and the young organization. At the MCTF he continues his life long commitment of helping workers defend their rights.