

# A Tribute to Charles H. Pillard



*International  
Executive Council  
1961-1968*

*International President  
1968-1986*

*President Emeritus  
1986-1999*

**International  
President Emeritus  
Charles W. Pillard  
shortly after taking  
office in 1968.**

All the Brotherhood and organized labor lost a great leader when International President Emeritus Charles H. Pillard passed away on April 26, 1999, of a heart attack. Brother Pillard served as International President of the Brotherhood from October 1968, until his retirement in March 1986.

President Emeritus Pillard provided the Brotherhood with a steady and stabilizing hand at the helm during some of the most tumultuous years in U.S. and IBEW history, spanning Vietnam, Watergate, price controls and the emergence of a virulent strain of union-busting that came to be accepted by corporate America. His time as International President stretched from Lyndon Johnson to Ronald Reagan—and he knew them all, and endorsed or confronted them all, depending on what he saw as best for working America.

“Charlie’s legacy is that of an outstanding leader—as the U.S. Army recognized

**Below, Charles and Helen Pillard on their wedding day, April 7, 1944.**



in plucking him out of the ranks of the enlisted to become a Captain, and the IBEW and AFL-CIO recognized in electing him to the top ranks of American labor," said International President John J. Barry, who succeeded Pillard in 1986. "His sole formula was dedication to union members. His every decision was weighed against what's best for the working men and women he served. He led the way through an extremely rough period of automation, globalization and tremendous dislocation for workers."

President Emeritus Pillard was born on October 26, 1918, in Buffalo, New York. He was initiated into IBEW Local 41 in Buffalo in October 1940, but his career was interrupted by World War II.

He served in the Pacific as an enlisted man and returned to the states where he entered the Infantry Officers Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. He was commissioned a second lieutenant, and after receiving his commission, was assigned to McClellan, Alabama, where he met Helen May Bratten, to whom he was married for 55 years. As an officer, he was sent to the European Theater, where he advanced to Captain. He served with the 4th Division, 22nd Infantry and received the Bronze Star for bravery in

action. He was one of the early members to benefit from the Brotherhood's military withdrawal card.

When he returned to his civilian job as an electrician, Brother Pillard took an active part in the affairs of Local 41. In 1952, he was elected business manager, an office he held until he was appointed International President in 1968 by the International Executive Council (IEC).

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, who served with President Emeritus Pillard on the AFL-CIO Executive Council, remembered him "as a friend and as a trade unionist whose good counsel was always welcome and much appreciated." In a letter to International President Barry, Sweeney said that the IBEW "became an example throughout the labor movement of a strong and vital trade union dedicated to the well-being of its members" under the leadership of President Emeritus Pillard.

During his time with Local 41, Brother Pillard worked as a journeyman on all types of industrial, commercial and residential construction and served as a steward, foreman and general foreman.

Active in community affairs, Brother Pillard was a member of the Labor Advi-

*(Continued on next page)*



**With astronaut Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon, who addressed the 1970 Convention.**



**Above, on the job circa 1972.**

**Below, acknowledging the cheers of the delegates to the 29th IBEW Convention in Seattle, Washington, in 1970, where he was elected to his first full term as International President.**



**At left, as business manager of Local 41, Buffalo in 1965.**

**Below, taking the oath of office as International President from President Emeritus Gordon Freeman (2nd from left) in 1968 as then-International Secretary Joseph Keenan (right) and then-IEC Chairman E. J. (Rex) Fransway look on.**



**Conferring with former AFL-CIO President George Meany.**





Leading a march in support of striking garment workers in 1973.

# Charles H. Pillard



Greeting President and Mrs. Richard Nixon. At left is then-International Treasurer Harry Van Arsdale.

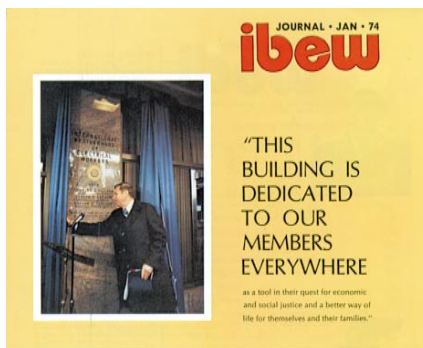


Above, with President Jimmy Carter in 1978.



At left, greeting President Ronald Reagan, whose policies he would vehemently oppose, at a Building Trades conference in 1981.

Below, operating a control panel at the Panama Canal in 1974. At left is then-IBEW Government Employees Department Director George Knaly.



sory Committee for the State University, Agriculture and Technical Institute of Alfred, New York; a member of the Mayor's Committee on Automation and Vocational Planning for the City of Buffalo; a member of the Economic and Redevelopment Board of Erie County; and a trustee of the United Fund for Buffalo and Erie County.

In June 1961, he was appointed as a member of the International Executive Council and was unanimously elected at the 1962 and 1966 Conventions. After the IEC selected him as International President, he was overwhelmingly reelected at IBEW Conventions in 1970, 1974, 1978 and 1982.

While International President, he served the labor community in many other capacities. In addition to his 10 years on the AFL-CIO Executive Council, he was first vice president and member of the Board of Governors of the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department; first vice president of the AFL-CIO Metal Trades Department; vice president and member of the Executive Council of the Industrial Union Department, AFL-CIO; member of the Executive Board of the AFL-CIO Public Employees Department; served on the Board of Directors of the AFL-CIO Labor Institute of Public Affairs; and was on the Economic Policy Committee of the AFL-CIO. He was also co-chairman of the National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee for the Electrical Industry; served on the Board of Governors of the United Way of America; a member of the advisory Committee for U.S. Trade Negotiations; and sat on the Board of Directors of the Occupational Health and Legal Rights Foundation.

In 1980, he received the Labor Human Rights Award of the Jewish Labor Committee for Human Rights. In 1985 he was a recipient of the Labor-Management Meany-Roche Award for the National Council on Alcoholism. President Emeritus Pillard also served on numerous other labor, government and private-sector advisory boards and committees.

Early in his presidency, President Emeritus Pillard realized the growing importance

At left, the dedication of the new IBEW headquarters building in 1973 was a proud moment for President Pillard and the IBEW as reflected in this *Journal* cover from January 1974.

of residential construction. From the 1960s through the 1980s, the Brotherhood promoted the Coordinated Residential Organizing Program (CROP), which organized the construction industry, and developed imaginative programs to provide better service to IBEW members. His agreement with the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) to increase the employer contribution to the National Electrical Benefit Fund (NEBF) from 1 percent to 3 percent provided a sound basis for improvements in pension benefits. And the local union reciprocity plan enabled the pension and health and welfare payments of traveling members to be sent back to their home local, helping the home local survive the tough times which prompted the member to travel in the first place.

IBEW membership reached one million in October 1972. Another milestone occurred on December 1, 1973, when the new headquarters building of the IBEW in Washington, D.C., was dedicated.

But there were hard times through the 1970s, as national unemployment reached 8.5 percent and inflation reached 9.5 percent. The fact that the IBEW not only survived but prospered serves as a testament to President Emeritus Pillard's insistence on organizing.

The Brotherhood will remember President Emeritus Pillard as a modest man, who spoke softly, giving each word thought and emphasis. He spoke of his accomplishments in phrases which began with "we." He always thought of himself as a member of a team and was a man whose word was his bond, whose satisfaction came in helping others, and who was a leader whose victories came from putting together winning teams.

Brother Pillard is survived by his wife, Helen, two daughters, Jane Carollo and Linda Voye, both of whom are married to electricians belonging to Local 41, five grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Sincere sympathy is extended to Brother Pillard's wife, family and friends by all the members and officers of the Brotherhood. ☐

**At right, a meeting of the leaders at the 1991 IBEW 100th Anniversary Convention: from left, then-International Secretary Jack Moore, International Secretary Emeritus Ralph Leigon, President Emeritus Pillard and President Barry.**



**IBEW members helped make many space flights successful during Bro. Pillard's tenure. In 1973, he accepted a framed flag and photo of the Apollo 17 mission to the moon from then-NASA Administrator James C. Fletcher (2nd from right) as (from left) then-Construction and Maintenance Department Director J.M. Parker and former Administrative Assistant to the International President Anthony "Sal" Salamone look on.**



**Conferring at an AFL-CIO Convention with the then-business manager of his home Local 41 (now International Representative) Gene Adams.**



**Above, speaking to a crowd of more than 500,000 trade union men and women at Solidarity Day in 1981.**



**Swearing in his successor as International President, J.J. Barry in 1986. Mrs. Pillard is second from left and Mrs. Barry is at right.**



**Above, in retirement, 1991, at his Maryland home before moving back to the Buffalo area.**