

WHAT IS A UNION?

As I See It

By
Henry F. Geerken

I never knew what a union was all about until our daughter Katie was born. Diane was on the Executive Board at the time and I was a chapter officer and when people found out that Katie was Down's Syndrome that's when our lives began.

All of a sudden Katie had thousands of aunts and uncles. She attended her first Executive Board Meeting at age 6 weeks and stole the show. We went from Henry and Diane Geerken to Katie's mom and dad – we lost our identities.

At that time there was such an outpouring of prayers, thoughts concerns and advice that this overwhelming concern and love was a very emotional high for us. I suddenly realized that a union is not just getting greater salaries or better terms and conditions for employment it was about people caring about and for each other. That's the real heart of UUP.

Since that time many Delegate Assemblies have come and gone. Leadership roles have changed and there are many new faces as it should be in the natural progression of life. Some hair got grayer some of us got fatter or thinner and other interests started to take over our lives as retirement entered the picture.

But then, very dramatically my health changed. From never having a pain to suddenly finding out that I needed a 5 artery open heart by pass surgery in just a matter of days was a distinct shock to me and my family.

At the end of a nine-and-a half hour surgery the word started coming in. My union brothers and sisters started by sending cards and e-mail to support Diane and Katie and I know your prayers were with me because people who were present at my operation said

that my surgeon was absolutely brilliant and awesome.

I sit here recovering nicely but very emotional. I am looking at a massive pile of cards and e—mail messages from so many of you that there is no way that I could ever individually say thank you enough or express my love to each and every one of you. I had messages from people I haven't seen in 10 years but they remembered me.

What can I say? How can I tell you how I feel? Each of you will always be a part of me and I hope that I will always be a part of you. Love never dies.