

BY MARK HOGAN

The ETCP and me

GROWING UP, the entertainment industry was in my blood. My grandfather, Gerald Hogan, started as an apprentice for IATSE Local 2 Stagehands in 1910. My grandmother, Madeline Hogan, was a theatrical wardrobe designer and seamstress. My father, Ed Hogan, was a member of both Local 2 and Local 476 Motion Picture Studio Mechanics. And at the urging of my father, who foresaw a blossoming industry and new technologies in the motion picture business, I went to electronics school. I then proudly accepted an apprenticeship in Local 476 in 1974. For 30+ years, I enjoyed a diverse career with Local 476 and the entertainment industry in general. My work has spanned



Mark Hogan, Recognized ETCP Instructor, (front left) is joined (circling around from his right to his left) by 476 members Dawn Copeland, Rob Franklin, Gary Carone, Abi Iverson (Local 52), Brett Burns, Nic Jones, Joe Lyons, Tom Nizinski, and Local 476 Recognized ETCP Instructor Bob Gomez.

from working at an electronics repair shop, to being a ham radio operator, working as a broadcast engineer at a radio station, owning/operating several equipment rental businesses including generators, to my steady work as an electrician on commercials and films, and, finally, to my eventual nomination/election as Business Manager/Secretary Treasurer for Local 476.

Being in a leadership position as a Union experiences extraordinary growth can be tricky. Our Local covers over 30 different jobs, making it a challenge to ensure that all our members are adequately prepared for the challenges of each position. Specifically, the electric and grip departments require some of our most talented technicians. These crews are almost always the largest of the on-set workers. Equipping these members with the appropriate skills and knowledge requires a detailed curriculum

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as well as highly-skilled trainers. The next step is offering proof of those skills. So consequently, when the IATSE became associated with the ETCP program, I knew that this had the potential to be a tremendous asset for our members.

I decided to walk into a testing center and take the Entertainment Electrician test in 2009. I did this on my own because I had difficulty getting others to take it with me, as most felt this new certification was not needed. I passed. Now I had to sell it to our Local.

I was excited to have the reason to implement more opportunities for training. However, after looking over the content



Local 476 members Joe Lyons and Brett Burns (foreground) join Nic Jones and Tom Nizinski in a study group for the ETCP Entertainment Electrician Certification.



Local 476 member, Jim Roorda, uses the triangulation formula in preparation for the ETCP Rigger – Arena Certification exam.

outlines for the ETCP exams, I knew that teaching to help members prepare for certification was going to be a challenge. I figured this would be an uphill battle due to the demanding curriculum in combination with the fact that many of our veteran members were less-than-eager to embrace something new. We started out by offering an Arena Rigging certification preparation class. While it was not as well-attended as I had hoped, it was a nice starting point as we saw our first members become certified.

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It became clear that increasing our members’ commitment to training classes would be critical to the success of any training program. We reorganized our training department and as we prepared to get our members ready to take the Arena Rigging certification exam, I decided to add my name to the list of attendees for training followed by a paper and pencil administration of the ETCP exam. As the class approached, we gathered a mix of veteran members and

newer members to set up study groups and get the discussion going, which allowed us to set the table for our ETCP preparation program as well as all our other training. This was an enormous help and we all bonded together and leaned on each other in preparation for the class. I discovered how this training could empower our grip rigging and some FX and construction members in skillful work and safety. Safety is a word that is tossed around in many industries but the ETCP Certification was (and continues to be) the hands-down gold standard for good safety practices. It was clear that these classes were important and valuable to the growth of our Union workforce.

When I received word that I had passed the exam, as well as many of the attendees, it was a source of great pride for myself and for the membership. Now the mission became to pass on to our members what we all had learned.

The natural next step for me was to become an instructor in electrics. In my younger years, I had been to electronics school which I knew would be a huge help, so I spent a lot of my spare time going over the practice tests and virtually anything I could find about the topics covered in the



Dawn Copeland, member 476, prepares for the ETCP Entertainment Electrician Certification exam.

ETCP content outline. Next up was teaching my first entertainment electrics class and I set my sights on that. We used the same formula for that class as member-attended study groups, encouraging members to listen to each other and glean the knowledge and expertise that each person had to offer. When it was done, we had our largest group of members who passed. That put the Local



Local 476 ETCP Recognized Instructor Don Rio McNichols (right) goes over an ETCP Rigging – Arena sample test with John Kenny.

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476 ETCP program on the map. Since then we have not looked back. Eventually I became an ETCP Recognized Electrical Trainer to provide renewal credits for our certified members.

As all of our members started seeing the benefits of this training and of certification, interest began to grow. It was at this time that the Portable Power Distribution Technician Certification was announced. In my mind, this was an important component of the ETCP. Over the years in my career, especially in my many years on films and commercials, I have witnessed the dangers inherent in improper hookups of power distribution. This certification goes a long way in ensuring a safe set for all, and

covers the daily routines of a rigging or set electrician. The new certification was, in my opinion, an excellent enhancement to the ETCP program. I was very happy to be in one of the first groups to take the test and then add this third certification to my name.

Now there was only one certification that I did not have, the Theatre Rigging certification. I knew, given my work experience, that this certification would be the most difficult for me to attain and contemplated whether it was feasible. However, when I considered my role as the leader of our Union and my commitment to lead by example, the decision was made and I went to work. When the news came that I had passed it was a great source of personal pride. It brought great satisfaction to me knowing how hard I had worked over the years and how much the knowledge that I had garnered from my peers had contributed to my success. It seemed to me that the team aspect of our program had worked extremely well. My success has been a direct

result of our Executive Board's support and the tireless dedication of our membership.

This past May 26th, after the exam proctor had left our training center, we went down to the local pub for a cold one. I watched with amazement and pride as all the test takers gathered in a circle with notepads, reviewing the Arena test. Everyone shared their thoughts on certain questions, drawing bridle formulas on bar napkins, listening and learning in the spirit of unity. That is what the ETCP can do. That is why it is so important. That is why I am so proud to be ETCP Certified. ■



Mark Hogan is Business Manager/Secretary Treasurer of IATSE Local 476, Chicago Studio Mechanics. He holds ETCP Certification as an Entertainment Electrician, Rigger – Arena, Rigging – Theatre, and a Portable Power Distribution Technician. Mark is an ETCP Recognized Trainer Entertainment Electrician and for Portable Power Distribution.