



Local 728 rank and filer Benjamin Turner attends to first order of morning business—a hale and hearty breakfast served by his wife, Oretha.



Arriving for work a few minutes ahead of schedule, Ben has time to pass a few pleasantries with his fellow workers. From left are Andy Trimble, John Wright and Howard Roper.

*By Leola Kendrick*

**C**OPIOUS tears are being shed daily by formerly unsuspected "friends of labor" for the sad plight of the rank and file member of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Union.

How the Kleenex business would skyrocket if the tears were genuine and not the crocodile variety!

Just who and what is this "rank and file member" who has leaped into sudden prominence as one to be pitied and protected, and who is pictured as the downtrodden of the earth?

**Dreams Come True**

The rank and file member of the Teamsters' Union, taken individually, is an average American citizen who can walk proudly and hold his head high in the knowledge that he has chosen well in affiliating with a strong union that already has helped him to fulfill many of his dreams.

Dry those tears, "Friends," straighten your thinking, and listen to the true story of a typical rank and file member, who in this particular instance is a member of Teamsters Local Union 728 in Atlanta, Ga.

Meet Benjamin Lanier Turner, 42 years old, happily married, deacon in his church, home owner, possessor of a nice automobile, and, thanks to his union contract, with sufficient time on his hands after work and on holidays

to relax with his family and in season, when he so desires, to indulge in his favorite sports of hunting and fishing. But best of all, the union has given him security in his way of life.

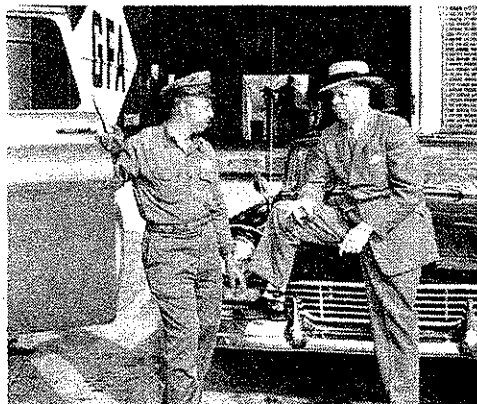
Has it always been like this for Benjamin Lanier Turner, rank and file member of Teamsters Local Union 728? The answer is a big "NO!"

From the very beginning until recent years, Ben's struggle to exist has been hard. Born into a family of six other children, Ben's father, a tenant farmer in Twiggs County, did his best for his large brood.

Even so, Ben with his brothers, after finishing backbreaking work on their own farm, were required to go out and earn what they could on other farms. There was never any ready cash except for bare necessities.

Seeking to get away from this situation, Ben left home to work in the orange groves of Florida. The work is seasonal and often his pockets were as empty as they had been on the farm.

Believing that for him there was something better in life, Ben came to Atlanta in 1940 and secured a job with a wholesale grocer. He worked 14

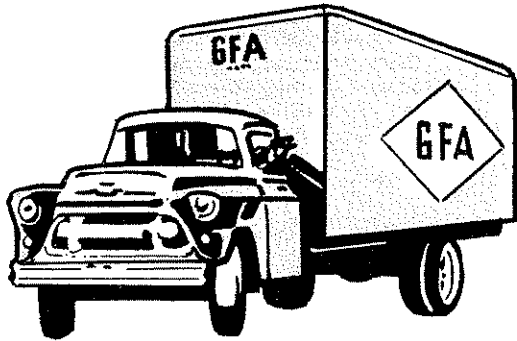


Before climbing aboard his truck, Ben has a few words with Local 728 Business Agent Joe Hendrix. Ben is a native Georgian.



After punching his time clock, Ben backs his truck into the dock to pick up his freight load for his day's deliveries.

**Portrait of a Rank-and-File:  
He Enjoys Security, Happiness  
and a High Standard of Living**



**J. R. Freeman, terminal manager for the firm where Ben works discusses deliveries before Ben starts day's assignment.**



**Here Ben chats with a super market employee as he unloads a consignment of chrome enamel.**

hours a day for \$15 a week, but at least the pay was regular.

To add to his happiness, but also to his problem, he married Miss Ortha E. Williams the same year he came to Atlanta. The \$15 a week wouldn't stretch enough for a family. Something had to be done, and he found a job with a foundry, but when the employees attempted to unionize the plant, the company moved its equipment elsewhere, leaving them high and dry.

His next job was with White Provision Co., where the CIO had organized the meat cutters, and he felt that he had bettered himself to some degree, but not enough.

The greatest change in his earning power up to date came when he went to work for J. L. Dean Trucking Co., but even there he worked a 50-hour week for \$37.50.

In 1952, Teamsters Union 728 began its organizing campaign and

**Back at home, Ben assists his young grandson, Burke Dodson, to polish Ben's new car. The Turner home is in the background. Mrs. Turner can be seen (at left) lending moral support to Burke and Ben.**

**The day's work is finished and Ben reports back to the terminal before checking out for home and then a few hours of fishing.**



struck the plant which had then become D & D Trucking Co. Due to injunctions and court restraining orders the union was stopped for a year and a half, and upon the advice of union officials, the employees went back to work, and to bide their time.

Through the efforts of Benjamin Lanier Turner, in 1953, the men signed up, and when the company saw that they were going to lose the election an increase almost equivalent to the union scale was granted. This did not stop the election, and the plant was organized. The wage scale was \$1.37 an hour for a 48-hour week.

In 1954 GFA bought the D & D Trucking Co. and now operates under the Southeastern Area Agreement. Since that time, the wage scale has almost doubled and the men work a 40 hour week. The pension and health and welfare plan is borne by the company.

Where once there were only three holidays, there now are six, with a 5-day workweek, with time and one-half paid for the sixth day and double pay for work on holidays and Sundays.

Keep in mind that GFA is a typical organized company, even as Benjamin Turner is a typical rank and file member of the Teamsters' Union.

What happens to the company where the employees seem to get so much? How is the company benefited in the union agreement?

#### **Employer Also Prospered**

When asked this question, Ben Turner said, "GFA, since it came to an agreement with the union, has prospered. The men are happy and secure and therefore produce.

"In the last three years the company has built a new terminal, bought a new dragline system, a fleet of new trucks, 50 trailers, 32 pickups and 16 new diesels for over the road."

The employees take pride in the new equipment and try to keep it jam up.

"I'm especially careful with my truck when I remember how I always fell out of the old truck whenever I opened the door," Ben said.

"GFA, as do most other union companies, cooperates with the union. Naturally union problems arise, but consideration for each other quickly straightens them out."

Benjamin Lanier Turner, rank and file member of Teamsters Local Union 728, had the highest praise for President R. C. Cook and Secretary-Treasurer Weldon L. Mathis, as well as for the union's business agents.

"There is never a time of the day or night when they won't come to a union member if he has a labor problem," Ben said. "These men give their jobs everything they have, and don't think the members don't appreciate it."

Thus speaks a rank and file member.

#### **Shop Steward Turner**

A spirit of goodwill and cooperation prevails at all union meetings of Teamsters Union 728. They are well attended by white and colored members who have but one objective, to work for the good of all. As senior shop steward, Ben Turner has the responsibility of trying to work out the problems of every union member, regardless of color, and he is doing a fine job, according to his superiors.



Since he is president and business manager of the Big-4 Deep Sea Fishing Club, big catches like this hearty eight pound Black Bass come easy for Ben.



Stern duties over, the Turners enter into the recreational hour with enthusiasm. A game of Chinese checkers proves relaxing while little Burke seems to find amusement in the apparent horseplay going on between his grandparents.



Hunting is another one of Ben Turner's avocations. Here he cleans his rifle while his friend, Gid Parham, stands by with the lubricating oil.