

Maria DeLise
Interviewed by Ann Froines
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Northford, Connecticut

(The first part of the interview was accidentally erased when the tape recorder recorded over it; tape recorder had automatic reverse for recording, and interviewer did not know this!) The earlier part of her story covered how the union got started at the University of New Haven.)

Were there times when you saw people, including yourself, doing courageous things in relation to the organizing?

Well, I always set an example of leadership. And I was never afraid of anything. I was always known as speaking up, and speaking my mind. I was never discourteous but I always made my point. And I was not going to budge. You think about things, you decide which way you want to go, then all speed ahead. And that has always been my life philosophy, whether it was in the household, or with the kids, or at the University of New Haven.

You think about these things, and it is really common sense, gut feeling common sense, and what you think is right. I've been pretty fortunate about that. Everything has worked out quite well. Whether it's the kids' problems, or husband's problems. You know, you sit down and discuss things, but then someone has to make a decision. And once you make a decision you stay with that decision. It might end up well, it might not, but so far, so good. (Laughs.)

Describe any training you received from 925.

Not so much locally, but when we went to national meetings, we'd go to trainings, sessions at the national level. District 925 was not local. We were the first one in Connecticut to be unionized with 925, I think. So we didn't have anyone else in 925 to call up and say, what are you doing on this or on that? We were mostly dealing with the (union) rep, and whenever we'd have any problems, they were always available. That's the beauty of this 925, which doesn't exist today in Local 760 in Hartford. That's one of the reasons we went with 925, because they assured us they would be there for us if we needed them, and they were. All the years I was affiliated with 925 before my retirement, they were always there. If we left a message, the message would be returned. And if the problem was major they would come down.

They were coming down from Hartford. All the reps that negotiated the contracts, District 925 would pay them to service us. They were all wonderful people, wonderful people. The contracts I have here will tell you who represented us. We had several of them.

Do you remember any specific discussions with 925 about developing women's leadership?

I know they had a lot of things going on, and like I said, we were really away from everybody. They were in Ohio; we were really mostly affiliated with the rep. When I was on the national executive board we would have those discussions about leadership. When we went to the national there would be different groups that would meet for different reasons. And so we would take advantage of those meetings and go in and listen to people address an issue. We took up a lot of knowledge, and of course, when you do that you impart that knowledge back to the women in the university where I was working. It catches on. It catches on. That was our job, to bring the knowledge from the national to the groups at the University of New Haven, to let them know what I learned, when I would go to the national meetings or the meeting of District 925. So that's why I always said, I learned a lot. I had no knowledge before about unions. To me, union was just a word, didn't mean anything. Once you get involved with this you embrace the whole group and what they impart.

Were you thinking about the leadership you would leave behind as you anticipated your retirement?

Definitely. I was afraid. You couldn't do anything because the people coming in are new people. We had a tremendous turnover and it's still going on. We (in our time) had members at the university that were there for a long, long time. People came and they never left. That's why we were successful in many ways, I think. We were successful because we were together. We knew each other; we were like a family. And they knew if we said something, it was truth and not lies to try to convince them to unionize. They truly understood that we needed to unionize because life for us would be better. We'd get better raises, we would get respect that we didn't have before.

The discontent was with the top administrative people, the president, the vice-president, not the people who we immediately worked for. They referred to us as "dumb broad," or a "dime a dozen." And we heard this. The way they would try to get you to leave was by...(Telephone interruption.)

Is there anything more you would like to add about your own development as a leader?

I feel it came natural. And I thought because I had the most seniority there, that I should always encourage people to acquire the leadership qualifications or qualities, because I wasn't going to be there very long. My years were coming to an end. After 43 years I think I deserve a rest. (Laughs.)

I do miss 925 tremendously, tremendously. I learned a lot, I became a better person for it. I have a tremendous amount of knowledge that I never had before. I'm always eager to learn so maybe that is why I enjoyed the role I had. And I've always liked to help people, because, the way we were treated, nobody else should be treated that way. We were the

forerunners of the group, and we took the leadership to make the place better for whoever is coming behind us. But I don't see any hope with this new leadership. I don't mean the clerical people but the local that took the place of District 925.

Are the clerical workers trying to get the union to do more on their behalf?

I'm sure they are, but the steward, the people that hold these positions, they're not trained. And I see that as a major problem because the people like us, they used to be trained. They used to be talked to, because the more you talk to people, the more they acquire knowledge. And if you don't talk to people...we used to go up to Hartford, and locally we used to meet with other groups that were unionized. Not necessarily with District 925 but others. You have to exchange experiences you know, this happened to us. Basically, the problems are the same, no matter where you work, whether you work in industry or in academia. They're basically the same.

On what occasions did you meet with other unions?

Well, many times they would call us, other groups trying to unionize. The Hartford office would call me and ask, will you go and talk to the bus drivers, the school bus drivers. Would you tell them about your experiences with the union at the university? So I said, sure, sure, and after work I would go down, and they'd have a group meeting, and they would introduce me, and I would tell them my personal experience at the University of New Haven. Where we were and where we are today, and how much we gained by unionizing.

I was not a union person, but I found out after so many years of being bumped around, that you need some help. The union is the answer. That's basically what it is. We were the union on the campus, but we knew that if we got stuck with the administration, they would come in, and without taking over, would start supporting us. And that's what they don't have now. I feel badly now because it looks like that with all of the work we did, it has reverted back to what it was before we unionized. I resent that. I resent that. I'm upset for them. I mean I don't need it any more fortunately, but I do feel for them. Because what's happening now is they--and people call me from the university--are making everybody administrative assistants. Their secretarial title is being removed. By doing that, they've taken them out of the union., They're depleting the numbers of people that are now unionized at the university. And that's their way. The union is doing nothing about it; that's what I resent. The union stewards, they're not knowledgeable because they've never done this work before. We did the work, but we had people guiding us, you know.

And these administrative assistants are doing the same work, receive the same pay?

Of course, of course. And they are depleting the numbers, they're depleting the numbers in the union, and we don't want that happening. Because we were not a big, big group, and if it gets down to 50 people, you know, what are 50 people going to do? It's starting all over again: "If you don't like it, the door swings both ways." This is an example that

just happened this past year. The executive secretaries to the deans were unionized. They took them out and made them administrative assistants to the deans, the directors, without the union fighting. Can you beat that? I heard they gave them \$5000 more per year so nobody's going to squawk—"Hey, I picked up \$5000, I don't care what title I have!" But that depletes the number that were unionized. If someone doesn't step in and say, no you can't do that...we'll talk about it at the next negotiation. When the contract is up, we'll talk about that. They tried to do that when we were there, and we said, absolutely not! You're not moving anybody.

When I was there the only way you came out of the union was if you applied for an administrative position. If it is posted, and you were capable of doing it, then, you know, then you let them go. But if you are in an existing position, you don't take them out of the union. And nobody stops that?! Nobody stops that?! That bothers me. When I heard that, I was wild! I'm still wild; I'm all wound up! (Laughs.)

A change of theme here: did you observe anything about the role of men as members of 925?

We didn't have too many men. Tony _____ was very active with us from day one. And then he left after a couple of years. He was just about the only man. Secretarial is really female . . . but he was very strong and powerful. I lost track of him. He moved down to New Jersey, and I don't know what happened.

Looking back, do you have anything you would like to add about the strategies and tactics of District 925, or their way of organizing?

I cannot say enough about the way they organized us, and what they did for us at the University of New Haven. They were always there for us; they always solved our problems. We may not have been right all the time, but they made us look right in the eyes of the administration. And all the back room talk that went on, you know, I'm sure we're not always right ourselves. But there was no justice. And they always took our side. They fought for us.

Did you use public demonstrations in the organizing?

Oh yes! Oh yes! Every time we had a contract, we had public demonstrations. I carried a sign, my sign read, "WE GET PAID WEEKLY, VERY WEAKLY!" (Laughs.) I think I still have it down in the cellar. I'm not sure because now that I'm home, I am trying to clean out the cellar.

We went on strike once. I'm not sure if it was the second or third contract. We were out for a whole week. We really crippled them. Our contract ran out August 28, which is the beginning of the school year. That's the worst time to go on strike. When we asked for a date in the first contract we were negotiating, we asked for August 28. The vice-president with whom we were negotiating said fine. He left a year later. I thought, that's why he gave us that date. He was on his way out and he was going to stick it to them.

You know what I mean? And I really do think I am correct in my thinking. Because nobody, nobody in their right mind--either that or he's stupid--would give us August 28 when the academic year starts at the end of August. Right? So I'm thinking he's either stupid, didn't know any better, or he really stuck 'em. That always remains the deadline for the contract. And you can do a lot of damage that week.

What were the tactics used in the strike?

We were picketing. We blocked the entrances, or tried to block the entrances. The students came out and supported us. I can't say all of them, but there was a good, strong representation of students supporting us. And fortunately for us we had a wonderful week of weather. Only one day it was raining, and we decided we were going to call it off because it was raining. But the women who were supposed to picket that morning at eight o'clock said, no, no, we're going to put on our raincoats and go out and picket. So they went out to picket, and they saw the problem. The TV stations were there--we called them. All this work was done by the union; they were behind us, they set it all up. And they did a marvelous job. I can't say enough about 925. I miss them tremendously, and I wish the University of New Haven was still with 925, though I did see it coming, because I was on the national board. I could see the talking going on, the back and forth.

When I came back from the executive board, I didn't mention this. I had a feeling we were going to be sold out. So I wasn't far from the truth. But everyone has to do what they have to do.

Did District 925 raise the issue of diversity by race and ethnicity in the workplace in its meetings or trainings?

Well, it might have. But I was brought up in that manner, so it didn't affect me at all. We were mostly white women, but we had a few black women. I was brought up in a home where, you know, it didn't matter the color of your skin or the nationality. You service those people just the same. I'm sure that people don't feel the way I do, but that's the way I felt. I defend the person, not the color. I don't care what nationality, what color they are. If the situation is wrong, it is wrong, regardless. I was brought up that way, and I brought up my kids the same way. And I can see the results now; they are imparting it to their kids, the same philosophy. We respect people for what they are, not the color of their skin or their nationality. We are all created equal.

Were the aims of District 925 realized?

Oh yeah. As far as the University of New Haven was concerned, no doubt about it! I think it worked because the people made it work. They were the type of people. . . they had experienced what we were experiencing. I really do feel that way. They understood the problems. They felt the way we felt. As far as the University of New Haven was concerned, they made the place a lot better for us. And I shall be forever grateful. And I'm sure everybody else feels the same way, including this gal that just called. We picketed together. She was executive secretary to the dean of the School of Engineering.

She wasn't afraid to come out and picket with us.

She wasn't afraid she might lose her job?

Nope, nope, we were strong women. That's why we're friends to this day, you know. We have the same philosophy. We're strong women. We're strong women at home, we're strong women in the office, and we are strong women with our kids. Like I said, I think about things before I act upon on them. Once I make up my mind the way I'm going to go, I stay the course. I don't deviate.

Do you think sharing these experiences with 925 cemented your friendships with the other women?

Absolutely! Because I think we all felt the same. I can't say "all," I shouldn't say "all." Ninety percent felt the same way we did, as these eleven people did. But they were afraid to come forward. You have these thoughts, you bring a group together to impart these thoughts--where we are going with this, this is what we're going to do. That's tough. That's tough. To call the troops out and have them show up, that's challenging. And if they don't show up, it makes you look bad. You can't lead a group that doesn't show up.

The group that led, we were right. We were there a long time. There are a lot of people that want to lead, but they don't know how, they feel insecure about leading. There are different reasons why not everybody leads, you know. I think I led out of anger. I always said, what they did to me is not going to happen to the next people. And we took it from there. Eloise contributed, and the gal that just called contributed. Strong women. Strong women. And the other ones appreciated our efforts. I'll tell you, when I retired, there were 100 people sitting there at this big restaurant. So that tells you something. And the president of the university came, and he made a heck of a speech that night. They might not like you, but they respect you, let me put it that way. The motto on campus was, "hands off Mrs. DeLise," you know. "There's potential problems." Because I let it be known, I'm not leaving, I'm here to do a job, and I do it well, okay, and that's determined every year when you are evaluated by your immediate supervisor. Everybody knew that, you know, what I do in my spare time, that's my business, nobody else's business. (Laughs.) Maybe sometimes I could be a little bit too strong, but it's all right.

Since you were on the national executive board, you were able to witness 925 in relation to SEIU. What impact do you think 925 had on SEIU as a whole?

Well, what I was able to notice when I went to the national meeting in Chicago and Las Vegas was, their women were highly respected. As a matter of fact, many of them eventually sat on the executive board of SEIU. Karen Nussbaum was one. She always sat at the head table. They were respected women.

And they contributed something to SEIU? How would you describe it?

Absolutely! Those women were possibly brighter than all the men sitting there. (Laughs.) First of all, they represented us, and the women's movement helped a lot. The timing was correct, you know? We all grew together. They were sitting on the executive board of national SEIU and imparting the knowledge they were bringing from us, and what was happening in our organizations, okay? And basically our problems are the problems all over--it's the same problems. Money and disrespect, basically. They represented us.

And they proved you could organize clerical workers.

Oh, absolutely! I went to Cincinnati, all over.

What did the experience of working with District 925 mean in your life?

I learned so much. The experience of negotiating a contract. I had never had that experience. Frustrating, true, terribly frustrating at times. But I acquired so much knowledge as to how to negotiate a contract. It was frustrating, but I enjoyed it. Otherwise I would not have sat on the committee for five contracts. It was part of my life when I could do that. The kids are grown, and my husband always was very accommodating. He never put any pressure on me; he knew I was involved in negotiating a contract. He'd give me all the free time I needed. If he has to cook for himself, he cooks for himself. So I didn't have that pressure: I'd better get home and cook supper or he's going to be angry. That type of relationship that a husband and wife have. My kids were still home but my husband was home if I went out of town. They didn't move out until after they graduated from college. Activism is not something you can do when your kids are young. At least I wouldn't do it.

Did you talk to your kids about your 925 experiences?

They know all about it. They work in real estate. My daughter worked at IBM for 10 years, then when she had children she left and was a stay-at-home mom. But after a few years--she is very much like her mother--she needed something in her life besides raising two daughters and being a wife. So she took the test and works for Coldwell Banker in New Haven.

Will you fill in the story that you mentioned earlier about the co-worker who was unfairly treated by the administration?

Marian is a good friend of mine. I worked with her for many, many years. She is the opposite of myself. Kind of mild, and very nice person. In other words, an administrator can walk all over her, okay? She called me up one day and said I have this problem. A full-time position that she had for many years was divided in half. They wanted her to work one half a day in this position and a half day in the other. I said, "Marian, do what you have to do." She was 61, now she is 62. "You have only four more years to coast out. Roll with the punches." So she went over to the new office and they started giving her problems there from day one: "Shut off the lights." "You were two minutes late

coming back from your break." I mean, nit-picking at every little thing. She became a nervous wreck. And I can understand how that can happen. When you know someone is watching you, you're not relaxed. A minute, two minutes. And this was all documented.

The rep from the local, he came down. This is a long story, this went on for weeks. She could not communicate with the stewards. The stewards are good people, but they are not trained. Then the administration made an offer for her to leave. We'll give you two months medical coverage and one month's pay. So she called me up, she was hysterical. The director of human resources had said to her, you have until 4:30 today to sign this letter of resignation. I was still working then, and so she came to me and said, I have until 4:30 to sign this paper. I said, "who said that?" Hennessey, she said, the director of HR.

I said, "You're not signing anything. You're not signing anything, Marian. You haven't done anything wrong." She said, but he said I have to sign this by 4:30. I said, "I'm telling you right now, Marian, if you sign that piece of paper don't come in and see me any more!" This is not the way it should be done. I was angry at the rep from the local, he was suggesting that she sign the paper. It was a good deal, he was telling her. "What deal? I said, "this is no deal! They are putting you out on the street and no one is fighting for you." I was aggravated. I couldn't do anything, I was not a steward; I was just a member like everyone else at that point. That's when I said to her, "if you've got a few dollars, get yourself a lawyer." She said, I don't have a lawyer. I said, "I'll get you a lawyer." Through my daughter whose friend was a labor lawyer, I got the name of Gesmondi. He's the best labor lawyer in the state of Connecticut, so I hear.

What happened was that after Gesmondi took over, she needed to fax something to Gesmondi and she couldn't do it where she was. So I said, "Marian, meet me for lunch and give me the paper. I'll fax it for you." Well, the paper was faxed to the attorney and the clerk receiving the paper, because there are several lawyers there apparently, didn't know to whom it was going. So she faxed it back. But she faxed it back to the person who had signed the letter, the assistant director of human resources, okay?

So the assistant director of human resources calls Marian and says, I got this letter from the attorney, did you fax it? And Marian says yes. So Marian calls me up and she's all excited. Because now they know she's got an attorney, right? I said, "Marian, that is the best thing that could have happened to you. Now they know you have an attorney, and it turns out to be Gesmondi. They're not going to fool around with someone who has an attorney." See, the idea is--they wouldn't pull that with me. They're trying to get her to quit. And at this point, it came to light that I was coaching her. But I didn't care, I really didn't care. They didn't come near me at all.

So once they found out she had a lawyer, and the lawyer was Gesmondi, they backed right off. I think what happened is the director of human resources went over and talked to her boss, and said hey--this is they lingo they use--you have to learn how to get along with each other. He was no longer 100 percent on the side of the administration because had Marian filed a suit against the university, the director of human resources would have to notify the administration that there was a suit coming in. And that might cost the

university money. He certainly didn't want that to happen. His job was to avert these problems.

But Marian didn't understand the game at all, you know. So without my guiding her and understanding the next step, she was going to sign. . . "If you sign anything don't come through those doors anymore." Either you stand on your own two feet and fight them or they are going to bury you. That's a choice you have to make.

So anyhow, Gesmondi did come in and contacted human resources, and said, what's the story here, what is this--excuse me--nit-picking shit, he said to them. She has all these years of seniority. She took over my job, and she was there for a year, then they eliminated my job! That's another thing they're doing now. Anyhow, Marian is still there working for the Hotel Management School now, working for a new boss in the new position. And after three months she had glorious evaluations.

What was the motivation of human resources for getting rid of her, to save money?

They always come down on the side of the administration, that's why we unionized. We have a union that comes down on the side of the employee. The only thing that I can think of as to why this situation came about is that they might have had somebody in mind for the position. And I told Marian that, this is not normal. She understands that they had to take her. They just had somebody else in mind for the position. I think that's exactly what happened. That's when you need the union.

Was age discrimination a factor?

I said that, and even the attorney said that. There is age discrimination. \$720 it cost her for this game. She was not represented well by the union.

When District 925 disbanded I was still working at the university. Anne Hill came in and called a meeting of the Board and told us what was happening. I saw it coming, but I never said anything because there was nothing definite. But when I used to meet at the executive level of the national, I saw it coming. Something else happened in Washington, and they had to disband. I said to myself, I hope they last until I'm out of here. That was my personal, selfish motive; I hope they last until I'm out of here

Was that the only disappointment you had working with 925 all those years?

I understood and I understand why it happened, because in the long run they had to watch out for what is best for the total picture. As a matter of fact, District 925 stayed with the University of Washington because they had three or four thousand members, where altogether they had three to four thousand members in the other groups. In Washington that was only one group. You have to do what you have to do. But selfishly I used to say that I hope they last until I am out of here because my days are coming to an end. When I was 65 I was out, I wasn't going to work a day after. And I was born in a cutoff year; 1938 was a cutoff year so I just made it. It worked out well for me. But I enjoyed my

meetings with those gals. I learned a lot from them. I knew nothing...I didn't even know how to spell "union," you know.

Did working with District 925 change your political views or opinions?

No, I was always a Democrat. I grew up in a Democratic home. I'm always for the underdog, and I'm sure the Republicans are not for the underdog. Their philosophy is completely different. I always try to help the Marians that come along; you know what I mean? Somebody else might have told her, get lost. But you know, where she was, I have been, only I didn't have a union. So I understood. But now that we have a union we shouldn't have to endure that. She's paying union dues. And don't forget, the union dues go up according to the raises, too. If you get a raise, part of that raise goes into the union dues. Because there is a certain percentage that you pay, right?

Do you think the employees there now have less respect for unions because of the poor service of the new local?

I have no idea. The people I know say, oh yeah, we're just paying dues, we're not getting anything out of it. Yeah, like Marian, who had that problem. The others don't call me because they are not as close to me, and there is tremendous turnover there. There was a . . .back in the 1960's, there was a movement, people were beginning to drop their aprons and come to work, okay? They were beginning to move, and some were more trained than others. I had worked in Boston for Boston Edison; that was my first contact with a union. I had graduated from _____ College, and we were very well trained in secretarial responsibilities. When the secretary to the President of Boston Edison on Tremont Street went on vacation, they would call me upstairs. And when I went upstairs and took her job, I would go from \$65 a week to \$100 a week. I went, oh, this is great. This is back in 1958. That was a lot of money, \$100 a week, you know? So if you're unionized this is what happens. When I went upstairs and did her job, I got her pay. That wouldn't have happened without a union. I would have gone upstairs, done her job, but made \$65 a week. So that was an eye-opener for me. I enjoyed the work at Boston Edison.

When I came down to University of New Haven, to get \$5 a week raise that was pulling teeth. Because we were not unionized. Maybe that union idea came out of the couple of years I worked for Boston Edison. There was a difference between being unionized and not being unionized. We had a book that had rules, and at UNH we didn't have any book.

In that era 1958, 1959, if you got married, you had to leave the job. No, if you got pregnant, you had to leave. Wait, no, even if you got married you had to leave. I remember, at Boston Edison, people were getting married, and they left. I'm going to be married 46 years this May. So I'm going back about half a century. It took us half a century. It seems like a lot of time, but it isn't. And yet we've come a long way. A lot of changes.

And you've been part of them...

Yeah, I think I contributed a little bit. We all contributed. There was a tremendous group at that table all the time, you know? We didn't always agree on things, but we had a lot of respect for each other. For a long time, I didn't agree with Eloise, you know? She did a super job, and she is still one of my best friends. But if you don't agree, you should say you don't agree. But you learn from others' thoughts. And other times she would say something, and I'd say, you know, you're right. You've got a good point there.

Were the things you disagreed about questions of how to approach things in your union activity?

Yeah, a solution to a problem. But most of the time, Eloise and I were on the same wavelength. Sometimes I wasn't at a meeting she was at. You know, when you're not at a meeting, and you don't get the total picture, it's a completely different situation. And you're just hearing a few phrases being said. . .but if you are at the meeting, you get the whole picture, because you hear this one talk, that one talk. Then you put it all together and you formulate an opinion, you know? But if you're not there, and you just listen to one person, sometimes you don't agree.

But I had tremendous faith in her, tremendous faith. Honest, sincere, brilliant, you know, brilliant mind. She went to school, she got a degree, she got a Masters. And she worked. She raised two boys. She started as a clerical like myself. She's still here. She got her degrees at night. She used to go on her lunch hour. If you have bosses that bend, give you an extra half hour. I always had great bosses. But I would say to myself, I don't mind working for less, that is, university wages, but this much less? You know what I mean? My boss used to give me a job to do, you know, and in 15 minutes it was done. As a matter of fact, he still calls me and asks where is this? Because now he has no secretary at all. But if I took a half hour, "Greg, I'm going to be late coming back from lunch," no problem. He appreciated me, because when he wanted something, I was there.

Did the union help change the climate for secretaries at UNH? Do you think you're treated now with more respect?

Oh yes! Definitely! I think even the immediate bosses. . .They used to say, watch out for Mrs. DeLise, she's tough. I'd say, "tough but fair." But within my own department I never had any problem. When I went out the door and started meeting with the guys across the street (the administration), well, to be fair to them, I don't know how much they knew about how valuable I was, or the other women were that did good work. They don't care. They see just a body, walking in and out. To the person to whom you report, you're very valuable, you know, because he depends on you. These professors, they come in and go out. They are in two days, three days, they're never there five days a week, or 8:30 to 4:30. You're there, and then as you get older, you become the students' parents, their parents away from home.

You're advising them about anything. I had an older women you know. She was getting a Masters. I babied her, and she used to drop in and out, married to a doctor. I think she

was Egyptian, a lovely, lovely woman. She had kids, too. She came to my party, brought a gift, and she kept saying, I'm going to miss you. And I said, well you are on your way, you only have a year left. And you're doing well. Especially when you are not American, you know, you're dependent on someone like myself. I used to tell her where to buy mattresses, sheets and towels. (Laughs.) Besides my job. I was known for that. "Ask Maria DeLise." But I enjoyed it. I enjoyed my 43 years, and I wouldn't change a thing, you know.

Except this. For 17 years my name was put in for outstanding clerical employee. I have a letter here; I read it the other night. And finally the last time I said, enough of this. They're not going to get away with this: "Congratulations on your name being submitted, but unfortunately you did not win. . .(she reads in a mocking voice). People with much less seniority, and who did nothing would get the award. It was a \$500 award, believe me, I don't need the \$500, but it was just the thing, and after 17 years of getting these letters, you know. I said to myself, they're not going to get away with it.

Two years ago I sat down--I read it the other night. I said, "thank you for your note. I really appreciate it. For 17 years my name has been submitted in nomination. And I've never won this prize. It is obvious that my union activities have prevented this university from taking it to the next step. Thank you so much. Have a nice summer." And then I carbon copied it to the president, the vice-president, everybody at the top level. In other words, don't think you are making a fool out of me. I don't need the money, but that is beside the point.

And finally the last year I was there, my boss said, I placed your name in nomination again. I said, I don't need the money; I said my bit last year. He said, I am going to do it just the same. So I was going to Italy May 15, and there is a day when they have the dinner and give the award, make it public. My boss came in to tell me that I'm going to win the award, and I said, "Greg, did you tell them I am going to be in Italy on the 15th?" He said, I feel badly that you are not going to be here. I said, not me. You know it is the best snub I can give them. When I got back they had sent me a lovely note with a \$500 check at home.

But isn't that something? 17 years, they couldn't recognize me, and then the last year. . .Well, enough is enough. Do they think people are stupid? But see, I could do things like that. Not many people would have the guts to do something like that. I said, no, enough is enough. I sent it to everybody. Put that in your pipe smoke it. (Laughs.) You have to have some guts.

Of course, I could do it, too, because I never paid the bills at home. That's the thing. When a woman is not financially set, I don't mean wealthy, I mean financially set, you think twice about doing certain things, okay? I don't have to have that fear. So I led the troops when it came to that. And everybody followed. But somebody had to lead. If it took me, and I was in a position to do it, then it was me. But I can understand why some people can't take leadership. They've got bills to pay, and they've got kids in school. I had kids in school, too, but I was still leading. But it is the financial situation. It boils

down to that. If you need that paycheck badly, then you kind of restrain yourself. But hey, that's the story. I have many stories.