

**Evelyn Thorpe
Interviewed by Ann Froines
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Boston, MA**

I am interviewing Evelyn Thorpe in her office at Boston Latin Academy, Boston Public Schools, January 19, 2006. Evelyn, tell me the story of how you first encountered or entered 925.

Well, as a local member here of the administrative guild we were 925 members and I was chosen to go as a rep to one of the annual meetings. My first meeting was in Cleveland, it was either Cleveland or Cincinnati I can't really remember which one. I kind of think it was Cincinnati. From there that's when I got elected. I got put in real quick because the person that was in that position declined reelection and they needed to run someone else for that office and they asked me would I be willing. It was almost like, it was funny it was kind of like, "You have to do it. You have to do it." So, I went, "OK, but I don't know what I'm supposed to do." That was my first experience and that's when I really got the bigger picture of what union, unionism was all about, workers rights was, from that point on. The way I got involved in my own local was because they needed a rep from the high school level. In our local, in the Guild, we went as levels because we had elementary, middle school and high school. We always had someone on our executive board from each level. So that's how I became involved in that. They said, "You want to be a rep for the high school level?" Since I was working in a high school at the time I said, "Sure."

What is the Administrative Guild? Can you describe that for me?

The Administrative Guild is Boston Public Schools secretaries and technicians. My sense of history, they were Local 385, I believe. I'm a little sketchy on the real old history of 925. They [Local 385] went in to 925 at some point. I came into the Boston Public Schools and the Guild in '83 when I came to work for the Boston Public Schools.

So 925 was already here, in place when you started working.

Yes, when I started working.

Do you remember anything about that first executive committee meeting that you went to?

I had been going to, not the E Board meetings, but the membership meetings. Seeing the women conducting business and what not. The first E Board meeting that I went to was pretty laid back for me because I was new and I was trying to really get a grasp of what they did, what the business was at hand and what not. After a while, I got a little more familiar. I still didn't have a big history and a lot of understanding, but as I started going to more training classes and leadership training and one-on-one what the union is and

what your rights and responsibilities are as a union member, I got a little bit more. Then I got elected to the National E Board. I really got scared because I was like, "Oh, my goodness!" It took a while [until] you got more as to what was going on, and then you really could connect the dots in the puzzle together to see how it all really worked, which to me was a big awakening. Then I understood the importance of a union and being a union member. I still stress that today to a lot of the younger ladies and gentlemen at work in the Boston public school system. Even people that aren't. I even tell my children how important it is to be in a union. You have more importance in a way if you belong to a union than you do if you're in private industry or something. Not to say that you can't get a good job in a private industry or whatever, but sometimes it's a little better. It's a good place to be. It's a good place to be as a person to always know that there's someone there for you.

What has been your own work for the Boston Public School?

I've always been an administrative secretary. I've never been a school secretary. I've always been in administration. I first started off in the Human Resource Department under Teacher Placement. At that time, we were responsible for the application process for new teachers, people that came into the system and substitutes, mainly the substitute teaching part of it. That meant you did all the payroll, the attendance for these people and the calling and scheduling for schools. You know, schools would call a day or two ahead and say they need teachers or a teacher for a school and you've got to get on the phone. I used to go in 5:45 in the morning, start work, calling up people, filling the slots and the schools with subs, trying to get a sub to here and there. That was horrendous sometimes but it was good. I enjoyed it. Then I just moved on. I bid out for different job. From there I went to Madison Park, which is a high school. At the time I started off, I was at the high school level office, which had like a deputy superintendent. They housed a lot of different department people from like curriculum, math and whatever, special ed office. They had coordinators and people working out of there, that worked with, basically, that level of schools. So if were in a high school level those people dealt with high schools; if it was elementary they dealt with elementary. From there they changed it to clusters. I got bumped one time and had to go to a couple of other offices for a while. Then I went back on the same job.

What is Unified Student Services where you work now?

Since they reorganized the school department at one time and they took a lot of the departments that dealt with students services such as special ed, private placement, special ed department alone, I mean that whole department, alternative ed which would do counseling and intervention that also becomes a part of Unified Services. Health, the health services, and the psychological services.

That's a big department then.

The offices are in three different parts of the city but we're still all unified. Under that comes speech and therapy, occupational. All those kind of services all come under

Unified. Anything dealing with the student other than teaching. We have behavior specialists, social workers, violence prevention and a portion of it entails AIDS and counseling, sexual education counseling. We also do the at-risk and gay and lesbian students, (and the) homeless initiative. There's a lot of things that come under Unified now whereas before they were kind of scattered out under other different departments. They put them all together now and so it's called Unified Student services. But as I said, there's a certain section in one part of the city. We're located here. In this particular building, where I'm at now, we have private placement. That means that students that are in other cities and towns but they're Boston residents and they are in residential settings or day settings but it's private schools. It's not Boston Public. We have the health services, which is like the head base for the nurses. We also do the violence prevention piece. We just got a new grant, Safe Schools and Healthy Students. Those social workers are now in, I think it's ten of the schools that they're focusing on. I think it's attendance and other issues. I'm not quite sure because they just started that grant.

Those of you who work here, are you doing all the coordination and keeping this thing going or do you actually deliver the services too?

Well, I myself, don't. We're staff support. We're secretaries that work with all these people to do all the pieces that they do.

I see. OK.

We have three directors for Unified Student Services, one of the senior directors is Bill Kelly, who's my boss, and then we have Carol O'Reilly and James Sullivan in the other places.

Now I understand that working for the Boston Public Schools anyway, you've always been a member of a union, either 925 or right now SEIU 888...

That all came about from the New Strength in Unity, and doing the like industries together. Before 925, we were in three different locations. We had health care public sector, public services workers, building services and all that all together in one union. Now with the New Strength in Unity they went to put like locals together... So, that's what happened with us. We ended up merging with Local 285. From that came a new local, which is 888, which I am now. 285 is now a part of 1199. The only ones that actually got to keep the 925 is the Washington group because they were the larger of the whole body. We decided that they could keep the name.

(Both laughing)

It keeps it alive anyway. Well, did you ever experience any lack of respect towards women office workers in your years of working as an administrative secretary? Mostly you've been in union situations.

I've talked to other women that work other places and they talk about how little respect they have and acknowledge what they actually do. They don't get any thank yous, any praise for what they do. But I haven't come across that a lot. I wouldn't let anybody do that to me. (Laughing) They try in the poorest public schools sometimes, you know, it comes time to negotiate but I think we have a pretty good contract with the Boston Public Schools. I would say we have one of the better ones probably in the state. It's not the greatest. It could be better. But I've seen others and I always tell my members, you know, we're doing pretty good. Things could be better but we're doing pretty good compared to others.

Growing up did you have any knowledge or experience with labor unions or workplace struggles?

No. My mother was in a union but I didn't actually know that until I became in a union. That was before she retired. She was a nurse and she was in 1199 for a long time but I didn't have any real knowledge of the union. I knew there were unions and the ones you always heard of were the Teamsters or the UAW but I was like, "Well, what is that?" I didn't really have any other knowledge about what actually went on in a union.

How would you describe your own family background? You mentioned your mother had a profession, a job outside the home.

You mean as far as my mother and father working?

Exactly, yes.

Well, my father always worked two jobs. He worked at the post office until he retired from there. And he was a chef part time at nights. He always worked two jobs, maybe three. My mother, she was at home most of the time up until I was in high school. Just about when I started high school, that's when my mother went to nursing school. Most of the time growing up she just had part-time jobs. She was home with my sisters and brothers because they're six, seven, eight years younger than me. She was at home with them a while.

She had, what, four kids?

Yes. My father always worked.

Did you grow up in the Boston area?

Yes. I did. I grew up here. I wasn't born here but I grew up in Boston. I went to school in Boston Public Schools.

Which ones? They have new names now?

Well, my high school is closed but my elementary schools are still there. Well, my kindergarten school is still is now condominiums. I went to the David Ellis and to the Henry Higgunson. Then middle school I went to the George Lewis Junior High and then I went to Jamaica Plain High School, graduated from Jamaica Plain High, which is now closed. My high school's closed.

So you really have roots in this community and in this school system.

Yeah, it's kind of weird because a few of my friends (that) I graduated from high school (with) has been a principal and a deputy superintendent. One's been a cluster leader, (and) one of my friends is head of the equity office for the Boston Public Schools. You know, we all went to school together. It's kind of nice.

Another question about background. Did you have any awareness of this thing called the women's movement going on?

Back when they were up in arms with the women's movement and you know, what you saw on television and heard Jane Fonda when she was out there doing her thing and the others. I kind of watched it but I didn't follow it a lot. At the time, I was raising my children. I was having children and raising them. So it wasn't like a priority thing. I was somewhat aware of it. I knew the times were changing. I saw on the news how women were protesting and all that, you know, and you'd always give your little, "Right on!" you know, but I wasn't involved in it. But I was a little bit aware of what women were fighting for in the workplaces and stuff.

Was there any particular campaign or union struggle that was important to you in your work with 925? I guess you already had contracts when you came into the union. Were you involved in supporting other struggles in other cities?

Yes. The one that I was really involved in, did a lot of work with, but we lost, was the campaign here with ABCD, Action for Boston Community Development. That was a big one. We had a lot of backing, like even the Teamsters came out and all that. But that was really hard and that was the most that I was like immediately involved in. We always would go to an E Board meeting wherever it was, and there was usually some kind of campaign going on in that city and we always went and did an action with those folks there. The one that I was really involved in, with really knocking on doors and going out and really trying to get people, going to people's offices and job sites and homes at night was the ABCD one. I had worked for ABCD before I came to the school department and I knew what those people were going through there. Back then, we were really trying to fight. Actually at one time in the office where I was working, we were trying to get unions in and they shot us down. That was back in the seventies when I worked for ABCD then. So I knew when people were telling what was going on, just couldn't get them to really be forceful together. People were really afraid. They spent a lot of money on campaigning, basically threatening people if they did this. They were giving them out letters and things in their paychecks. Supervisors were telling them, you know, right out, "If you go to that meeting you're going to be fired." Things like that.

ABCD stands for Action for Boston Community Development. And it's basically a city agency then, right, or it's funded by the Federal Government?

Yes. It's a big organization. I want to say ABCD is the first, what do you call it...

Is it a big private non-profit? Is that would be called, do you think, rather than a city...

It's not a city agency. It's the largest social service agency in the city, federally funded. They go back to the '60's; I remember my first job out of high school.

It was part of the anti-poverty program.

Yes. That's what I was trying to say, anti-poverty. Under that came HAW, Health and Welfare. They're still around; probably they're the largest in Massachusetts, and the oldest around. And they encompass the whole city. I mean they're spread out.

Why do you think the supervisors were so against the union?

Because they're so used to doing things the old school way. Not that they have a lot of money to pay staff. I think for a long time people were just basically getting minimum wage pay there and they were expecting a lot from workers. Especially the Head Start units of those places. They were probably the lowest paid of anybody on staff at ABCD and worked the longest hours. Those people endured a lot and got no thanks for it at all.

They were mostly women, too, right?

Yeah, I would say yes. Mostly women. And a lot of women had been there a long time, too. And the other side, what I tried to explain when we were doing the canvassing and campaigning and going out at night and stuff. Trying to contact workers at ABCD, a lot of people weren't home in the evening. I'm like, "These people are working second jobs." They need a second job to make up for the first one so that they can survive. At the time, too, things had changed over. There were a lot more immigrant people. A lot more Asians, a lot more Hispanic families in the Boston area now, West Indian families, people from different Caribbean islands. There were not a whole lot of skilled people. I don't want to sound like I'm talking prejudiced or anything but you've got these people working in these positions but still they're working. They're here and they should be paid accordingly. They should have benefits. Just because they're in menial jobs, and that's the way they kind of looked at them, like they were menial jobs, then you're just going to treat them any old kind of way. Well, there's a civil rights act passed. Everybody's included. That was just the biggest thing I didn't like. And still today. They still don't have a union. It's still as usual. They've been in existence since '63, '64, something like that. Things basically haven't changed there. They might get a little bit more money but like still, the same. That to me is sad where this is, you know, 2006 now and it hasn't changed at all.

Do you think SEIU might ever try to organize them again?

I would hope so. I would hope so. I would hope so because that would be a big, big, big change in this city if they could get in there (laughing) and get those folks.

Can you remember some of the kinds of training you received at different points with 925?

We had a lot of leadership training. I attended a lot of leadership training. There are a couple of different things I did do. As I said, it's been a while. And a lot of it comes from just experiencing and you're learning, you know, at the table. You pick up a lot. Then you listen and you hear more.

Did you do any negotiating?

Yeah, I've been on three negotiating teams. The last three contracts for the Guild. We're getting ready to try to start negotiation for our next contract but after that, I'm done. (Laughing) After that I'm done. I'm done.

You're president of your chapter?

Yeah, of the Administrative Guild.

Does that mean all of the Administrative Guild?

Yeah.

The Administrative Guild is a chapter of this larger local?

Yes. Right. We're one unit in that local 888.

So, how much time does being president take?

They allow me, meetings and stuff. Like if I have to do Labor Management and that's usually held during the day, so they allow me to attend any meetings. Sometimes I have to go out on a grievance. We have our Executive Board meetings, membership meetings anything in between that might come up or whatever. They do allow me the time to do that if I have to. I always give my boss in writing fair, you know, what dates when I know in enough time. It's very seldom I get called in at the last minute. Usually I know ahead of time so I always give them a schedule. I've never had any problems.

When did you start thinking of yourself as a leader?

I never thought of myself as a leader. I still don't think of myself as a leader. Since I've been involved in the union, I have become, I'd say, more aggressive, just a little bolder,

More outspoken? Willing to express your point of view?

Yes. I'll say what I know and what I've seen. I always try to pass that on to others. I don't know it all because right now a member will call and they'll ask me a question and I'll say, "Well, I'm not quite sure," and I'll give them the answer, but if I'm not sure that I don't have the right answer then I'll say, "Well, call Claire, call Lorraine or call Cathy." You know, one's not sure, the other one is, and that's pretty much how we always cover ourselves. So our members know that and a lot of times they'll call like my boss says, "Well, can we?" I'm like, "No, you can't."

He'll ask?

"No you can't. No." I have become a little more outspoken since I'm not as afraid to face something. A lot of people might think I'm a bully, too, but I'm really not. I'm not. I'm not afraid to talk to any administrator or anything. They're like, "Well, I'm going to call, I'm going to call and we'll talk and whatever." I'm not like that anymore. I'm not afraid to say anything.

Do you think in the beginning you were more hesitant to speak up?

Yeah, because I didn't know what I was going to talk about. If I have to make a phone call you know my vice president or my E board members we always, you know, I'll call and I'll say this, you know, and my rep, we're always close, everybody's like on the same page. Sometimes we get scattered but not very often. A few of the other girls on the E board they've been around even longer than I have so they really have a lot of history. I always have to check with them because it's still kind of new to me in a way. My most involvement was going to the E board's national, bringing back the information and sharing it, explaining it. That was it. We go to the membership meeting and do the same thing, maybe, but as far as—

END of SIDE A

START of SIDE B

In between negotiating periods, it's an ongoing way of communication, is that what it is?

Yeah, communications and labor management. There we discuss jobs, if the school department is going to be adding new jobs or cutting out some jobs. If we have a problem with their posting of a job. They say it's management; we say, "No, it looks to us like it our work, we could do this." We have to negotiate and fight about that. Our last one, just before I came here to this position, my actual position they had taken and made a management position along with about 25 jobs. We fought that. We put in a grievance and we fought it all. We didn't win them all back. I think we won back 11 of those positions which then my job became back. When I was in, I had a staff assistant job. This job, this particular site came up, and it came on a posting for a second time and I'm

like, "Now what (is this) job?" I was way out in Brighton. So, I'd been on the job. I didn't think I would get it. They called me up and I said I'm going to take it 'cause it's right down the street from my house and I'm tired of going to Brighton all the time. I loved where I was at. I had a great office and a boss was really nice. But I was just like it's just a hike. And I don't drive. I'm one of those rare birds that don't drive. So I says, "Well, I'll try it."

So you were on the 'T' and this is better.

I can walk to work if I want, if I wasn't so lazy. (Laughing) I can get the bus up the street and visa versa. I took the position, which was management when I first started it but meanwhile this grievance had been in for some time. We were still fighting it. So they won the jobs back. Mine was one of the jobs that came back so I came back in. So I was actually out for only like eight months.

Now was the pay roughly the same?

The pay was the same.

It's just a redefinition.

And that why we were fighting it because it was nothing different.

You're using the influence of the union.

And they still do that. We're looking at couple right now that they have out on the postings that could be switching around []. And even with the qualifications and things that they have down in it. Well, we have people that have degrees, can do analysis and just because we're school secretaries doesn't mean we're all stupid. (Laughing) We have people that are very bright and brilliant and can do. We have to really monitor postings because they'll slip it out there and make it management. We've lost a lot of jobs just since I've been in the union. When I've first came in we were about close to 500 and now we're about 350. So we lost a lot of jobs to that. And another thing is they'll cut it out of the budget and they'll bring it back the next year with a new name. So, that's why we're always...

You have to really watch that.

...watch it.

Is there a new generation coming along who will be able to take over when you and others stop being active?

We're trying to grow a lot. Lately we've gotten a lot of younger ladies now that are coming in and are showing an interest. We're trying to get them in, get them on a committee, get them to be involved, to learn this because a lot of us now are getting close

to retirement age. They'll know what they're doing to carry on, to continue on in the guild, in the union. We do have quite a few new ladies that are younger and are willing and anxious to know. That's good because we haven't had that kind of inspiration for a long time. A lot of us have been doing all this for quite a while. We're every committee, we're everything. A lot of times we don't pass anything else because we're all doing the same things. Attendance at our meetings is getting a little bit better. That's a good sign. This year I've tried to move the meetings around the city a little bit. Because my (unclear word) already sponsored in Charlestown. They don't like to come all the way to Dorchester to go to a meeting. So we hold them at Court Street, which houses quite a few members there. I try to move them out into the areas like Jamaica Plain, West Roxbury, so those ladies can come to one site. And Dorchester and Roxbury together. Maybe do one in East Boston, Charlestown somewhere. Hopefully that's going to work.

Then you have to get on the 'T' and go on public transportation to go to those meetings?

Well, I usually get a ride with somebody.

That's a good thing because at night...

If I didn't, if somebody said they can't go, I have to get there. It's not too bad though. I don't mind. It's not like I have to do it every day, I mean it's not like you're going all the time. It's going to be once a month.

A little shift here. How did 925 deal with issues of racial and ethnic diversity? Did they have any particular approach to that or were you aware of any issues?

I think we all just weren't decided. I think at one point there was some talk about I don't even remember what it was. I think we were in Cleveland, we just decided as a body that if we're a union we're not going to have any racial issues or whatever. Everybody is treated fairly and the same and should be. We never really encountered... I don't really remember if there were issues of that that came up at the table with other places. I just think it basically was dealing with people's rights as a worker. It wasn't about what race or whatever they were. I don't remember us dealing with just racial issues. I can almost say. I do remember a discussion that it would always be fair and equal for everyone. And it wasn't going to be dealt in racial issues.

I know one of the things that has come up with some of the other interviews, especially some of the union staff, is their concern that the officers of the union as well as, if possible, the staff of the union kind of reflect the composition of the membership. The top leadership tends to be mostly white women. Mostly because of how the organization was started and everything.

I don't think race came into it at all in that sense until '96 when AFRAM was formed which is a caucus of SEIU members of African American descent. That was started in Chicago at the Chicago convention. I believe that was '96 because that was the first

convention that I had gone to. That would have been the only time like really racial issues because they were saying there were a lot of African American members of SEIU and there were a lot of other issues that they would like to have addressed and bring to the bigger body and that's when AFRAM was started. That was because, like you said, to make the higher echelon reflect the overall membership because that's when Andy was elected. Andy was elected, Betty Bedachick (sp?) And Chevaz, he was on the international, Andy, Betty, Pat Ford,...

You have a great memory for names.

And one other. I want to say it was...

Anyway it was a way of those voices being heard better, was that the idea?

And AFRAM was formed and it's still a part of SEIU. They have a conference every year. We're still broken up into regions. Southeastern region and western. We come together. I'm actually on the AFRAM chapter here. We're trying to get our chapter in Boston stronger but we're working on that. I just got put on as the Eastern regional E-board in April. I haven't been able to be involved at all this year. Hopefully things will come back together for me. But that's because of what happened with my Mom, so I've kind of been away from everything actually.

And when you have had these other obligations, does the vice president take over in terms of running meetings and all that?

Yes.

Have you had good support?

Yes. Very. That was always. On our Executive Board, the past president is still always a member for the next term because that person may have history that the other person doesn't. That's important. We always keep that person on.

Because one of the questions is about is 925 a family friendly organization. This is when an organization is challenged to give support to an active person like yourself who has a big family crisis and obligation and can't be so active.

Yeah, because they called, I mean Susannah called and said, "You know, anything I can do, just tell me." She said, "Is there nothing we can do or can we help you do anything?" But I'm like, "No, but if I need you I'll holler." It makes you feel good to know they're there for you. My other close E-Board members have been there to support me. They call and check on me. "What's going on? Give me a report what's happening today with your mother. What's going on?" Like I had a meeting Tuesday and yesterday Lorraine called me, "Ok what happened yesterday? Tell me what happened." They always keep in touch with you.

So these women that you work with in the union, they're some of your good friends as well.

I've become very good friends. Since we've broken up with 925, I've kind of lost track with my other friends, you know, like in Washington, Ohio. I kind of miss them. I think about them a lot. I know they're all doing well anyway but...

It's hard to keep in touch.

Yeah.

Did you feel like there was a loss for your union here when 925 decided to end?

In a way, we felt like it was. But we knew it was for the better for the union, period. Overall that it would be for the better. Anyway, it was a loss because you miss seeing those people. We know it's all for the best.

How would you describe the legacy of 925?

I think we made an impact on the world. (Laughing)

Well, let's start with SEIU. Did you make an impact on SEIU, do you think?

I think we did. I think we did. I mean we were a small piece of SEIU, 925, but still were big enough. We got our word out when we had an issue it was always taken back to the other. I think we all did. I would say 925 probably made the world more aware of SEIU than SEIU of 925. I mean, I didn't hear about SEIU before I knew about 925. It was like 925 first then SEIU. I don't think that a lot of folks even heard of SEIU until after Andy Stern came to office. Now I could be wrong, but I never saw a lot about SEIU in the paper, I never knew what SEIU was, until, as I said, I was in 925. 925 brought SEIU out. 925 and probably other locals but as I'm saying it was always 925 or 1199 or whatever the local number is and not SEIU.

Of course, in Boston, 925 had a long history.

Yeah, because it was kind of like the beginning, it was 9to5 and then it became 925. I don't know if they still have 9to5. I think they do.

It's called the Working Women's Educational Fund and it's based in Milwaukee, I think .

They have a place down here on Boylston St. I'm not sure about that. I'll have to check that out. I think they are trying to keep something going.

Well, some of 925's tactics were innovative at the time and now SEIU and other unions are kind of using them, you know, bringing the nature of a company to the

public's eye. Not traditionally unionism but making more of a public campaign around organizing. Maybe that's it. We see that as part of its legacy and some of those women who led 925 are now in leadership positions in SEIU. I suppose that could be part of the legacy.

I was really amazed and just felt so honored to be when they had the legacy...

In Washington?

...at the Labor University there...

Oh yeah, right, the college...

God, what is the name of it?

It's changed its name. I know what you mean. (National Labor College, George Meany Campus.)

It's in Silver Springs right there. But when they started telling the stories and stuff and I had heard a lot of them before. But when I got to see the people that were in it I was like, "Oh, my God!" They asked me to come to this. What am I doing here? I don't have anything to add. It was just amazing. I was crying. I was like, "This is awesome! This is history. I'm sitting here with these famous women, because they are famous."

They wouldn't have had anything if it weren't for women like yourself.

I wouldn't have had anything either. I wouldn't have this now if it hadn't been for them, then. Some of the stories that they told about the harassment and prejudice against them as women and the things that were said to them across the table. It was like, "Oh!" I'd probably be in jail. (Laughing) I don't know if I could sit across the table if somebody called me...

...a bad word, yeah.

They really endured a lot and we wouldn't be, I don't think, where we are now if it hadn't been for the women's movement and the things that they also did as individuals in the workplace. It was like, "Ooooh!" I don't know if I could do all that, but I guess if you had to and I was there, I guess I probably would have, but like "Wow."

What do you think you learned about yourself through all your involvement with 925?

That I could do more than I thought I could. As I said, I became more aggressive. I'm not as afraid anymore. I like talking to others about what I've learned, what little bit I know. I try even in here, you know, about my experiences, what I've done being in the

union and how important it is. I think that's basically what I want, how important a union is and workers rights. Its not just a job, it's your right.

Do you feel optimistic these days about SEIU and union organizing in general?

No, I don't see the organizing going on as much right now. I can't say that they're not doing it but I'm not where I hear a lot of new units being brought in. I think that part is on a lull. I could be wrong. I can't speak for what's going on all over the country 'cause I don't really know at this point right now. But in my area, I don't see any big campaigns going on. Not to say that there aren't. I know they're still working on Head Start out in Central Mass. I know they brought some of them in. But I think they're still working on that, but that's pretty much it. I wish I could see more organizing happening because it does feel like it's at a little of a standstill for the minute.

Maybe in some of the old-time cities like Boston that could be true.

Yeah.

I know. That's sort of what SEIU is claiming it wants to do, right. And why it withdrew from the AF of L; to put more resources into that. They did get one victory from somebody I interviewed yesterday I'll share with you. Joe Buckley. Have you run across him? He was connected with 925 at the very beginning.

Yes. I've met him.

He was a regional director, area director of SEIU.

He's at Tremont St.? Yeah, I've met him.

You know SEIU is putting some resources into organizing the South now. It is really hard to crack for unions and they just apparently won a campaign and organized about five thousand janitors in Houston, Texas.

Oh, nice.

So that's something. With this Justice for Janitors campaign strategy they're using.

I know, they send me a lot of information too but it's always when I can't go. It's always something else. When I get it, I'm like "Oh, man!"

But I think you're right. They're targeting certain areas and not maybe around you, that you can see. Like you mentioned ABCD, a place where people should be organized, and nothing's happening, so it seems like.

That was a big disappointment. Our local here, you know, SEIU worked hard on that and it just didn't happen.

Was it a close election?

Yes. It was. It was. And that was sad. Because we were out this time of year knocking on doors and just everything, daytime, nighttime and it just didn't work.

Do you remember roughly the dates of that?

I probably have something at home.

Was it in the '90's sometime? It might have been even earlier.

No, it wasn't earlier. Ok, Julie was our rep. It might have been back around 2000. I guess it's been that long. It was before I came here. I came here in 2001. So, it was before I came here. It might have been in 2000 or '99, I'm not sure.

Anything else you'd like to add about 925 and its legacy or significance.

Last question.

I don't know what to say. I have all good to say about 925. Our president, and Secretary/Treasurer, Anne Hill, Debbie Schneider, I miss all those folks. They kept us cracking, kept us working. I miss them all. I've learned a lot. A lot I forgot. (Laughing) They gave me something to go with. I got to meet a lot of people, important bigwigs, did a lot of traveling with them. But the most I guess I got out of 925 was just really learning more about people's rights, worker's rights, and I guess being a worker, that's important. That's something should know and a lot of folks don't. Every chance I get, I'm always telling somebody about the union or they should be a part of a union whether it's big, small, whatever. Respect you know, workplace respect. We've not always had good times but we've always worked hard to keep what we have together in 925 and be part of the bigger picture. I learned what the bigger picture is and what are the expectations for the bigger picture. I think that's good.

Well, thank you so much.

Thank you.

A great interview.