

Communications Workers of America Oral History Project

Interviewee: Hill, Annie

Interviewer: Debbie Goldman

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**Debbie** [00:00:00] It's January 12th, 2024. This is Debbie Goldman. I'm interviewing Annie Hill in Washington, DC. Annie, let's start at the beginning. When were you born and where?

**Annie** [00:00:13] I was born on October 1st, 1953 in Roseburg, Oregon.

**Debbie** [00:00:19] And you went to school in Roseburg, Oregon?

**Annie** [00:00:23] The town I grew up in was Sutherlin, which was right close to Roseburg. Sutherlin didn't have a hospital, so that's where I grew up and spent all my time there until I graduated from high school.

**Debbie** [00:00:34] Talk about any of your early experiences as a kid, and how that might have affected you in terms of your later life and your values?

**Annie** [00:00:42] The biggest impact was that my Dad was a Teamster. He worked for a local dairy and he delivered milk first door to door when they did home delivery. Eventually they eliminated that service. Then he did wholesale delivery. I don't remember him being an activist, or what we would think of as an activist today but I do remember and being aware that he was a union member and that he attended union meetings. I knew that was very important. When I did end up going to work for the phone company, that wasn't a question in my mind of whether or not I would be a union member.

**Debbie** [00:01:26] And your mom?

**Annie** [00:01:28] My mom was pretty much a stay-at-home mom, and she had a few side jobs. She wrote for the local newspaper and she worked in a dress shop, but she stayed at home. Then she got ill when I was about 9 or 10. So then she didn't work at all out of the home after that.

**Debbie** [00:01:45] And you have one sibling?

**Annie** [00:01:47] I have one sister, a younger sister. Her name's Lindy. We're close, and she lives in Oregon still.

**Debbie** [00:01:54] You grew up in a small town. How far was that from a big town? Was it in eastern, western, or central Oregon?

**Annie** [00:02:02] Sutherlin was in the Willamette Valley. The town was 2500 people, so very small. Portland was about 3.5 hours away.

**Debbie** [00:02:22] After high school, did you go to college or start working?

**Annie** [00:02:25] I went to Oregon State University. Then, while I was there, my second year, I got hired as a summer hire at Pacific Northwest Bell and worked in Roseburg when I was on holidays and off on summers.

**Debbie** [00:02:46] What year?

**Annie** [00:02:47] . I started college in 1971, and I was there between [19]71 and [19]75.

**Debbie** [00:02:54] What did you do?

**Annie** [00:02:57] For three of the summers, I worked inside as a repair service clerk. I posted service orders. I took repair calls. It's back before they consolidated everything. We had pretty much one-stop shopping. There was a test board and assignment and service reps down the hall and there were still operators.

**Debbie** [00:03:26] You were in the central office then?

**Annie** [00:03:29] Yes, there was a central office there.

**Debbie** [00:03:32] Did you complete college in four years?

**Annie** [00:03:35] I did not. I was just short a few credits of graduating. My plan was to go to summer school and get my degree. But then I got a call from the phone company. They offered me a job as an outside technician. This was in 1976. They had just started hiring women in outside jobs. I accepted their offer. My initial plan was I would work for the summer and then go back to school in the fall. But, I kept working. They offered me a full-time job, and I took it and moved to a different town.

**Debbie** [00:04:25] I think I asked you, but I forgot that, which company?

**Annie** [00:04:28] Pacific Northwest Bell.

**Debbie** [00:04:33] 1973 was the EEOC consent decree. A couple of years later, Pacific Northwest Bell was looking to have more women in the technician job, and they saw you and they picked you. What was your job?

**Annie** [00:04:50] When I first started out, I was a regular residential installer. The summer that I started out, we did a lot of pre-wiring then. Of course that was way before cell phones and the goal was that everyone would have 3 or 4 phones in their home, landlines as we now call them. Everything was wired back then. I did a lot of pre-wiring of new construction and then eventually got trained on doing the installation side of it and a little bit of repair.

**Debbie** [00:05:28] Pre-wiring means what?

**Annie** [00:05:33] As a home or business is going up, before there's drywall up and there's just studs, you would go in there just like an electrician would but you would run telephone wire, not electrical wire.

**Debbie** [00:05:50] You would physically wire the home?

**Annie** [00:05:54] Yes, drill the holes and run the wire and make sure it was everywhere it was supposed to be.

**Debbie** [00:06:00] What was your job title?

**Annie** [00:06:04] It changed several times over the course of several years. I think it was service technician.

**Debbie** [00:06:10] If it changed, what were the other titles?

**Annie** [00:06:12] I don't remember.

**Debbie** [00:06:13] But that was the outside plant work.

**Annie** [00:06:16] Yes.

**Debbie** [00:06:19] Talk about your training. How did you get trained to do all these things.

**Annie** [00:06:23] When I first started, it was on-the-job training and learning from other people. When I got hired full-time, then they sent me to school to learn how to climb and the regular installation and repair school that they would send you to. As I remember it was 4 or 5 weeks. I ended up doing that particular job for about three years. Then I had an opportunity to move and do business installation.

**Debbie** [00:07:01] When you started and you were in your training class, were there any other women?

**Annie** [00:07:06] I don't recall if there were other women in my training class. This was still early on in getting women into those positions. When I ended up where I was permanently hired, which was in Medford, [Oregon], there was one other woman that was working outside, so it was just the two of us.

**Debbie** [00:07:28] And how many men?

**Annie** [00:07:33] 40, maybe.

**Debbie** [00:07:35] How did the guys treat you?

**Annie** [00:07:38] Overall very well. The other woman seemed to have more problems was my observation. Of course I was young then, only in my mid-twenties but I just found a lot of it was the attitude that you had and that you didn't go in as a know-it-all, but you would ask for help if you needed it. You would be willing to commit and do the job. I think one of the reasons the other woman had a problem was that she often asked for help, and when someone would show up, she would always ask them to do the harder part of the job. So I think they tended not to respect her as much.

**Debbie** [00:08:20] Did you like the job?

**Annie** [00:08:21] I did. I liked it a lot.

**Debbie** [00:08:23] What did you like about it?

**Annie** [00:08:25] You were outside. There was a lot of freedom. You got to meet a lot of people. Of course, back then, being a woman outside was very new. So the reaction from the customers was always pretty unique, they'd be surprised and they might be a little unsure that you really knew what you were doing. I remember some people would follow you around and make sure that you looked like you knew what you were doing.

**Debbie** [00:08:58] Talk about the freedom.

**Annie** [00:09:02] It's just different being outside in a truck and having a load of orders versus being at a desk. It's just a very different kind of environment. Of course, that was before a lot of the monitoring that is in place nowadays. There was focus on getting the work done and getting the work done well.

**Debbie** [00:09:24] In other words, there was no technology to track where you were when you took your lunch or other kinds of things.

**Annie** [00:09:33] No, other than calling in when you were done with each of your orders or repair job.

**Debbie** [00:09:39] When you went to business installation, how did that differ?

**Annie** [00:09:44] First it was unique in how I got there. I only got the job because I was a woman. It was another EEO override into the position. There were a lot of men that were more qualified than me, that had a lot more seniority than me and that got bypassed. I struggled with that a bit. I eventually realized that if it wasn't me, it wasn't going to be one of the guys, it was going to be another woman because they were looking for a woman in that position. When you were doing business, the work was more technically difficult because of the wide array of equipment. But the environment that you worked in was more often than not inside, you weren't out in the elements, in the rain, in the cold. You weren't out there in your rain gear every day. You got to learn a lot more. There was a lot of training involved.

**Debbie** [00:11:01] Was this a higher title?

**Annie** [00:11:03] Yes.

**Debbie** [00:11:04] What was that?

**Annie** [00:11:05] It was a PBX installer.

**Debbie** [00:11:09] Explain what a PBX is.

**Annie** [00:11:11] That's what the business systems used to be called. They were almost like mini central offices. It was before electronics. Some of the electronic switching systems started to come in as I was getting at the end of my time in that position. That's just what they called it back then. I'm sure it's an acronym, but I don't remember what it stands for. [private branch exchange]

**Debbie** [00:11:43] But in essence, it's a switch that's put at a business [location]. In the old days, if you were in an office and there would be many extensions, rather than the switching coming out of the central office, [the switch] would be at the place of business.

**Annie** [00:12:01] Correct.

**Debbie** [00:12:03] All this time you were doing installation and repair or just installation?

**Annie** [00:12:10] When I was doing residential, I did primarily installation, but did do some repair. When I did business or PBX, it was primarily installation.

**Debbie** [00:12:23] So you weren't climbing poles outside?

**Annie** [00:12:26] Sometimes. Sometimes it was a smaller business and the terminal was at the pole. You'd have to run a drop to get dial tone in there, but more often than not the cable was actually in a terminal room in the building.

**Debbie** [00:12:44] So you weren't up there on the pole repairing cable. That was a different job.

**Annie** [00:12:48] I had that job after divestiture.

**Debbie** [00:12:54] This is a long time, so jump ahead to that.

**Annie** [00:12:58] When divestiture happened...

**Debbie** [00:12:59] 1984.

**Annie** [00:13:00] 1984. AT&T split off from the Bell System [Regional Bell Operating Companies], and technicians in our work group were given an opportunity to make a preference whether they wanted to go with AT&T and continue to work on telephone systems or stay with the [Bell] Operating Company. . I had opted to go with AT&T but I was very low on seniority. so I ended up staying with the [Bell] Operating Company. What they did is they placed us in cable maintenance.

**Debbie** [00:13:45] Why had you wanted to go to AT&T? And do you think ultimately it was a lucky chance for you that you didn't go to AT&T?

**Annie** [00:13:56] I wanted to go with AT&T because I really liked the work that I did and wanted to continue to do the work.

**Debbie** [00:14:01] The business installation.

**Annie** [00:14:04] The business installation versus learning a whole new sort of trade of cable. It wasn't unique where I was working but very quickly AT&T started to right-size, downsize, lay people off and I was lowest on the seniority pole, which is how I ended up back with the [Bell]

Operating Company to start with. I would have been one of the first ones out the door if I had been with AT&T.

**Debbie** [00:14:41] And what company was it now? Same company?

**Annie** [00:14:45] US West.

**Debbie** [00:14:48] At that point, Northwest Pacific Bell and which ones?

**Annie** [00:14:53] Northwestern Bell, Mountain Bell, and Pacific Northwest Bell were put together and became US West.

**Debbie** [00:15:03] But they were separate contracts for a little time or no?

**Annie** [00:15:06] Yes. They were separate contracts until we started to combine them in 1989.

**Debbie** [00:15:18] You stayed then on cable maintenance. Was it a different title?

**Annie** [00:15:28] I don't remember specifically what the title was. This was 1984. By then I had gotten involved with the local union. I was the secretary in our local union. I had some time off from there. Cable maintenance was a whole different ball game. It was more on the construction side. You were working on the cable facilities that came up to a terminal, that then fed a house or a business. It was a whole different skill set. I received a lot of on-the-job training with other people that had done that work for a long time. In 1986 I became local president and was on and off the job a lot. In addition to my responsibilities as local president I was very involved in the employee involvement activities that were going on in that period of time.

This created problems for me for a couple reasons. First, I didn't have the opportunity to become totally proficient at my job. I was slower and because the work was often done over multiple days I sometimes would not be there to finish it. Ultimately, I went back to my roots, if you will, I did residential installation and repair again. I knew how to do that. I could finish the job and not leave them in a lurch.

**Debbie** [00:17:31] We're going to move on to your union work. Anything else you want to add about your work for the phone company?

**Annie** [00:17:41] In retrospect and looking back, it was exciting to be there during that transition, especially being a woman and having a woman move into so many of those non-traditional kinds of jobs. I'm glad I got to experience that.

**Debbie** [00:18:00] The [AT&T/EEOC] consent decree required goals and timetables for about five years, through the end of the [19]70s. You stayed in the tech job through the early [19]80s. Was there a drop off in the hiring of women after the mandates [expired]?

**Annie** [00:18:25] I don't know the exact numbers. My recollection is that women continued to be hired.

**Debbie** [00:18:51] And it sounds like your experience was pretty good.

**Annie** [00:18:53] Yeah, overall it was good.

**Debbie** [00:18:55] Let's go on to the union then. You hired into a workplace that already had a union. How did you get involved in the union?

**Annie** [00:19:09] First I was a summer hire and then I got loaned to a small town called Klamath Falls Oregon]. When they hired me permanently or offered me a permanent job, I moved to another small town called Medford [Oregon] and I was working outside. The local president of the local union there also worked out of that garage. I started going to local union meetings there, and like a lot of small locals, they operate primarily on volunteers,. After not too long there was an opening for local secretary. Basically they asked me if I would be interested in doing it. There wasn't a big stampede at the door of people that wanted it. I said yes. So that's how I got involved. Often people start out as a job steward, I ended up starting as a local officer.

**Debbie** [00:20:18] As secretary, not secretary-treasurer?

**Annie** [00:20:20] Every local is different. Sometimes it's separate, sometimes it's together. So this was just secretary.

**Debbie** [00:20:28] Was secretary typically a woman?

**Annie** [00:20:30] I would say most of the time, yes. It was typically a woman.

**Debbie** [00:20:34] What local was it in what year?

**Annie** [00:20:37] [Local] 7908. I'm sorry, it was [local] 9208 at first pre-divestiture. Afterwards it was [local] 7908 and that would have been from like 1977 to 1980 or [19]81. Then I transferred to another town and a different local.

**Debbie** [00:21:09] What town?

**Annie** [00:21:10] Salem, Oregon and it was [local] 9204, and then the local became ][local] 7904 after divestiture.

**Debbie** [00:21:23] It was [local] 9204. So it was in a different district? [The first letter of CWA locals indicates the CWA district. This is not the case for sectors that merged into CWA like The Newspaper Guild, NABET, print sector.]

**Annie** [00:21:27] Oregon and Washington were part of the old district nine, pre-divestiture, at which [time] the union also reorganized itself. Oregon and Washington had been part of a district with northern California and Oregon and Washington. It was district nine. Then district 11, I think, was southern California. When they restructured, northern California and southern California were put together and became district nine. Then those of us in Oregon and Washington that had been in nine became part of the new district seven, which included people that had been in, geographically,

the old Mountain Bell and old Northwestern Bell. It had 14 states in it. It was the biggest geographically, but one of the smallest districts population wise.

**Debbie** [00:22:30] Do you remember what year that was?

**Annie** [00:22:32] That would have been right after divestiture, [19]86 maybe.

**Debbie** [00:22:42] In that local, did you get an officer position?

**Annie** [00:22:46] Which one? The second one, yes. Ironically, the same thing sort of happened again. I'd gotten married and we moved to a different town. I transferred to Salem[Oregon] as a business installer. The president of the local worked on my crew. Their secretary left office. They knew that I had been [secretary] because I'd met many of them before in union meetings. They asked me if I would fill in for the rest of the term, and I did.

**Debbie** [00:23:24] And then when did you become president? I'm assuming in the same location?

**Annie** [00:23:30] Yes. I filled out that term as secretary. I became local president in 1985.

**Debbie** [00:23:44] How many people were in your local then?

**Annie** [00:23:46] I'm going to guess maybe 400.

**Debbie** [00:23:49] Mostly tech[nicians]?

**Annie** [00:23:55] We'd had a business office that was an AT&T business office, but it only lasted about a year after divestiture. I think we had a repair center. We also had operators and a dispatch center.

**Debbie** [00:24:24] Repair center means taking the calls for repair.

**Annie** [00:24:26] Yes.

**Debbie** [00:24:29] The business office refers to customer service. You were local president for how many years?

**Annie** [00:24:41] Five, until I went on staff.

**Debbie** [00:24:44] What would you like to talk about that were major things that you remember of being local president. I think you mentioned you wanted to talk a little bit about quality of work life.

**Annie** [00:25:02] Besides being a local president and the regular duties with that, I had the opportunity to get involved in many employee involvement activities. The administrative director for the area was Sue Pisha. She was a strong supporter and my biggest mentor that I had my whole union career.

**Debbie** [00:25:23] Sue eventually became the vice-president of district seven 1991-1999].

**Annie** [00:25:27] Yes she did. At that particular point in time, there had been an upswing in initiatives called Quality of Work Life and employee involvement, which in a sort of oversimplified way, means that the employer and the union sit down and try and work a lot of issues out together beyond what they would normally do in a regular collective bargaining environment. There was starting to be lots of restructuring and change which then impacted our members and their employees. I got to be involved in several of those initiatives. One of the ones that I think was the most successful was an initiative called Opportunity Expo. The employer was starting to do a lot of restructuring in the central office. They were also closing and consolidating centers, downsizing as the equipment was updated and switched to more electronic switching. You didn't need as many people to keep the equipment maintained. There were lots of changes that impacted a lot of people. One of the efforts we did, there was a joint committee that had both managers and several union representatives on them, and we came up with the idea of doing a training expo in as many towns as we could do. We called it Opportunity Expo. Each event would have representatives from schools in the area. This helped employees learn about opportunities if they were thinking about leaving the company. We also had information on resources internal to the employer that would help people if they were in a situation where they would need to look for a different job within the company. We ended up doing 20 to 25 of them. We didn't just do the bigger towns. We included several smaller areas.

**Annie** [00:27:56] I also had the opportunity to be on the bargaining committee when we started combining the contracts in 1989. There were three different committees. One consisted of district leaders. They worked on global issues such as health care and wages. Then there was a table that had issues specific on the network side, and then one on the marketing side. I was on the table that was on the marketing side. It was my first time at a bargaining table. It was quite the experience to go through.

**Debbie** [00:28:48] That was in Denver?

**Annie** [00:28:50] No, we were actually in Minneapolis.

**Debbie** [00:28:55] Back to the QWL [Quality of Worklife], which first was negotiated in the AT&T contract and the Bell companies in 1980. My understanding is that it kind of died out in many of the Bell companies and AT&T after a few years, but that US West was one of the areas in which QWL continued. Do you know why?

**Annie** [00:29:23] We had a fair amount of successes. The other thing was that there were leaders on both sides that believed in the process and were willing to go to the mat to continue to make it work. When it started winding down several years later it had started to lose support within the leadership of the employer. If you don't have strong support on both sides, it's not going to work.

**Debbie** [00:29:56] What were you able to achieve that you couldn't have achieved through collective bargaining or through other union mechanisms?

**Annie** [00:30:05] You only get to do the big bargaining every 3 or 4 years. I think that by having the employee involvement you got to involve a lot more people much more than a bargaining committee. We were able to deal with the issues that were relevant in the moment.

**Debbie** [00:30:30] So you had local committees?

**Annie** [00:30:32] Yes.

**Debbie** [00:30:33] The other criticism of QWL is that it saps the militance of the members and creates kind of an illusion of inclusion. How would you respond to that?

**Annie** [00:30:50] I guess I would say that could be somewhat true. I'd have to think about that a little bit. I don't recall seeing that so much. There was a sense of frustration as support dwindled from the employer. I do think then people turned back to what we traditionally would do, whether it's trying to bargain harder or get involved different mobilization activities.

**Debbie** [00:31:31] You had a big district in the West and US West was a different company. Do you think there was a different culture than you experienced among some of the other districts in CWA?

**Annie** [00:31:46] There was a big difference in cultures within our district, number one. You have to remember that when CWA restructured it put together part of one district and then two other whole districts. The culture that existed and the relationship that existed with the employers was as different as night and days. In Mountain Bell, it had been very contentious and their wages tended to be lower, but they had work rules for everything. The Northwestern Bell and Pacific Northwestern Bell had a better overall working relationship with the employer. Their wages tended to be higher, less work rules in the contract. When we had to sit down to combine those contracts, which happened over a couple rounds of negotiations, some of the biggest struggles we had were not with the employer, but they were among ourselves trying to figure out what we wanted to focus on. I'm sure there were other districts that had similar challenges. I think that there are cultural differences depending on what part of the country that you're in and how people deal with things. Some of it being the level of union density, what people are used to, what your neighbors do or don't do or what they believe. So it's very different.

**Debbie** [00:33:40] You had right-to-work states, right?

**Annie** [00:33:42] Yes.

**Debbie** [00:33:43] Which were those? Before you answer that, Mountain Bell was what states?

**Annie** [00:33:48] Mountain Bell was Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Idaho.

**Debbie** [00:33:59] What about Montana?

**Annie** [00:34:01] Montana was IBEW. Northwestern Bell was Minnesota, the Dakotas, Iowa, Nebraska. Pacific Northwest Bell was Oregon and Washington.

**Debbie** [00:34:24] In combining the contracts, as you said, it was quite a challenge. I think it's a little more straightforward to understand combining wages: do you go up, do you go down? And who goes up and who goes down? Maybe you want to mention a little bit about that, but I'm really interested in the work rules. Do you keep them all for everybody or how do you deal with that?

**Annie** [00:34:53] Often there were things that we would have huge discussions about. I remember in the Mountain Bell contract they had their language about breaks and the other two contracts didn't because breaks are by law that you get a break in the morning, a break at night if you're working a full shift. I remember that as an example of a big discussion we had. We ended up not having language in there about them, but there were several points like that that we would have a lot of discussion about and what to do.

**Debbie** [00:35:29] Which were the right-to-work states? [“Right-to-work” state laws bar unions from requiring either union membership or agency fee payments from all represented workers in a bargaining unit.]

**Annie** [00:35:33] Oh, boy. Arizona. Don't hold me totally to these. Utah, Idaho. Colorado? I'm not sure. I don't think so. I think the Dakotas were both right-to-work. Nebraska. I think Iowa, Oregon and Washington weren't. [The right-to-work states in district 7 are: Arizona, Idaho, Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming. Colorado's Labor Peace Law allows a bargaining unit to over-ride right-to-work provisions with a 75% vote.]

**Debbie** [00:35:59] This really affected union power.

**Annie** [00:36:03] Yes.

**Debbie** [00:36:03] If the company wanted to move work, were they more likely to want to move it to some of the right- to-work states? You can't move tech jobs like repair, but you can certainly move the call centers or operator services.

**Annie** [00:36:18] Ironically, if you look just at numbers from percentage of members and who was a member, I remember, not in every state, but for example, in the Dakotas, their membership percentage was very high and they were both right-to-work states. One school of thought was that people would work harder because you didn't take it for granted.

**Debbie** [00:36:49] Work harder to get members.

**Annie** [00:36:50] Yes. Because otherwise you don't get any dues and you do lose some power versus if it's not a right-to-work state, like in Oregon where I came from, you still get those people's dues, whether they're a member or not.

**Debbie** [00:37:08] Was there an agency shop throughout this period or did it come in at some point?

**Annie** [00:37:14] It was always there when I was there. So I don't remember when it would have started. [DG: As a result of a 1988 Supreme Court decision in Beck v CWA, the union could not require all workers in a union workplace to pay dues, but could collect an agency fee from non-

members, which is an amount that excludes the cost of political activities, typically about 80% of dues.]

**Debbie** [00:37:29] Should we go to moving on to staff?

**Annie** [00:37:32] Sure. I went on staff in September of 1990. I was living in Salem, Oregon at the time. The assignment that I got picked for was in Minneapolis, and the locals that I was going to be supporting were in North Dakota and what we called outside the metropolitan area in Minnesota.

**Debbie** [00:38:04] What were some of the things that you recall that you were involved in on staff, before you became an elected leader?

**Annie** [00:38:19] From staff then I got promoted and I was administrative director and then assistant [to the vice president].

**Debbie** [00:38:24] When were you promoted to administrative [staff]?

**Annie** [00:38:30] 1994.

**Debbie** [00:38:34] Let's do a little timeline. Staff 1990 to 1994 in Minneapolis.

**Annie** [00:38:39] Yes.

**Debbie** [00:38:40] Then 1994, you were promoted to administrative director. Did you move to Denver?

**Annie** [00:38:47] I did.

**Debbie** [00:38:49] And then what came next?

**Annie** [00:38:51] And then I think 1999, I became assistant to the vice president, still in Denver.

**Debbie** [00:39:01] When did you become VP?

**Annie** [00:39:03] In 2004, I think.

**Debbie** [00:39:08] And that was until...

**Annie** [00:39:12] Until I was elected to executive vice president. That was in July of 2008.

**Debbie** [00:39:20] Executive VP of the national union.

**Annie** [00:39:23] Yes.

**Debbie** [00:39:23] So you moved to D.C., and then you were secretary-treasurer of the national union in what years?

**Annie** [00:39:35] 2011 to 2015.

**Debbie** [00:39:40] Let's go back to major things that you remember in the period before you became vice president.

**Annie** [00:39:57] When I was on staff [it was a] very different job than when I was either administrative director or assistant. Those two were very similar. I was in the field. I had locals that I supported. My particular assignment, all the locals were away from where my headquarter office was. I probably traveled 85% of the time. I also had a lot of contracts with small, independent telephone companies. When I say small, it could be 12 people, could be 25 people. There were bargaining units that only had 5 or 6 people. Those were contracts that you would have to go out and meet with the people and put together the bargaining proposals and then sit down and bargain with the employer, which in most cases was typically board members. Then there would be an attorney at the table. The only bargaining experience I'd really had before that was being on the bargaining team with US West. This was very different from being on that, where you're a voice in the room versus you're in charge of the negotiations. The contracts were also very different. They were much smaller. You would tend to go out, maybe because a lot of these places were five and six and seven hours away driving from where my office was. You'd go out the night before, meet with the people from the group in a cafe or a back room of a restaurant. Often most of the people would be there and you would meet with them and sort through what you were going to take to the bargaining table. Because these were smaller groups the relationship they had with the employer was different. They tended often not to file a lot of grievances. So you had to sort through their complaints and whether it should be handled as a grievance or whether it should be something that should be brought up at the bargaining table. Then often we would go in and meet the next day, and sometimes we'd get done in the morning, and the employer would let us meet with the employees and we'd vote on it. That would be if it was simpler. Most of the time they went pretty well. Most of the relationships with these smaller employers had been there for years and years.

**Annie** [00:42:43] While I was there, there was also an organizing drive that happened with New Flyer Bus Company, a Canadian company. They actually are still in existence. They've expanded. This was their initial presence in the United States. I was not directly involved so much in the organizing, that was done a lot out of the local, but I did chair the first contract negotiations. Because the home company was headquartered out of Canada and they were unionized, we'd actually had an opportunity to go visit them. It was never really a question of if you were going to get a first contract. The question was what was going to be in that first contract. That was quite an experience, being that it was the first time I did a first contract, but also because the workplace was totally different than what my background was. It was a manufacturing facility. They finished the busses that were brought down from Canada where they built the shells. So it was quite the process. Predominantly male. It was interesting, but we were able to successfully get a first contract. And like I said, they're still around today and a very successful company.

**Debbie** [00:44:09] And in Minnesota, right?

**Annie** [00:44:11] The first plant was in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Then, if my history is right, they moved that one across into Crookston, Minnesota. Then they have another plant now in Saint Cloud, Minnesota.

**Debbie** [00:44:33] As I recall, there was a long period in the 2000s in which CWA was attempting to use leverage to try to get neutrality to organize I believe in Alabama and maybe elsewhere. I think they finally got it. We can look that up. [In 2022, New Flyer workers in Jamestown NY selected CWA representation under a card check agreement.] When you came on staff and now you had to do all of this negotiation, did you get training or was it sink and swim?

**Annie** [00:45:02] I went to staff school. I got put on staff in September of 1990. At that particular time, it's changed over the years, but new staff did an organizing assignment. At that time it was for three months. You were sent to the field and worked with a variety of people. Because of the timing, mine ended up being a little bit longer because they didn't want me to start in the holidays so it ended up being like three-and-a-half months. I know they do it differently nowadays. I would say it was a mixed bag for me. I did not have really any organizing background, so they sort of plunked you out there with not a lot of support.

**Debbie** [00:45:54] Where'd you go?

**Annie** [00:45:55] I was in Nebraska at first. I was supposed to be helping them. We had a group of natural gas workers who were trying to organize their clerical workers. They were spread out all over Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. I spent a lot of time with another person from the local. They weren't an organizer either. I was there about a month-and-a-half. The most productive time, I would say, I was in Texas and I worked with Sandy Rusher.

**Debbie** [00:46:39] At Texas State Employees Union?

**Annie** [00:46:41] She did a variety of things. She was, and I know she's retired now, a great organizer. I really got a feel for what campaigns look like, what it took, we'd be up at five in the morning leafleting people. I was there probably three weeks. Then I finished up in New Mexico, which was another sort of less than lackluster experience. They were getting ready for an election with some state workers in New Mexico.

**Debbie** [00:47:17] You talked about getting training in organizing. What about bargaining?

**Annie** [00:47:23] There was staff school which was in the spring of [19]91. You went through a variety of things, CWA policies, arbitration training. I remember less about bargaining per se. There must have been something about it. But we were there 2 or 3 weeks and it was decent training, but there's nothing that replaces doing it and learning from that.

**Debbie** [00:47:52] Did the district have a structure that there was somebody you could consult with?

**Annie** [00:47:57] No. It was informal. Jack Ivory was the other staff rep that was in the Minnesota office. I was lucky that at least there was one other person in the office. That's not the case nowadays because there's been so much downsizing. At least there was somebody else there. The other person I would say I used as a resource was the secretary in the office who had been there for probably 20 plus years and knew a lot of these people and the contracts. Her name was Dianne and she was a huge help.

**Debbie** [00:48:31] Dianne who?

**Annie** [00:48:32] Drumm.

**Debbie** [00:48:37] You didn't mention grievance handling or arbitrations. Was that not an assignment for staff in your district at that time?

**Annie** [00:48:45] I had one arbitration the whole time I was there. I had primarily smaller locals, and they tended not to generate a lot of grievances. I did have a few grievances, but it wasn't a big part of my assignment. I did a lot of steward training. There had been some organizing drives going on with some cable TV units in Minnesota, so I was involved. They weren't successful but I was involved in those.

**Debbie** [00:49:16] Let's move on to when you were in Denver in administrative positions. What were some things that you remember from that period?

**Annie** [00:49:26] I did do a lot of grievances when I got there. At that time we still had maybe two different contracts. But anyway, the way we were structured, there were two administrators: John Thompson and myself. We split up responsibility for grievances between the network side and the marketing side.

**Debbie** [00:49:49] And the vice president was Sue Pisha?

**Annie** [00:49:52] Sue Pisha was the vice president, yes. A lot of time doing collective bargaining and getting ready for bargaining, and working on other administrative issues. I think at some point I had the responsibility to manage the clericals in the office, which was another new concept of managing other people. Something that we don't necessarily train people to do, or at least haven't in the past.

**Debbie** [00:50:29] At this point in the early [19]90s, what's the relationship between CWA and US West?

**Annie** [00:50:39] It was evolving. At some point, I don't remember exactly the year, Qwest bought US West.

**Debbie** [00:50:46] Let's not go there yet.

**Annie** [00:50:47] Okay. let's not go there yet. It continued to evolve. There were things that we got along well with and some things that were more challenging.

**Debbie** [00:51:01] And my understanding is the employee involvement continued.

**Annie** [00:51:06] Yes. There was still quite a bit of employee involvement going on at that time, especially on the marketing or commercial side, primarily because of the leadership within the company that was really pushing for it and saw some value in it.

**Debbie** [00:51:25] And as I understand, they were paying union people to be trained as facilitators.

**Annie** [00:51:32] Yes, there was a small group of people that did that.

**Debbie** [00:51:37] At least in the early [19]90s, after President [William J.] Clinton came in and employee involvement was a big part of the push coming from Robert Reich, the Secretary of Labor, a project between US West and CWA was highlighted even at a national conference.

**Annie** [00:52:02] I don't remember, I would have still been on staff at that time and not in Denver till 1994.

**Debbie** [00:52:07] This was the job redesign in the marketing division, but you weren't involved with that?

**Annie** [00:52:18] No.

**Debbie** [00:52:18] While you came out of the tech side, you became the person who was overseeing the issues involved with the customer service reps, the commercial/marketing.

**Annie** [00:52:32] Yes.

**Debbie** [00:52:33] What were some of the issues going on? Was there consolidation going on?

**Annie** [00:52:38] There had been ongoing consolidation. The other thing is during several rounds of negotiations, the employer had been pushing for some sort of commission plan for the sales representatives, and we had fought that off. Then in 1994, I don't remember the exact round, they brought to the table another proposal.

**Debbie** [00:53:20] This was US West.

**Annie** [00:53:21] This was US West.

**Debbie** [00:53:23] And were you the bargaining chair?

**Annie** [00:53:24] No, I was the co-chair.

**Annie** [00:53:29] They called it the leverage compensation plan. They were, I would say, very smart in how they did it. They actually set the base pay for the compensation plan at what the base wage was for the current reps, and then people could make more than that from their [commission]. So let's say it was \$32,000, which I think was about what it was, that was your 80%, that's what you were guaranteed. And then if you performed at 100% of what your goals were, then you could make another \$8,000 a year, up to \$40,000. If you exceeded that, you could make even more than that. So it became very hard to walk away from and it was, as I recall, their number one issue that they were really, really pushing for.

**Debbie** [00:54:35] Why?

**Annie** [00:54:38] They wanted people to focus on bringing in more revenue and making more money for the employer, and they thought that that was a good way to do that. Like I said, because I think they were creative in how they did it, it would have been very different if they would have said, okay, your base pay was half of what you're making or two-thirds of what you're making. But the fact that they were doing their own communicating with people and saying, you know, listen, you're always going to make at least what you make now, but you can also have all of this upside. So we did end up agreeing to that.

**Debbie** [00:55:18] Were you able to get any rights to structuring or evaluating the commission plan?

**Annie** [00:55:25] There was a committee that would meet and oversee the results. There were specific provisions of the plan that were negotiated. So within the plan, like how much would be for sales, how much would be for products, how much would be for maybe quality. Those kind of things were set by percentages. What was left to the company's discretion was the setting of what the objectives were and what the goals were.

**Debbie** [00:55:55] The union could negotiate that of the goal, x percent should be based on revenue, x percent based on quality measures?

**Annie** [00:56:06] Yes. That was part of the initial plan.

**Debbie** [00:56:11] So what happened? And was it controversial?

**Annie** [00:56:16] It was controversial because it was very different. But I think people saw the dollar signs of it all. So it was like, okay, we're going to give this a shot. So what happened? Well, the first year I called the honeymoon period basically because people were making so much more money and the company really wasn't focused so much on disciplining people that weren't meeting their goals. The objectives seemed to be reasonable and people had a reasonable opportunity. It's not that some people weren't struggling. There were always people that struggled with those kinds of things. But people did, like I said, make a lot of money. We could see that because we met with them, I think, every other month or quarterly. They shared all of the data with us. Once the first year happened, then the whole issue of what the objectives were started to change. Two things happened. Number one, the objectives seemed to get harder, so we had less people that were making the upside money or making more. The second thing is that they started to discipline people more aggressively. We had a lot of people that were either being terminated or that saw the handwriting on the wall, weren't doing well, and were transitioning to other jobs. As we were preparing for the next round of negotiations, the whole plan itself and how the objectives were set became a big issue.

**Debbie** [00:58:16] What happened? I think we're talking 1998 but I'm not sure.

**Annie** [00:58:23] Yes, I think so too. We started out, as you always do, sort of shooting for the moon, and we wanted to obviously help set the objectives, which they were very resistant to. We kept going back and forth on what kind of verbiage we would use, how that would work. To make a long story short, the verbiage that we ended up settling on was that they would set reasonable objectives for the plan. We'd made a few other tweaks, and that was the big thing that we walked

away with. We still had the group that met to oversee the plan. That was then approved and adopted into the new contract. Then we started monitoring how it was working going forward from there. What happened is we didn't see a lot of change and the results that we saw were, there was still a huge amount of people that weren't meeting the objectives. We gathered more and more data. We eventually filed a grievance on the fact that the company wasn't setting reasonable objectives. The grievance went up through the process. Then ultimately, we did a big arbitration case on it.

**Debbie** [00:59:56] What happened?

**Annie** [01:00:03] I'm biased. I thought we did an excellent job. We had people that did very well under the plan, that were top performers, that were witnesses that talked about how they still didn't think that it was reasonable. We also had people that struggled. We had a commission expert come in and testify. Of course, I and other people testified. The company put on their case. When we received the opinion it initially appeared that the arbitrator was siding with our case. That is how the award read until the end. Then it appeared that he confused the verbiage and the ruling he rendered ended up being harmful to our people. It was elation, followed by, oh my gosh, what just happened and how do we deal with that because we had put so much work and effort, I mean, hours and hours and hours into this arbitration. The arbitration lasted over a week. So we ended up having to get the arbitrator back in, and he mediated a solution which was never as good as if we would have won it outright. So it was heartbreaking to say the least that it ended up the way that it did. I'm not sure where it's at today. I know they did many changes after I was gone. It's been quite a few years now, so I don't even know if there's business offices left. There's been so much downsizing. It's sad because I think that it could have worked if the company wouldn't have gotten so greedy.

**Debbie** [01:02:24] It, meaning the commission plan.

**Annie** [01:02:26] The commission plan? Yeah.

**Debbie** [01:02:29] But being greedy may be the nature of the beast. And, the company changed.

**Annie** [01:02:38] Yes.

**Debbie** [01:02:39] You alluded to that earlier.

**Annie** [01:02:45] In the early 2000s, Qwest, which was basically a holding company run by Joe Nacchio and oh, what was his name? Philip (he owned railroad tracks) [Anschultz]. They bought US West [in 2000]. When they first came in, they wanted or they acted like they wanted to have a really good relationship with us. We actually were able to negotiate a really lucrative [contract] extension separate from the whole leverage compensation plan, but with good wages and everything. They became more difficult to work with over time.

**Debbie** [01:03:39] And in fact, Nacchio went to jail, didn't he?

**Annie** [01:03:43] Yes he did.

**Debbie** [01:03:44] What was he doing?

**Annie** [01:03:45] I think it was insider trading. What was it? I don't remember.

**Debbie** [01:03:51] But the pressures were intense.

**Annie** [01:03:54] Yes.

**Debbie** [01:03:59] One last point about the leveraged compensation plan. In addition to people getting fired for not meeting their quota, which is ironic because with a commission plan the idea is if you don't sell, you don't get the money. But what impact did it have on the stress levels for the service reps?

**Annie** [01:04:22] It was huge, which was part of the testimony that we gave at the arbitration. People were getting fired. A lot of people, who had the opportunity, transferred to other jobs. They lost a lot of people. One of the arguments that we continually made when we would meet with them to talk about these objectives was the amount of money they were investing in training people over and over and over and over again. The training that they went through was many weeks long. They were investing all of this money. Let's say you had someone that was consistently at 90% of the objective. It's not like they weren't bringing any money in for the employer. And so you let them go, and then you hire someone who's not ready to be on the desk for, let's say, eight weeks, and then they have to ramp up and maybe they don't even do as good. But they wanted everyone to make the objective.

**Debbie** [01:05:34] You talked about when you were a tech, there was a lot of freedom. Now you were responsible to represent the service reps working in the call centers. How would you contrast that level of freedom?

**Annie** [01:05:48] It was like night and day. I mean number one, not just the work environment versus you're in a vehicle, you're driving around from job to job, you're talking to customers. Nobody's listening to you, to the fact that you're in an office, you're at a desk, you have a schedule. One of the things you're measured on is adherence. So, you need to take your break at the right time. You need to ask to use the restroom. They're keeping track of how many keystrokes you're doing. You have a script that you're supposed to follow word by word, and that you have to offer this product and that product. Then all of the regulations that depending on what state you're in, that have to be followed and that you have to state and restate to customers. So it's a night and day difference.

**Debbie** [01:08:26] As US West was preparing to be sold and bought by Qwest, what was happening to the investments and the network?

**Annie** [01:08:36] I think like a lot of other companies, whether they're being sold or not, their investment in the plant was declining. I think there was some thought since Qwest was a big fiber company that it would replace the copper cable. We still had a lot of people that were relying on landlines that were serviced by cable that had been placed years ago or had been replaced temporarily. They weren't doing the things that they needed to do to keep that service quality like it had been in the past.

**Debbie** [01:09:17] You were in the local and then the district during a very tumultuous time post-divestiture. How would you describe how the industry changed and then how the union at the local and district level might have changed?

**Annie** [01:09:37] The change was huge across the industry. The restructure and the breaking up of AT&T started this chain of events of restructure, re-engineering, downsizing, resizing, rightsizing. It was called different things. Then you overlay that with all of the technology changes that were going on at the same time. For example central offices changed from old [mechanical] switches to electronic switching. This newer technology did not require the same kind of manpower. Call centers also changed. It used to be that most towns had operators, service reps, a repair center, assignment, test board. Over time, because of technology, we saw these job duties consolidate into bigger centers. Over time there were many changes which resulted in fewer centers overall and often fewer people performing the work. When divestiture happened, CWA redrew and combined the geographic districts. With all the change your focus on what was important to bargain in contracts changed. You had to address how you dealt with the whole concept of employment security language including how much time people would get notice for layoff, what kind of severance pay would they get, would they get priority placement for other jobs. I don't think any of those kinds of things have been in there in the past, but because of what was happening, you had to think totally differently.

**Debbie** [01:12:12] If I'm correct, I remember that you all had to deal with outsourcing of operator services. What was your response to that? What did you negotiate?

**Annie** [01:12:25] We had a second tier contract that was called Agent Services. It was done because operators continually were going away and they were outsourcing them. The company proposed creating a second tier, a lower tier, let's call it what it is, a lower tier pay which was in place for several years. One can argue whether that makes sense to do or not. There's a school of thought that it created continued employment for a lot of people, and otherwise we probably would have been eliminated much sooner.. Others, [say that] you should have just continued to fight the good fight, if you will, and let the chips fall where they may.

**Debbie** [01:13:22] There was a lot of consolidation of the service reps into, as I recall, about ten areas. You now had larger locals in those areas with larger numbers of service reps. How did that shift priorities for the bargaining? Or the power within the [union]?

**Annie** [01:13:50] If my memory serves me correctly, we had about maybe 50 locals, with varying sizes, within the 50 to 60. Like you said, where it used to be that many of those locals had all the different employees that work there, then over time, that dramatically changed, especially for business offices or repair centers, there were fewer and fewer locals that had them. It created a shift in the dynamic and you had to pay attention to that when you were putting together bargaining proposals. While every Local continued to have outside technicians fewer locals had members that worked in centers. You had to keep that in mind when you looked at the proposals.

**Debbie** [01:14:56] Let's move on. You get elected to be executive vice president [EVP]. You said that was in 2008 and then secretary treasurer 2011 until 2015. We have a seven-year period when you are at headquarters. I believe that's the whole time when Larry Cohen was president.

**Annie** [01:15:22] That's correct.

**Debbie** [01:15:24] You said there were a number of things you wanted to talk about that you thought were your major accomplishments, and why don't we focus on those.

**Annie** [01:15:33] I think one of the first ones that happened early on, it would have been when I was still EVP. It was around our work when [President Barack] Obama had been elected. He had just gotten elected right after I got to DC and then sworn in in 2009. His big push was for health care reform, which CWA had always been very supportive of not only within contracts and working with employers, but also legislatively. I was one of the people that worked with Louise Novotny out of the research department. We had worked on how we would frame up our work on health care. It had many moving parts, but the one I wanted to focus on was a more permanent structure within the locals to do legislative and political work. In the past, when election season would come along, you'd scramble to put together your people and committees and figure out who was going to do what work. There is a fair amount of work at the beginning of every process, which took away from the time that you had to do the work. One of the things that we talked about doing was that we would create a more permanent structure within the locals, calling them Legislative Political Action Teams or LPATs, that it would be a more permanent part of the union structure so you could do ongoing training with people. Not that there wouldn't be turnover with them, but that they would be ready and engaged and able to do things not just at election time, but post-election if you're lobbying for certain issues. We did a lot. We identified people, and we did lots of training. I think one of the things I'm most proud of is looking back, and I've been gone eight-and-a-half years now, is the Legislative Political Action Teams are still in place. That tells me the idea had merit and it worked. I'm sure that it's evolved and changed and become even better and stronger, but it was very exciting to be involved in something that became part of the union structure.

**Debbie** [01:18:24] This was changing the political work from giving checks to people power?

**Annie** [01:18:29] Yes. Part of the process was also continuing to increase the amount of money that we would earn for political action funds. That didn't go away. But it really was about creating a team of people that would be boots on the ground, whether canvassing for people when they're being elected or phone banking, or actually going out and then lobbying people once they're in office.

**Debbie** [01:19:01] There would be a local structure, a district structure that oversaw that, and then the national structure and building it around the issue of health care helped make this real and gave them a real source of action. CWA had been involved in health care reform or was committed and making it a major policy issue because –

**Annie** [01:19:29] Basically because it had become such a big issue at the bargaining table for us. I know it really started about the time frame when I first was involved in bargaining back in the [19]80s. Health care costs had continued to increase. What the employers wanted to do was to pass that on to the members. For our bigger contracts, most of them, for many, many years, had no premiums. There would be no cost basically out of their pocket anyway for the member to have health care. What we saw was this continued push from the employers to pass the increases on to the employees. Most of the contracts, the bigger ones anyway, had joint committees that worked on

looking for ways that they could save money without really impacting people like that. But it was getting harder and harder to do that. I think most contracts now, the employee pays part of the cost.

**Debbie** [01:20:42] Part of the sense was our big employers provided good benefits. There were other employers that did not.

**Annie** [01:20:50] Right.

**Debbie** [01:20:51] Therefore they were subsidizing [the companies that did not provide benefits].

**Annie** [01:20:54] Yes.

**Debbie** [01:20:55] In CWA was there debate between [support for] policies that would impose an employer mandate or [policies for] single-payer health care for all, a Canadian type program? Where was CWA?

**Annie** [01:21:12] We wanted a single-payer system. The other thing that contributed to the success of the program is that we had resources available. We had started to have Strategic Industry Funds within the union, which gave us money that we could use to do training and support on an ongoing basis. That made a huge difference.

**Debbie** [01:21:49] When we interviewed Larry [Cohen], he talked about the Strategic Industry Fund. Can you explain briefly what that was and why?

**Annie** [01:21:59] There was lots of work to be done and not enough money in the General Fund to do it. There was a huge push then to divert some of the money that had gone into the strike fund, and to look at trying to use it more proactively instead of reactively. It was very, very controversial. There was lots and lots of debate. Eventually after much debate, the establishment of the Strategic Industry Fund was adopted [by CWA Convention delegates in 2006]. How it is used and the rules that govern have continued to evolve over time. It created a nice pot of money that we could do some of these strategic initiatives that we wouldn't have had the dollars to do otherwise.

**Debbie** [01:23:00] The general fund was basically funded through dues.

**Annie** [01:23:03] Yes.

**Debbie** [01:23:04] And while different bargaining units had different structures, the basic concept was what percent of [members'] pay went into dues.

**Annie** [01:23:20] Two hours of pay a month. And then there was another quarter hour that went to, now you're really testing my memory here, a quarter hour that went into the defense fund, I think. Anyway, it took part of that. I'd have to go back and refresh my memory on that.

**Debbie** [01:23:37] I know different unions have different mechanisms. There was a different assessment imposed at one point by the convention to fund the defense fund (the strike fund) and that continued to grow because there weren't that many strikes. When CWA looked at, how can we

increase our resources, one option could have been to raise dues at a time when probably the locals were having more and more needs.

**Annie** [01:24:12] Yes.

**Debbie** [01:24:12] The idea was, let's not have such a huge strike fund that isn't being tapped into. What I hear you saying is our health care policy work was one of the projects that was funded [through the Strategic Industry Fund].

**Annie** [01:24:32] Yes.

**Debbie** [01:24:33] And the funding went to hire people who were —

**Annie** [01:24:39] We did a variety of things with it. I think we used some consultants. We did. We'd pull people off work to do training. So it was the lost wages for that.

**Debbie** [01:24:52] Let me stop you there. In building the LPATs, at the local level and the district level, was it all just volunteer time or did we pull people off the job and pay them lost wages.

**Annie** [01:25:09] No, we pulled people off and paid them lost wages.

**Debbie** [01:25:12] That's something that CWA was able to do because the employers would pay the health care, the big employers, and people had their jobs back when they went back.

**Annie** [01:25:24] Yeah. In some cases it was more incidental time, it wasn't like they were off full-time. It depended on how big the area was, what the area of responsibility was. That could have evolved over time. As I remember at the beginning, it was more incidental, so we weren't pulling people off full-time. At that point, it was more, okay, we're going to pull you off to go to training for three days, and then you're going to maybe be off during this period of time for two days a week or whatever. A lot of the contracts have language in them for incidental union time off.

**Debbie** [01:26:04] In some ways this differs from some other unions' political programs where they hire full-time staff to do the political organizing.

**Annie** [01:26:12] Right.

**Debbie** [01:26:15] What else do you want to talk about while you were in national leadership?

**Annie** [01:26:20] Two things. One was a program called Unity at Mobility. When I was executive vice president, I had, allegedly (I can get into the term allegedly later), but responsibility for telecommunications. One of the things that we started and then I was able to keep the assignment when I went to the secretary treasurer's office is we had a growing group of people within our union that worked at the AT&T Mobility stores and

**Debbie** [01:27:05] And call centers.

**Annie** [01:27:07] And call centers

**Debbie** [01:27:07] And a few techs

**Annie** [01:27:08] Yes. Not many techs at that point of time, but stores and call centers. It became apparent while organizing and interacting with the workers that they did not have a working knowledge of the union. Most of the workers were younger. We talked about culture earlier, there is less and less out there about unions. Probably more today as we sit here with the organizing efforts that have been going on, especially in the service industry. At that time, really nothing. One of the things we put together was a program called Unity at Mobility to help educate the Mobility membership. We built a training package. And again, we were able to use the Strategic Industry Fund dollars. The beginning part of the program was trying to educate a certain percentage of members that worked in the stores and in the call centers. The goal was they would be prepared to go back and share that information with their co-workers. To do that, we had put together a whole structure. We had representatives, in most cases from most locals, that we trained on the training to help that out. It's another program that is still in existence today. There was also a big communication piece. In general, there were a lot of blast emails and information about unions including general information and information about any bargaining that was happening. It was distributed to all the workers in AT&T Mobility. Another goal was also to increase membership levels. It was another chance to really build the union and help make it stronger over time. It was exciting to be part of that process.

**Debbie** [01:29:20] Was it successful?

**Annie** [01:29:21] I think it really was successful. Yeah.

**Debbie** [01:29:24] In what way?

**Annie** [01:29:25] The number of people that we trained, the number of people that got involved. This is my guess, it had [already] started to change a little bit, but a lot of these people have turned into young leaders and become officers in their locals. They have gotten to be much more engaged in their locals. That's one small example. I think we even probably have Mobility members that are now on staff and that have been engaged that way and become involved.

**Debbie** [01:30:00] Was part of what you were also dealing with a challenge that as these new Mobility members would come into locals, the local leadership may have incorporated them and may have felt a little challenged by having them?

**Annie** [01:30:18] I think we had some of that go on. I think that there were locals that willingly embraced this and were excited about being able to do that and train people, give them more information and knowledge. And there were less that weren't willing to do that. I think we've always had that challenge to a certain degree. It depends on the personality and belief system of the people that are in there. Some people are more open and willing to embrace new people and new ideas and train people, develop new people. They think that will make the union stronger overall. And some are very territorial.

**Debbie** [01:31:04] You said there was a third achievement you'd like to talk about. What was that?

**Annie** [01:31:09] Oh, yes. I was probably less directly involved in this, but actually from the beginning, it was an idea [that I supported]. At that time, I think, we still had annual conventions. Now they're biannual. There were a couple of young officers that were at convention, and they had come to me with an idea about wanting to get young people more involved in the union. This sort of gets back to what you were just talking about, embracing and bringing in new people and new ideas. They wanted to present a resolution at our convention. Often local people have the opportunity to present the resolutions ahead of time so the resolutions committee can do their due diligence on them, but they can also be brought up from the floor. They hadn't presented it beforehand. We were in the throes of convention. They had wanted [this] and I thought it was a worthy idea. The thought was, well, you either put your thoughts together now and do the legwork to try and get some support and you introduce it on the floor, or you wait another year to do it. They did the legwork, they put together the resolution with their arguments, and they successfully introduced it and then passed it on the convention floor.

**Debbie** [01:32:44] What was the resolution?

**Annie** [01:32:46] It was to expand and involve more next generation [members] and to create a group, a committee, if you will, that would actually look at issues specific to next generation workers. I was actually fortunate enough to work on the front end of that. Then, it got turned over to some other leaders over time. I think it's another entity or group that's still alive and functioning. It was exciting again to see those young workers actually take the initiative to start something from the beginning. Some of the establishment from the headquarters weren't very excited about something coming like that from the floor. But I thought, we're a democratic union and I thought it was indicative of what we should be about. It was exciting to see it.

**Debbie** [01:33:38] Why did we need that?

**Annie** [01:33:43] As your last question talked about people embracing different things, there is, at least at the time, in far too many locals, the old guard, if you will, that wouldn't even want to give some of these newer workers the chance or involve them in the union anyway for whatever reason. I don't know if they were threatened or they didn't want to be bothered by it. But it was a way to acknowledge that we did have and I think probably still do [have] a large group of newer workers that have a voice and want to have a say.

**Debbie** [01:34:30] It was also my understanding that we were aware of a gap in training the next generation, that there had been leadership that was older and that there wasn't that next generation coming up to take over. It wasn't just that we needed to cultivate and incorporate new ideas. It was otherwise there isn't going to be particularly that local and middle level leadership which I think a lot of unions struggled with as the union movement declined over this same period.

**Annie** [01:35:25] I was going to say I think a lot of it is, and we talked a little bit about that earlier in the interview, the culture changing and so the lowering of union density. Like I talked about when I came in and went to work for the phone company in the [19]70s, my dad was a Teamster so, even though he wasn't an activist, I was aware of labor unions and what they did and knew they help put food on the table. Now most people don't know about unions. How do you fill that gap? Do you just say, throw your hands up and say, oh, well, then we have a responsibility to try and do something about it.

**Debbie** [01:36:09] You wanted to talk about one of the challenges.

**Annie** [01:36:13] When I was executive vice president one of my responsibilities was to be, I can't remember exactly what the title of it was, but anyway, there was a telecommunications office, per se at headquarters, and that I would have a role in it. AT&T bargaining was probably the next year after I got there.

**Debbie** [01:36:45] Let me just jump in. At this point, AT&T is the company that SBC bought. So now you have bargaining units in what was Southwestern Bell, what was Pacific Bell, what was Ameritech, what was Bell South, what was AT&T Long Lines, Lucent (the manufacturing company) and various contracts for Mobility. Some were across district lines, depending on when those mergers occurred. We had many different contracts. And within AT&T we had many different contracts with that same company.

**Annie** [01:37:35] Yes we did. And there were several district vice presidents then. In fact, they were all involved in some way and in one or more of those different entities.

**Debbie** [01:37:46] We no longer even had common expiration.

**Annie** [01:37:50] That really changed the year that I quote unquote, had the telecommunications office. I think that the most challenging part was being given this quote unquote, assignment and responsibility, but not really having the authority. Most of the decisions, the hard decisions, like the expiration dates and working with things and the bargaining have been going slower. Larry [Cohen], who was president, made a decision to step in and really ran the show with that. But then when all was said and done, then because there was a telecommunications office, the results or the angst about what had happened got laid at my feet.

**Debbie** [01:38:57] What happened that was different?

**Annie** [01:39:00] There were different expiration dates.

**Debbie** [01:39:03] Some units agreed to a contract while others were still waiting?

**Annie** [01:39:08] Yes.

**Debbie** [01:39:09] So that the unified power was broken up?

**Annie** [01:39:12] Right. Some people then felt because we did that, that we didn't get as strong contracts overall that we could have gotten. At that time, Mobility wasn't part of that picture that was going on. It was sort of what we would think more of as the core [landline] AT&T agreements. It was more frustration around the internal structure and how it all worked out within the union. I think it probably could have been handled a little bit better. It just ended up being more of a frustration of mine that I supposedly had this assignment but really didn't have this assignment, so the lines of responsibility weren't very clear.

**Debbie** [01:39:58] Did you want to add anything more to that?

**Annie** [01:40:00] No.

**Debbie** [01:40:00] I think we've come quite a trajectory. One of the major themes that Jeff and I have been pursuing in this project is the transformation of the union over these 40 years. The union was functioning within very big transformations: cultural transformation, economic industry, market, etc. I want you to give an overview comment about how did the union change over that period? What are some of the big changes that you saw?

**Annie** [01:40:55] I think the structure of the union changed. The geographical areas [of the districts] were each restructured. That was huge along the way. There were a few mergers thrown in there, bringing other people involved, I don't remember the exact dates.

**Debbie** [01:41:18] Do you mean mergers with other unions?

**Annie** [01:41:20] Yeah. Flight attendants, IUE. We went from annual to bi-annual conventions. We really changed how we fund the union work. We talked a little bit about that with how our dues were structured, and then there was a certain amount for the strike fund and the defense fund and how those particular funds were then rerouted so we could do more strategic work. That really changed the work that CWA has done. I think then another big change is the diversity of the leadership and in the union. I remember being in headquarters and looking at old board pictures and staff from before I was around and not to pick on old white guys, but it was all old white guys. Now there's a mix of different races, genders, and it's been that way for a long time. That didn't just happen by accident. It was another thing that I had the opportunity to be involved in. There was actually a committee put together to address how we get our leadership to be more diverse. There ended up being a proposal going to convention. That was the creation of the at-large diversity members. [CWA convention in 2007]. Four of them from different regions. That's where Claude [Cummings] came. Claude, our current president, came on as an at-large diversity member. There's been a lot of external things that we've had no control of. But I think that overall the union has been very proactive in trying to create a structure and resources so they can be responsive to what's going on in the time frame that they're dealt. I know there's been lots more changes since I left.

**Debbie** [01:43:40] When you came on the executive board in 2004, how many women were on the board?

**Annie** [01:43:47] Pat Friend from Flight Attendants. Linda Foley.

**Debbie** [01:43:55] From the News Guild.

**Annie** [01:43:55] From the News Guild.

**Debbie** [01:43:56] And Barbara Easterling,.

**Annie** [01:43:58] Barbara Easterling.

**Debbie** [01:43:59] Secretary-treasurer.

**Annie** [01:44:00] And myself.

**Debbie** [01:44:02] No other district vice presidents?

**Annie** [01:44:08] No, no, other district vice presidents at that time. We didn't have the at-large diversity people then.

**Debbie** [01:44:16] Very different.

**Annie** [01:44:17] Very different. Yeah.

**Debbie** [01:44:19] Any other general comments you want to make?

**Annie** [01:44:23] No, I think I've talked enough.

**Debbie** [01:44:26] We could go on for a long time, but I think that you have really summed it up. Thank you.