Communications Workers of America Oral History Project

Interviewee: Foley, Linda

Interviewer: Debbie Goldman

Date of Interview: January 4, 2024

Place of Interview: Washington, D.C.

Page Total: 28

A raw transcript of the interview was first produced by machine via Trint.com. The raw transcript was then audited and edited by Hannah Goldman and reviewed by Debbie Goldman. The following transcript was then reviewed, edited, and approved by the interviewee. This is the official record of the interview. Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

Debbie [00:00:00] This is Debbie Goldman with Jeff Reichenbach. We're interviewing Linda Foley. It is January 4th, 2024. We're in Linda's home in Potomac, Maryland. Linda, let's start a little bit with your personal life. Where did you grow up? Tell us a little bit about the community that you grew up in.

Linda [00:00:22] I grew up outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in a suburb there. I would say it was an upper middle-class suburb. Did not have much union background in my family. But I was from the Pittsburgh area so unions were very prominent in the Pittsburgh area. So union was never a bad word for me. It was always sort of part of the course of doing business or being in the work-place. When I was in high school in my junior year I was very interested in writing and was active in the school newspaper or in the school yearbook. I also got an opportunity to study in a five-week course for high school rising seniors at Northwestern University in the summer. I took advantage of that. It was a very defining moment in my career because it really solidified for me that I wanted to be a journalist and that reporting on things could make change. I found it very empowering. I did that and then, of course, I applied to Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism, got in because I had been in the summer program partly, and spent four years there. Then when I graduated from Northwestern I got a job pretty quickly at a time when journalism jobs weren't that plentiful. I got a job pretty quickly at the Lexington, Kentucky *Herald-Leader*. I went to Lexington, Kentucky -- loaded up my car, which was a Pacer at the time and drove to Lexington, Kentucky, In all my wildest dreams, I never thought I'd end up in Lexington, Kentucky. But Lexington is kind of a neat town. It's a university town. The paper was a good newspaper. I started off on a paid internship there and then migrated eventually to a full-time job where I was a copy editor. I also did some reporting as well. That's where I got involved in the union.

Debbie [00:02:51] Terrific. We'll get to that in just a second. What suburb were you in?

Linda [00:02:58] The suburb is called O'Hara Township and even people from Pittsburgh don't even know what that is sometimes. O'Hara Township is in the north hills of Pittsburgh. I attended Fox Chapel High School, which is a pretty toney high school in Pittsburgh.

Debbie [00:03:16] Public high school?

Linda [00:03:17] It's a public high school, yes.

Debbie [00:03:18] If you don't mind me asking, what year were you born?

Linda [00:03:21] I was born in 1955.

Debbie [00:03:23] And your parents, what did they do?

Linda [00:03:25] My dad was a doctor. He was a family doctor, had a really great reputation in the community. Very well known. My mother was -- when we were younger -- a stay-at-home mom, but she was also a really good writer. She got involved later in life in teaching writing to adults. She taught poetry and stuff like that. She also did have a teaching certificate and she was fluent in several languages, including French and Italian. She worked as an Italian teacher and then as a French teacher. Yeah, I know she was pretty amazing. I think if you asked my mother, “What was your occupation,” she would say, "I was a mother," because she was very much all about her kids.

Debbie [00:04:21] How many siblings?

Linda [00:04:22] I have three siblings. I'm the oldest, I have two brothers that follow behind me. And then I have a sister who's at the end.

Debbie [00:04:28] And what would you say from your upbringing was core to the development of your values and your commitments?

Linda [00:04:37] Certainly, my parents were pretty adamant about their views, their moral views. My dad was pretty conservative politically although he drifted to the left as he got older, interestingly enough. But my mother was always a person who said, "You can do whatever you want. Don't listen to them." "You can do whatever you want. You can." I think she influenced me the most. One little story, it's a political story, about my grandmother. My mother grew up in a very Catholic family, Italian Catholics. They were Republicans. During the 1960 election -- I love this story -- during the 1960 election, they kept saying to her, "Adele, now you know you're going to vote for Nixon, right? You're going to vote for Nixon." Well, she liked John Kennedy because he was a Catholic. She kept saying, "Yes, yes." Then she told me later, "When I got in that voting booth, I did what I wanted." [*Laughs*] So I was like, "Cool." She was not a rebel. But my mom, on the other hand, was pretty forceful about being treated equally. I don't think she would have called herself a feminist but I think she kind of was. She just taught us that we could be whatever we wanted, my sister and I.

Debbie [00:06:04] And was your father Republican?

Linda [00:06:07] He was for a long time. In fact, he ran for local office as a Republican at one point for the little township council. He lost. But as I got more involved in CWA and then after -- in 2008, I went to Pittsburgh and worked with Marge Krueger and some other people in the AFL-CIO.

Debbie [00:06:32] Marge Krueger was CWA staff rep.

Linda [00:06:35] Yes. In Pittsburgh. I worked with Marge Krueger and some other people in the labor movement in Pittsburgh, including Leo Gerard, who was national president of the Steelworkers, on the Obama campaign because it was very exciting. I had just left CWA. My dad came to me at some point and said, "Linda, how do I change my registration?" He not only moved to the left, he actually changed his registration because he got really mad at the Republicans and the way they were treating Obama. I was sort of shocked by that. I'm not sure he stayed true to that the rest of his life, but I'll take credit for it. [*Laughs*]

Debbie [00:07:21] Were you raised a Catholic?

Linda [00:07:23] I was, yeah.

Debbie [00:07:24] You went to church and Mass?

Linda [00:07:26] I went to church. I never went to Catholic school.

Debbie [00:07:28] You never went to Catholic school. But was being a Catholic also formative in forming your values?

Linda [00:07:36] Probably. My mother's family was very religious. My mother in the beginning was, because that's the way she was raised. When she was a young mother, she was pretty religious. My dad never cared that much for it. I mean, he would go, but he wasn't all about it. She was. But then she started getting less and less and less. I don't know that I could point to the Catholic Church and say, you know, those were my values. My memories of the Catholic Church are sitting in the pew and making fun of the choir director's hat. I don't have these great moral stories. It was influential in that the monsignor who was at our church was very conservative. This was in the early [19]70s. There was a lot going on with women's rights and reproductive rights. When we would ask about it, we would just get shut down. I think that did influence me because I was like, okay, I'm not dealing with this. These people are just wrong. I am not going to participate with them, and I'm moving on. I think my family influenced my values more than my participation in the church.

Jeff [00:09:01] Where did the restaurant come in?

Linda [00:09:03] Oh, the restaurant was my mother. My mother came from a restaurant family. They're all gone now, I think. Well, one guy is still alive, but my grandmother was the oldest of ten children, some of whom were born in Pittsburgh -- including my grandmother -- and some of whom were born in Italy. Her brothers owned various restaurants in Pittsburgh, all by the name of Tambellini, that had a tremendous reputation in Pittsburgh because they had good food. And Jeff asked because we went there. [*Laughs*]

Jeff [00:09:38] Well, and they were famous in Pittsburgh.

Linda [00:09:40] They were very famous. Yeah, yeah. The one we went to is closed now; they're almost all closed. I mean, there are a couple of Tambellini restaurants, but they're like distant relatives. My grandmother would always say when we'd go to another restaurant, "Don't tell them I'm a Tambellini. Don't tell them I'm a Tambellini. I don't want it." And of course, my dad would say, "You know, she's a Tambellini." And they'd say, "Oooooh." [*Laughs*]

Debbie [00:10:07] How do you spell Tambellini?

Linda [00:10:08] T-A-M-B-E-L-L-I-N-I.

Debbie [00:10:11] I never would have guessed that.

Linda [00:10:12] And it means "little war-like people."

Jeff [00:10:14] [*Laughs*] Oh, really?

Linda [00:10:15] That's what my mother told me. It means "little war-like people."

Debbie [00:10:17] I think that's a good name for the family, for the person I know. On your father's side, was there any ethnic --

Linda [00:10:24] Oh, yeah. First of all, my father's mother goes all the way back to Plymouth Rock. Her father's family goes all the way back to the founding of Boston. But her mother emigrated from Ireland before my grandmother was born. I think there were three sisters. I didn't know them at all. I knew my grandmother. I didn't know her mother. They came from Ireland, and settled

in Boston. And then there's my dad's father. I could spend the whole interview about my dad's father. He was so interesting. He was from Czechoslovakia and he had a PhD in petrochemistry. This was around 1918, 1920 when the industry was just taking off. So he was in real demand. But there was a war. His stories of trying to get to America are pretty amazing. He was on a boat that got blown up in Athens harbor and then he lost his passport and because he had a thick accent they thought he was a German. The British captured him as he tried to go through the Straits of Gibraltar, threw him in jail. But he would say that the British treated them like they were at a country club. They gave him cigarette rations and beer. The only thing was that every day they'd march them through the streets of Gibraltar and people would yell at them. But other than that, it was fine. He spent the whole war there. Then when it was finished, they were like, "Oh, Mr. Kincl, we made a mistake." They gave him, essentially, reparations. It wasn't a lot of money but it was enough money for him to get to the United States. He had had a job waiting for him, I think, in Boston. But it fell through. And then he got another one. He had no trouble finding work. At one point even owned a refinery in Nashville. My dad was born in Nashville because my grandfather owned a refinery there. My grandfather was a lot older than my grandmother. When he got married, he was like, 42 or 43. My grandmother was like, 20. So he was like twice her age.

Debbie [00:12:32] Interesting family.

Linda [00:12:32] It was very interesting. He was a very, very interesting guy. Spoke with a very thick accent. I'll digress for one second, but recently, because of Facebook, I got a note from a guy named George. My last name was Kinsel, K-I-N-S-E-L. But really in Czech, it was spelled K-I-N-C-L. I got this message from this guy named George K-I-N-C-L. He must have been following me. He lives over by Baltimore. I think he's my second cousin. His grandfather and my grandfather were brothers. Isn't that wild?

Jeff [00:13:20] Yeah.

Linda [00:13:20] Yeah. He's older than I am but not by much.

Debbie [00:13:25] I should have asked, then -- your pre-married name was --

Linda [00:13:29] Kinsel. K-I-N-S-E-L.

Debbie [00:13:32] You took Foley when you got married?

Linda [00:13:35] Yeah.

Debbie [00:13:35] One last question about your upbringing and background that maybe will jump us ahead as well. Your generation -- and I put myself -- our generation -- it was a complex transition time for women. You became quite a leader, quite an independent woman. How do you recall the kinds of messages and education that led you to being such a leader as a woman and an independent woman?

Linda [00:14:17] Well, first, when I joined my local in Lexington, Kentucky, it was very small. Actually, my husband, who wasn't my husband at the time, said, "You should come to the union meeting." I left out that I had been a member of the Paperworkers' union in high school because I worked in a Christmas wrap factory. I did. [*Laughs*] It was the middle of July, and we were packag-

ing these little snowmen and all this Christmas stuff and there was no air conditioning. It was really infuriating. But anyway, they had a union there. There was a guy who was kind of creepy and was trying to hit on me. The union steward really protected me. He stood up for me. I went to the women who worked there and I said, "This guy's really coming after me." They said, "Oh, you need to go to Bill, the union steward." I went to Bill, a little guy, and he goes, "We got it." When I left the plant then that night, he had the tallest, biggest guys from the union escort me out. When the creepy guy tried to stop me, they surrounded him and started screaming at him. I thought they were going to beat him up. He never bothered me again. I was like, "Oh, this union stuff, this is pretty good." So when my husband said, "You should come to the union meeting," I said, "Okay." He said, "It's a good way to meet people." I met four people. [*Laughs*] They had officer elections. I got elected treasurer.

Debbie [00:15:50] What local?

Linda [00:15:51] At the time it was Local 229, Lexington Newspaper Guild. I got elected treasurer -- there wasn't a lot of money, so it was okay. Then we had a rep come in and help bargain our contract and he said, "You know, you guys should really come to the convention, the union convention that we have." And we had it every year at that point, like CWA.

Debbie [00:16:18] "We," meaning --

Linda [00:16:19] Guild.

Debbie [00:16:20] Right then, it was called The Newspaper Guild, right?

Linda [00:16:22] It was called The Newspaper Guild. Yeah. Monty and I said, "Sure, we'll go."

Debbie [00:16:29] Monty is --

Linda [00:16:29] My husband. I'm sorry. My husband is Monty Foley.

Debbie [00:16:31] Was he also a journalist?

Linda [00:16:34] Yes. He started as a journalist and he also was a good union member, before I was. We went to the convention, and I was young at that point. I had graduated from college I think the year before or maybe a year and a half before. So I was about 24 years old, 23, 24 years old. And, I was getting up on the floor and talking about things. So they really liked me. They said, "Oh, we got one." "We really like this person." The president of the Guild at that point was a guy named Chuck Perlik.

Debbie [00:17:14] How do you spell Perlik?

Linda [00:17:17] P-E-R-L-I-K. He took me under his wing kind of politically and had me chair his re-election campaign. It was pretty wild. We were getting ready to leave the convention. I got a call, and Monty said, "It's Chuck." (The secretary treasurer was Chuck Dale.) There was Chuck Perlik and Chuck Dale. I said, "Chuck? Which one?" I said, "Perlik or Dale?" He said, "Perlik." I said, "Oh." He asked me if I would chair his election committee. I said, "Sure." That's kind of how I got my start. They liked me because I was supportive of their union positions. I wasn't a shit stirrer,

[*laughs*] so to speak. And I was supportive of their positions. I think they thought we had done a pretty good job in Lexington, given the limited resources we had. So they liked me. That's kind of how I got started in the union.

Debbie [00:18:17] Tell us a little bit about your trajectory in the union.

Linda [00:18:24] I was president of the small local. But I was very well-known because of my role. Annual conventions helped that. This is my opinion: One of the things annual convention did. It was kind of a leadership development program. Every year I could go back and build on the network and, the credibility I already had. When I look back on it, I think that was a part of what made me rise to the top of the union. So I did that. I was president and I went to the conventions. That was about it. That went on for a couple of years, maybe three years. Then there was a job opening in the collective bargaining department as a researcher and they were not treating me very well at the paper because I was a rabble rouser. My career there was not on any kind of trajectory. I liked the union stuff. When the job opened up, there was a man who was head of the contracts department. His name was Dick Ramsey. They called him "executive secretary of the contracts committee." That's a weird Guild thing but he was basically director of collective bargaining. He liked me because he had come in and bargained our contract and stayed at my house. And so he liked us. He hired me. There were two researchers. One was myself and the other one was Eric Geist who eventually came to CWA. We knew each other from conventions and district council meetings but we became really good friend. And sort of helped each other out. Ramsey's boss was Bill Blatz. He was ancient, colorful, but ancient. He retired and so they were looking for a replacement for Blatz. Ramsey was in the running but he didn't get it. So he left. That left an opening. The guy who did get it was Bill McLeman. I don't know if you know Bill McLeman. He retired shortly after we merged with CWA. He was, by far and away, the best mentor I ever had in the union movement. He was from Canada.

Debbie [00:21:25] And how do you spell McLeman?

Linda [00:21:28] M-C-L-E-M-A-N. He had been the Canadian director. Then he got the job as the field operations director. When Ramsey left, he called me in and he said, "I want you to apply for Ramsey's job." He said, "There's nobody better in the union than you to hold this job." I was pretty young. I'm not even sure I was 30 years-old at that point. Maybe I was. But at most I was in my early 30s, so I was young. There were all these wise old men there. I ran the collective bargaining department and helped locals handle grievances as well as bargaining. I still, to this day, think that was one of the best jobs I ever had. I really enjoyed doing it. McLeman had like, 25 years of professional union experience. He was my boss. When there were big decisions to be made, he would call me in and ask me what I thought and whether I had any ideas about how to tackle a problem. For a young woman in that position, that was so important because it really boosted my confidence. I thought, "Well, jeez, if Bill McLeman thinks I can do this, then yeah, I must know what I'm talking about." He was really, really good. He just passed away last year and it was very sad. He also was a really nice guy. Really nice guy.

Debbie [00:23:14] You were in the Washington area?

Linda [00:23:16] Yeah, we were in Washington, DC. I moved here when I got the job.

Debbie [00:23:20] The first job.

Linda [00:23:21] The first job as a research assistant.

Debbie [00:23:22] You were in Silver Spring then or not?

Linda [00:23:24] No. We actually had an office in the IBEW building across from *The Washington Post* on 16th Street. I haven't talked about this stuff in a long time. During that time -- this is when I was a researcher, not head of the collective bargaining department -- there had been ongoing talks with what was called the ITU, the International Typographical Union, which ended up being the print sector in CWA. The Guild had had ongoing talks with them for years. Finally got to the point where we had a merger agreement hammered out. We were going to merge with the ITU, which made all kinds of sense because they were in the back shop, we were in the front shop. The ITU was having a lot of problems. We were not, in terms of jurisdiction. We had money problems because we were small but we didn't have problems in terms of the work. They did. They were losing the work. We hammered out this merger agreement. We had this big Guild 50th anniversary, and we voted on the merger agreement at the convention. Everybody was singing Kumbaya and holding hands. And, "Oh, we can't wait to be in the – (merged union)." I forget, we had a name for it. I can't remember what it was. The president of ITU was a guy named Joe Bingle. He was -- I'll say this, even though he's long gone -- he was a snake. The ITU then was supposed to vote on it at their convention. Instead, he invited Jackie Presser from the Teamsters to come to their convention. Presser, on the floor of their convention, invites them to merge with the Teamsters. So then it was like "Newspaper Guild who?" They ripped up the merger agreement. They were going to merge with the Teamsters, not the Guild. I don't know if you know this part, but Bill Boarman -- who was a vice president of CWA for the print sector when I was there -- was a young vice president of the ITU during that time. Boarman did not want to merge with the Teamsters and so they were looking around for other merger partners. Remember, the Teamsters had all this corruption around them. The Teamsters were not in the AFL-CIO. Here's the world's oldest union doing a merger with them.

Debbie [00:25:46] The ITU.

Linda [00:25:48] The ITU. Lane Kirkland was beside himself -- Lane Kirkland, being the national president of the AFL-CIO -- that the ITU was going to go with the Teamsters. So my understanding is he went to Morty Bahr, president of CWA, and said, "Can you take these guys?" I think that's what happened. But Bill Boarman was key to that because he had a following in the ITU. He rallied support for CWA. So then the ITU moved into CWA. And in the Guild -- we were like, "Okay, what do we do now? We can't continue on our own. What do we do now?"

Debbie [00:26:29] Why couldn't you continue on your own?

Linda [00:26:31] Because we didn't have enough money. We didn't have enough resources. The newspaper industry, at that point in time, was starting its war against its workers. We were having strikes all over the country, major strikes. Our strike fund was being depleted. We really had a lot of problems.

Debbie [00:26:50] Why did the newspapers go to war with the unions in that period?

Linda [00:26:56] Well, my theory is, that they used to be a pretty benign industry before the mergers of media outlets started to happen. That's when they started to go to war because they needed to

trim the workforces. You combine that with a technological revolution in the news industry, which occurred about the time I got in. There was just enormous pressure on them to downsize. The unions were too strong and particularly the craft unions. It wasn't so much a war on the Guild as it was a war on the craft unions like the ITU, the International Typographical Union, and the GCIU [Graphic Communications International Union], who were the pressmen, and the Mailers who stuff the papers. These were all different unions in the newspapers and they all had good contracts. If you're looking at consolidating and merging, that's not something you want.

Debbie [00:28:00] And the technological revolution was going from the lead type --

Linda [00:28:05] Yeah. Hot type, they called it.

Debbie [00:28:06] -- hot type to --

Linda [00:28:07] Cold type.

Debbie [00:28:08] Cold type, which was digital?

Linda [00:28:11] In the beginning of cold type, we would input on electric typewriters and they would be scanned into a computer and then the type would be printed out on certain glossy graded paper. They would paste the stories up on flats where they had the layouts of the pages. They would paste type on the pages rather than sit at a Linotype machine and type it. Anybody could do that. But the ITU used to be very skilled work. You had to go through an apprenticeship program. You had to be really trained to be able to use those linotype machines. It was really skilled work, and that went by the boards. Morty Bahr wrote about this in his book quite extensively. And that's how the ITU members got their lifetime job guarantees. I'm not going to go into any of that. But anyway, that's what was going on. Then they also were trying to consolidate operations and these bigger and bigger corporations were taking over. Eventually it got to the place where the companies that owned newspapers weren't even in the news business anymore.

Debbie [00:29:30] We're talking early [19]80s? mid [19]80s?

Linda [00:29:32] Yes, early [19]80s. We were under a lot of pressure in the Guild because we thought we had a merger agreement and we didn't. What do you do when you don't have a merger agreement? You buy a building. So we bought a building. [*Laughs*] That's how we got to Silver Spring. We bought a building in Silver Spring, a little controversial because last thing we really needed was a building. Then once we bought the building there was poor financial management. In addition to that, the building became a money suck as it was being built and as we were transitioning it. We could have moved into an existing building but no, we had to build a building. I think that people in power felt that it was something to secure the Guild into eternity. That's how we got to Silver Spring.

Debbie [00:30:28] You had about how many members at that point?

Linda [00:30:34] Our membership didn't change that much during my tenure in the Guild. We had between 32,000 and 34,000 members. At one point we hit 36,000, but that was after we merged with CWA and then it started going down again.

Debbie [00:30:52] Did you bargain contracts in Lexington?

Linda [00:30:55] Did I?

Debbie [00:30:56] Yes.

Linda [00:30:56] Yes, with the help of the International.

Debbie [00:31:00] When you were the director of collective bargaining, what was that department's role?

Linda [00:31:09] Everything with the Guild is complicated.

Debbie [00:31:12] I know it's different than other unions.

Linda [00:31:15] The Guild did not bargain single contracts for these big employers. Let's take Hearst, for example. Hearst was a newspaper chain that was very prominent in the Guild's heyday. We did not have a single contract covering all of the Hearst newspapers. Part of that was the NLRB [National Labor Relations Board] and the NLRA [National Labor Relations Act] and the way they divided up bargaining units. The other part of it, let's face it, was turf. We didn't have that kind of global bargaining. We did do some joint bargaining with the other unions. Mixed bag on the success of that. We had what we called our collective bargaining program. We had, as a part of that, a model contract. We tried to get contract language in all of our contracts that mirrored what was in the model. The problem with it was the model contract was subject to convention approval. Every year people would get up -- I used to call it the Christmas tree -- and they'd say, "Okay, now we want paid family leave for a year, and we're going to put that in the model contract." It was supposed to be just a goal. Yeah, but the companies don't take you seriously if you put that on the table. The locals had to submit their contract proposals to us for approval. We technically had to approve the contract proposals. That was a lot of what I did. I looked at the contract proposals and I said, "Okay, does this conform to the bargaining program?" Then, they were supposed to make it conform. The locals also didn't always submit their proposals. I also used to analyze the contracts after they were bargained and say, "This doesn't meet it." I mean, people were doing the best they could. Before I came to worth there, the Guild lost a unit at *The Arizona Republic* back in the 19]70s. It was a tough organizing drive. Dick Pattison, one of the Guild reps, [He] got locked in a trunk of his car in the desert. He had told somebody where he was going so they went looking for him. That's the only way he survived. They were so vicious. It was bad -- but we won. They started to bargain a contract and the powers that be in the Guild -- not me, this was before me -- the powers that be in the collective bargaining department decided that the sick leave provision in that contract wasn't good enough, so they rejected it. This was a multiyear battle. The members said, "Okay, bye. We're done here. We did the best we could. We're out of here." It was a terrible story, but we had stories like that. That's the worst example. We were struggling, even though we had a good reputation.

Debbie [00:34:34] Talk about the decision to reach out to CWA, that process, and the controversies about it then and now.

Linda [00:34:43] Chuck Dale, who had been secretary treasurer, became president of The Newspaper Guild. Our secretary treasurer was named John Edgington and I defeated him in an election be-

cause of an internal scandal. Bill McLeman was part of the leadership structure too. It was Dale, McLeman and Foley.

Debbie [00:35:15] And that was what year?

Linda [00:35:17] 1993. Chuck Dale was always a big proponent of us merging. Though out most of its history Guild members were primarily reporters and editors. But as the Guild grew, they weren't the majority of people in the union anymore because there were a lot of people working in the classified department and in the circulation department and they were all part of the Guild. The editorial part of it was slightly less than 50%, not unlike what happened with the Bell people in CWA. But the editorial people that always controlled the union because they were the ones who would get up at the mic at conventions, and they were very articulate. When you get people who are Pulitzer Prize-winning reporters or work at *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*, and they get up and make their points, people listen. So they were driving the union. They had this identity that they wanted to maintain and they were scared about a merger because they said, "Oh, our identity will go away. And, you know, we need to have our own union because we're so special -- no, we need to have our own union because we do this unique job. And we have to be objective and, what we do is really important." I could tick down the list.

Debbie [00:36:57] And we're professionals.

Linda [00:36:58] And we're professionals. Yeah.

Debbie [00:36:59] And also, was it linked with -- because we are journalists, we need to be nonpartisan and --

Linda [00:37:05] Yes. Very much so.

Debbie [00:37:06] -- objective?

Linda [00:37:06] Yeah.

Debbie [00:37:07] And unions take political --

Linda [00:37:08] The Guild, over the years, flirted with getting rid of that "objectivity" and got slammed. The leaders got slammed every time. Every time. But that wasn't all of it. The other part of it was, "Well, you know, we need to have our own identity. We're not printers, you know, we're not Teamsters." Back up … We did a strategic plan. We hired two people to help us with the strategic plan. Remember, the merger with the ITU had fallen through. One of the recommendations from the people that did the strategic plan was, "You really need to pursue a merger. You need to do these other things -- mobilization and organizing, etc. But you also need to merge with another union because you won't have the resources." I think that was accurate, actually. I think that was a good assessment. We had a merger committee that was a small committee.. It was myself -- I was at that point secretary treasurer -- Chuck Dale, and Bill McLeman. It was great because we got a lot of great food, except at CWA. I always said CWA food was the worst, but the best was GCIU, by the way.

Debbie [00:38:39] GCIU?

Linda [00:38:40] GCIU, Graphic Communications International Union, the pressmen, because they really wanted us. Teamsters was okay, but they had their own cafeteria. But the GCIU -- Jim Norton, the president, he would order out of this fancy Italian restaurant. And Bill McLeman would say to me, "I wonder what we're having for lunch today at GCIU." [*Laughs*] He said, "If we were merging kitchens this would be a no brainer." [*Laughs*] We would joke about that. "Yeah, we get a lot of good lunches, except at CWA" where we'd get like ham sandwiches or boxed lunch or something. But the problem was that there was no way that the Guild could merge with the Teamsters. That just would not have worked at all because of the corruption, the reputation of the Teamsters. It would not have passed. There was only really one choice. There were three unions we were looking at seriously. I think a couple of other unions, like the Machinists came to us and maybe we had one meeting with them, but we were interested in merging with someone who had a connection to our industry. So, there really wasn't any others. The GCIU was a possibility, but they were having their own problems and we never meshed with them, culturally, at all. Whereas with CWA … Eric Geist and I were very active in Jobs with Justice. We got to know CWA that way. We had worked with CWA on some other projects. We had members in the CWA. The research department staff of the CWA used to be members of the Guild. Yeah. We had a lot of connections to CWA and we used to say, among the three of us, "Well, CWA is a clean union." Even the GCIU had some sketchiness. The CWA was attractive to us. That really ended up being the only choice. Morty Bahr and Barbara Easterling, but it was mainly Morty who was driving it. M.E. Nichols was involved, but he didn't offer much.

Debbie [00:41:00] He was EVP [executive vice president] at that point.

Linda [00:41:02] He was EVP, and then Larry Cohen, who was director of organizing. Larry really saw a good possibility for us in CWA. I personally knew Larry. We all knew Larry because we had been active in Jobs with Justice. We were one of the first unions to be active in Jobs with Justice when he was putting that together. So we knew Larry, liked him. Dale liked Morty. We all liked Morty. It was not hard to like Morty, but Larry was the guy we knew and so Larry really tried to push to make merger happen. I would have a lot of side conversations with Larry about the identity issue and how important it was to make sure that people had their identity. That was the other thing about CWA. That was said from the get go. "You can have your own sector or organization within the CWA and you can do your own thing." That was very attractive because that was not going to happen in any of these other unions we were talking to. That's really how it came about and then when we put it up for a vote, I was also running for president, but when we put merger up for a vote, it actually passed overwhelmingly. I was a little surprised. There was a little bit of pushback, but not much.

Debbie [00:42:41] Because people understood you needed to be with a union that had more resources?

Linda [00:42:47] Everybody, and I'll throw myself into that bucket. Because I was sort of the new blood coming in. I was in favor of it. I was a journalist and I always felt like I spoke for the journalists a lot of times. We did a job selling it. We went around the country and really sold it. The one issue we had a lot of problems with was Canada, because Morty had decided he was going to let CEP go.

Debbie [00:43:27] CEP was --?

Linda [00:43:31] Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers Union which grew out of the ITU in Canada but became much larger. We were having a lot of problems in the Guild in Canada. We had locals leave us and go to Canadian unions. There was a whole movement toward Canadian-only unions in Canada -- starting with the auto workers -- because they felt like they were being taken for granted, which they were. So there was a whole nationalistic movement. The Guild got caught up in that. The CEP factor was tricky. It was a tricky question. We ended up actually doing a separate agreement about Canada, and it was part the merger agreement, but it was separate and only the Canadians voted on it. We said to them, "You're going to have your own autonomy," because they were [saying] "We need Canadian autonomy. We need to make our own decisions and not have to go through Washington in the Guild." We set up this Canadian autonomy agreement as part of the merger agreement, to have their own governing board. They were very interested in that. We said, "Well, you don't get that unless you vote for the merger with CWA." So the CWA merger also passed in Canada. It was good; it was unifying. I think we felt really good about it. There were some bumps along the way, but the Canadian Guild is still in CWA.

Debbie [00:45:07] I remember at that point Larry Cohen was pushing the idea that the technological changes were leading to a unified information industry. The journalists would be producing the information. Telecom would be the transmission. I don't remember what else was part of it. There were four boxes. I don't know how real that was and whether it was just something that helped Larry sell this within CWA or not.

Linda [00:45:42] Yeah, but it probably was a little bit real. If you look at the way the media industry has evolved, it certainly was real.

Jeff [00:45:52] It was deliberate on CWA's part, going after the Newspaper Guild.

Linda [00:45:54] Right. Right.

Jeff [00:45:56] NABET [National Association of Broadcast Technicians which merged into CWA.]

Linda [00:45:56] Right. NABET had come in before.

Jeff [00:46:01] There was this whole notion of bringing all these unions together under one umbrella.

Linda [00:46:03] Right.

Jeff [00:46:03] Morty was a big champion of that notion.

Linda [00:46:05] Right.

Jeff [00:46:06] They would all fit together.

Linda [00:46:07] Right. All the media unions.

Jeff [00:46:08] Right.

Debbie [00:46:09] Now that you're mentioning that, I remember because I was given the assignment to coordinate this convergence conference.

Linda [00:46:18] Oh, yeah. I remember the convergence conference.

Debbie [00:46:20] The idea at that point -- and now, of course, we've seen this happening -- that newspaper journalists were becoming videographers.

Linda [00:46:30] Yes.

Debbie [00:46:31] And the merger of video and print then was a big issue.

Linda [00:46:39] Yeah, it was a huge issue. Because our people didn't do that [video].

Jeff [00:46:44] Right.

Linda [00:46:46] We had still photographers but we didn't have people that did video. They didn't tell stories through video. I think the argument about the convergence and putting everybody under one union who was in this information sector had a lot of appeal to the Guild people too. I think that wasn't a bad vision for the Guild. People liked that they could still have our executive board. But they liked that whole notion of convergence. So that did help steer us to CWA and I will say this, that the CWA leadership really bent over backwards to make us feel special. [*Laughs*] No, they really did. They really did. And that was helpful too.

Jeff [00:47:43] So you mentioned you were running for president at that -- Was that a contested election?

Linda [00:47:47] Yes.

Jeff [00:47:49] So your opponent was supporting the merger, or --?

Linda [00:47:52] Everybody supported the merger. My opponent just opposed me.

Jeff [00:47:55] Okay.

Linda [00:47:55] Can I digress on a little story about that? This is this is one of my favorite stories about my career. Chuck Dale was president. I was secretary treasurer, but when I ran for secretary treasurer, I didn't run with him. I ran on my own. It was Patrick Hunt from CWA [research department which was represented by The Newspaper Guild at that time] who was a Guild activist at the time, said to me, "You'll never be able to pull that off, being an independent, and he's going to kill you. He's going to crush you." He didn't crush me. There was this guy from New York running against me who was not much. Anyway, I won, and I got more votes than he did.

Debbie [00:48:40] Than Dale.

Linda [00:48:41] Than Dale! And Dale was pretty popular at that point. That sort of shocked me. The Guild has one person, one vote for officers, that you mail in the ballots. I actually went out to locals and campaigned and nobody had ever done that before. I'd go to workplaces and I'd cam-

paign and people were impressed by that. They liked that. So I won pretty handily. So then Dale was close to retirement. As we got toward 1995, I kept saying to him, "Are you going to retire? Because I need to know what I'm going to do." He's like, "Well, I really haven't decided yet." That was not true. He had decided that he was going to retire. He just decided not to tell me. I just announced for president, and he hadn't "decided" whether he was going to retire or not. I went into his office and I said, "Look, you know, this is March. We have the convention in September" or whatever it was. "I've got to announce, I got to do it. I got to get going. I hope you decide to retire because I think you deserve a good retirement. But if you're not going to do that, regardless, I'm going to run." Oh, my God, were they mad. The old guard was so mad about that. So, Chuck Perlik, my old ally, who had retired, writes a letter to all of his friends in Guild leadership positions – and he had a considerable network. The letter starts off like this. "The Guild is facing a very critical decision" -- because we were voting on CWA merger -- "And we are at a very critical time. This is no time for a social experiment." [*Laughs*] Can you believe that? "This is no time for a social experiment.".

Debbie [00:50:48] A woman --

Linda [00:50:49] Yeah, that's a social experiment? Oh, and there was other stuff in that letter. I saved it. I still have it on my desktop because I always go back and look at it every once in a while. I mean, this wasn't 1950. This was 1995. Okay? "This is no time for a social experiment!" He claimed that I didn't have any experience and that Barry Lipton, who was the president of the New York Guild and running against me, had a lot of experience, decades of experience. And he was really good and da da da, and that I spent my whole time under the tutelage -- this is another great line -- under the tutelage of the three wise men of the Guild, Bill Blatz, Bill McLeman, and Chuck Dale. I was just a puppet of theirs, I guess. I don't know what that was supposed to mean. But it was bad. The women of the Guild rebelled. [*Laughs*] They didn't like that at all. He ended up retracting the letter.

Debbie [00:52:02] What percent of the Guild do you think was women?

Linda [00:52:08] You know, I don't remember, but it was close to half. Maybe even a little more than half. Later, it was more than half. But at that point it was close to half. Because remember we not only represented newsrooms, we represented classified advertising departments. They were all women. For the most part all women. Those were the biggest departments in the newspapers at that time. So, I'll never forget it. I can still see it. We had a woman get up in a forum we had at the convention and she said, "I want to ask Barry Lipton and Larry Hatfield" -- they were running against myself and Bernie Lunzer [Lunzer was running for secretary-treasurer]. "I want to ask you, are you aware of a letter that Chuck Perlik sent out to Guild leaders that said, among other things" and then she started to quote the letter. I mean, she was a journalist. [*Laughs*] She knew how to ask questions. Then she goes, "My question for you is, do you agree with this letter?" [*Jeff laughs*] And I swear to God, they blew the answer. They said, "Well, you know, Chuck Perlik is very well respected." And she said, "But do you agree with the letter?" No -- "Do you disavow the letter?" That's the way she put it. She said, "Do you disavow the letter?" And they said, "Well, you know, Chuck Perlik is very well-respected in the Guild." And she said, "I'm asking you--" this is in an open forum -- "do you disavow the letter?" And they said, "Well, you know, I mean, Chuck Perlik's views deserve to be considered." And she said, "So you're not going to disavow the letter. Thank you very much." And she sat down. The place burst into applause. I was like, "We're done." [*Laughs*]

Jeff [00:53:43] [*Laughs*] Game, set, match!

Linda [00:53:44] Game, set, match. We're done. So then he issues another letter saying, "I'm not a sexist." [*All laugh*] Honest to God. Honestly, he said that in the letter. "I am not a sexist. I hired this person, this woman, this woman, this woman, and Linda Foley." But guess the one woman he left out? The one African-American woman he had on staff. He forgot.

Jeff [00:54:05] Jeez.

Linda [00:54:08] [*Laughs*] So it just kept getting worse and worse. We called it the Perlik Papers. It just kept getting worse. Then he issued something else later. I think finally Larry Hatfield, who was running for secretary-treasurer, got up on the floor and did disavow the letter at some point. But that was unbelievable. We were doing the merger at the same time. There was no daylight between myself and my opponent on the merger. Everybody was in favor of the merger because Chuck Dale was in favor of the merger. So his people who were the ones running against me really wanted the merger. There was no daylight between us. But I am going to share one little thing that I did. This might be boring, but one little thing that I did and I was so happy with myself. Actually Bill Boarman, gave me the idea. He said, "Look, you should be the one presenting the merger agreement." He said, "You negotiated it." He said, "You tell them you're going to present it. And that gives you an advantage. That's what I did [when the ITU was considering merger with the CWA]." And that was really good advice. My campaign colors were teal and purple and gray. So I did a PowerPoint presentation and guess what colors I used? Teal and purple and gray. [*All laugh*]

Debbie [00:55:25] This was to the convention.

Linda [00:55:26] To the convention -- well, everywhere. We'd do a convention. We would go anywhere people wanted us to go to talk about the mergers. That was my little gift to myself.

Jeff [00:55:40] Part of all these mergers that CWA has sort of championed, and frankly, it was one of the selling points, as you identified, was the fact that you could keep your autonomy.

Linda [00:55:52] Right.

Jeff [00:55:52] That autonomy was a big feature. And you gradually integrate those locals in partnership with the locals that are already CWA locals and other merger partners. But they continue to maintain that autonomy. The CWA structure is divided into regions and each of those regions has some collective bargaining responsibility. But overlaying that then is the sector bargaining responsibility that they retained. While they were recognized as partners, they still had their own identity and really never sort of meshed in that convergence that we thought was ideally going to take place. Which I get. You've got some pride in your own identity. You see AFA-CWA sometimes or just AFA. I mean, you want to identify yourself that way. I had a couple of questions about the whole merger experience, but also more pointed about your rise within the union. You talked about going and campaigning in person, which hadn't been done, apparently. Did you go to the newsrooms where your opponents were and --

Linda [00:57:14] Well, first of all, when I first did it, my opponents didn't do it. So Pete McLaughlin, who ran against me for secretary-treasurer didn't go anywhere. He would write letters and stuff and put things in the *Guild Reporter*. But he wouldn't go and campaign. The only difficulty with was, I didn't have access to every newsroom. These guys – remember -- were fighting us tooth and

nail. A lot of locals, they said, "You can't come in here." Then I had to figure out some other way to meet people. If that was the case, then I'd do something at a restaurant or I'd do something somewhere else where people gathered and try to meet with them. By the time I ran for president, people saw the success of that. So my opponents then started doing it, too. The trick was to get somebody to show you around the newsroom -- not just the newsroom, but the whole workplace. The whole Guild unit. A lot depended on who your friends were there. They would take you around and introduce you. You had to be a little careful because most of the employers were not our friends, and they didn't like people to be interrupted. It made them really nervous to see a high Guild official come in and start to talk to people. But it was really fun. I visited some of the larger locals, like I did go to *The New York Times*. I did go to *The Washington Post*. But the smaller papers were the places where people were most impressed because no one ever came to see them. One of my best visits was at *The Plain Dealer* [in Cleveland.] It was a great visit because I knew so many people there and they were nice to me and it was not, at that point, a real hostile environment. But the smaller papers, like the Manchester *Union Leader* in Manchester, New Hampshire. That was a blast because I would go in, and there weren't that many people there, and they would all come over and ask me all kinds of questions about the union. It was really great. You had to be judicious about what you did. The other thing was it was really expensive. I spent a lot of my own money. Now some people, my friends who were staff reps, had points. So my friends would give me points. That helped a lot, especially in Canada, I went from Toronto to Vancouver and my friend gave me points to take that flight. Otherwise, it would have cost me over $1,000 to make the flight.

Debbie [01:00:18] Points mean frequent flyer miles?

Linda [01:00:20] Frequent flyer miles. A lot of times I'd stay at people's houses. Sometimes I'd stay in the hotel, but usually I'd stay at people's houses. Sometimes people considered that, like, a contribution to me.

Jeff [01:00:42] When you're running for president, did the merger agreement then give you sort of an extra vehicle to get around and talk with people?

Linda [01:00:51] Yeah. Although people on the newsroom floor were not that interested in it. The leadership was interested in it. The people on the floor weren't interested in it. They were interested in when are we going to get our mileage rate increased, stuff like that. Like now, [in her role as a state legislator] -- When are you going to put a speed camera on my road? It was like that kind of thing, so they weren't that interested in merger. To the extent that they were, it was concerns about identity. They were like, "Well, you know, are we going to get swallowed up? " There were questions like that, but for the most part merger wasn't so much on their radar as it was on the leadership's. Sometimes what I would do because I was secretary-treasurer, I was being sent by the Guild and the CWA all around the country. Like if there was a meeting in Cleveland, I would go to the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and then I'd get my car and I'd drive to the *Toledo Blade* and then I'd drive to Akron. I just used it as a jumping off point to go meet people. I did a lot of that to save money because it was expensive.

Jeff [01:02:04] So the merger, what we've talked about so far sounds like smooth sailing, but obviously there's rough spots.

Linda [01:02:11] They came after.

Jeff [01:02:11] Why don't you talk about a few of those?

Linda [01:02:18] Okay. Putting together anything like a merger agreement was a big deal. Lots of people's lives were affected. There were things that we didn't address that we should have. The whole tension around whether Guild locals integrated with the CWA locals. There was tension on both sides of that. That continued. I would have locals call me and say, "The CWA wants us to do this. We're different. We're not the CWA." Well, yeah, you are the CWA. There was a lot of that. Then there were things that we just didn't address. For example, we knew about the Members Relief Fund which was very attractive. Because part of our problem was that we got eaten alive by strike benefits. When we paid strike benefits, we were so small that it triggered a huge dues increase when our defense fund fell below a certain amount. Having access to the Members Relief Fund was huge. Huge.

Debbie [01:03:32] Remind us what the Members' Relief Fund --

Linda [01:03:34] The Members' Relief Fund is a fund that CWA has that basically pays people a portion of their salary when they're on strike. Critically important because people can't go without a paycheck. Another problem with being on strike is you lose your health benefits after a certain point. So CWA had this other fund called the Defense Fund. The Defense Fund paid strike-related expenses and helped out with medical coverage for strikers. When we merged I don't think we really understood all of that. We never addressed the Defense Fund part of it. We also had Canadian members. The Canadian health care system, as you know, is much different. They wanted a piece of the Defense Fund as well. So we had this tension over that issue. We finally, I think, worked it out. But it was very contentious. I mean, the Canadians were really pissed off because they were on strike and they didn't get the health care benefits. We ended up assessing the members an additional amount so that they could participate in the Defense Fund part, but we never addressed that in the merger agreement. That's a good example of something that we didn't think about dealing with when we went in.

Debbie [01:05:05] I think what you're saying is -- initially, Guild members' dues did not include an assessment to contribute to these funds, therefore you couldn't access that. Is that what you're saying?

Linda [01:05:19] Yeah -- and maybe Jeff remembers better than I did -- we could access the Members Relief Fund.

Jeff [01:05:23] Right.

[01:05:24] I don't remember why we could do that. I guess because a portion of our dues went in there.

Jeff [01:05:27] Yeah. That was built into the dues, the Members' Relief Fund. But the Defense Fund --

Linda [01:05:32] We forgot about it.

Jeff [01:05:33] It was 50 cents per member.

Linda [01:05:34] Right. We forgot about it. Then when people went on strike and they were like, "Well, we didn't get these benefits." We had to fix that. And that was a tough one.

Debbie [01:05:47] And the Defense Fund is the big fund, right?

Linda [01:05:49] No.

Jeff [01:05:49] No, no, no. Members' Relief is the big fund. That's where the Members' Relief Fund came in. The Defense Fund just wasn't capable of handling any major strikes.

Linda [01:05:59] Right.

Jeff [01:05:59] We created this Member's Relief Fund and then left sort of the ancillary benefits to the Defense Fund. And the irony is, the Defense Fund doesn't actually pay a health care premium. They will pay some of your medical expenses that haven't been met.

Linda [01:06:16] Right.

Jeff [01:06:17] And well, in Canada there weren't any medical expenses to meet. But I get the tension.

Linda [01:06:22] We worked out a deal where they did get a stipend to help offset the premiums. Because those people always got what they wanted. [*Laughs*]

Debbie [01:06:29] But they were a big unit.

Linda [01:06:30] Big unit and smart leadership.

Jeff [01:06:33] Yeah.

Linda [01:06:34] Arnold Amber [leader of the Canadian unit at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] was an interesting person, very, very good friend of mine, and he was very smart. That was one area where we had a lot of tension and, and then the whole political involvement thing we knew was going to be a problem. We dealt with that. We spent a lot of time talking about that in the merger agreement and what --

Debbie [01:07:00] The political, meaning --?

Linda [01:07:00] CWA's a very politically active union and TNG was not. This whole thing about "We have to be neutral." By the way, they're still dealing with that. "We have to be neutral. We can't take positions. We can't endorse candidates." So, we got from Morty [Bahr] and Larry [Cohen] that CWA for [US] president and that was about it. That was voted on at a convention. We actually wrote into the merger agreement that the TNG vice president could abstain on behalf of TNG members in the vote but that wasn't good enough for the people in the Guild. Hence, you had Peter Szekey, who's a lovely person, a Reuters reporter, get up at every convention and say "On behalf of the journalists, I disassociate us from this endorsement and will vote against it." You know what? Fine. But some CWA members would get really upset with that because they're like, "What's wrong with you? Don't you support John Kerry or …?" Pick one. That was a little bit difficult. Then the

other difficult part was the Canadians got greedy and wanted somebody on the CWA executive board which we had never really contemplated. That was really dicey. We ended up working that out, and now they do have somebody on.

Jeff [01:08:36] Yeah.

Linda [01:08:38]We did not initially put a Canadian on the CWA executive board. We did that on purpose. But then they came back and said, "Well, we deserve somebody" after the fact. We worked it out because at one point, Larry Cohen had said to the Canadian director, who was Arnold Amber, "We could give you a seat, a non-voting seat on the executive board. I don't think people will care about that." Arnold said, "No, I have to have a vote." When some of Arnold's people found out that he had been offered a non-voting seat and turned it down, they weren't happy. They urged him to take that. That's kind of where it ended up. Then eventually, because the executive board expanded, they got a seat on the executive board. So it worked out. That part worked out.

Debbie [01:09:35] Linda, you were president from 1995 through 2008. What were some of the biggest challenges you faced as Guild President, CWA Vice President?

Linda [01:09:51] The biggest challenge I faced was the shrinking of the newspaper industry and the news business -- the consolidation and then shrinking. We were looking at job losses. Now they're even more catastrophic. I didn't think they could get more catastrophic, but now they're even more catastrophic. We were looking at job losses in some cases, like, a third of the workforce would be laid off or bought out. Our membership was going down. That was by far and away the biggest problem we had, and it impacted our bargaining power. We couldn't negotiate contracts the way that we used to. On a smaller scale, the Detroit newspaper strike started when I was secretary treasurer.

Debbie [01:10:37] What year?

Linda [01:10:39] [19]93 or [19]94. And continued for like a decade after that. That was really tough because when people go on strike and they don't have 100% solidarity or near 100% solidarity, you're always going to get a division between the people who are in and the people who are out. The people who are out look at the people who are in and they say, "Well, wait a minute, I'm having a lot of trouble here. My life is a mess and they're still working. Why don't I just go back and work? They're doing it. Why don't I do it?" The longer the strike goes on, the more of a problem this becomes. Very hard to keep that picket line tight. In Detroit, the hard core believers and the people who really were prosecuting the strike became more and more militant. We were trying to get them to make an unconditional offer to go back to work because there were unfair labor practice charges but they wouldn't do it. This was like five years after the strike began. They wouldn't do it. It was a big fight. People were really nasty about it, just really nasty. We used to give an award called the Heywood Broun Awards named after the founding president of the Guild. It was a pretty prestigious journalism award. We had a panel of journalists judge it. I picked a woman named Susan Watson who had been quite a popular columnist in Detroit and became very, very active in the strike. She never actually went back to work at the papers, but I picked her to be a judge, and she used her opportunity as a judge to rail against me and the Guild about how we had abandoned them. It was pretty bad. This was at our awards. [*Laughs*] There were a lot of hard feelings. It was really tough because a lot of people's lives were really upended and people really got hurt. It was a rough, rough

strike. There was a lot of violence in the strike. People got hurt. It was a rough strike and it went on for a long time.

Debbie [01:13:04] Did that have an impact on your power in other units?

Linda [01:13:09] Yes, totally. Because people said, "Well, look, the Guild can't do anything. Look what's happening in Detroit. Detroit of all places!" We'd always hear that. "Detroit of all places!" You know, "You can't get anything done. And you know what? We don't want that here. Why do we want that here?" In organizing, it really hurt us.

Debbie [01:13:30] What were some of the biggest achievements or accomplishments of your tenure?

Linda [01:13:35] The CWA merger. Because I feel like the CWA merger saved the union. There would be no News Guild today. It's called the News Guild now, but there would be no News Guild today had we not merged with CWA. That is clear. I don't think it would have lasted five years after that ITU thing fell apart, if we hadn't merged with CWA, really. Putting together a merger that allowed the Guild to maintain its own identity and to still be able to appeal to workers in the industry -- I consider that really important. I consider the Canadian part of that agreement really important, because we had such a problem with our Canadian members threatening to leave our union because they didn't have enough autonomy. To be able to -- through the merger agreement and then going forward -- put in place an organization, a union that really could represent them was quite an accomplishment. I think now they may be the strongest media union in Canada.

Debbie [01:14:53] And the backbone is the CBC? [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation]

Linda [01:14:57] Yeah. I wish I could take credit for the CBC organizing, but I can't. That was Arnold and Lise Lareau and some other people that made that happen. There was a consolidation vote at the CBC and all of the units ended up being part of the Canadian Media Guild and so the union went from like 150 members to like, 3,000 members or 2,000 members -- whatever it was.

Debbie [01:15:25] Over what period?

Linda [01:15:27] Overnight almost.

Debbie [01:15:28] And what night was that? What year?

Linda [01:15:32] When was that? It was in the early 2000s. No, it was right around the time of the merger. So it might have been in the late 1990s. I remember going with Bill McLeman to a meeting of the newly formed Canadian Media Guild with all these new members in it. And I said to him, "Bill, you know, CWA merger is really important. This is almost as important right here." I didn't have too many of these victories. But we did save a newspaper in Hawaii and that was a lot of fun. That was really good. Remember, you worked with us, Debbie, on that. We had that guy, Todd Miller, who was an antitrust attorney and they tried to dissolve the joint operating agreement and close the Honolulu Star-Bulletin and we saved it. We saved it! One hundred people had their jobs saved because we went to bat for them. And again, I go back to the CWA. The Guild as itself could never have afforded Todd. He was very reasonable as an antitrust attorney but we could never have afforded to do that on our own, ever. And I remember going to Morty [Bahr] and saying, "This is

going to be really expensive." He goes, "Is it going to work?" I said, "I can't guarantee it's going to work. But I think we have a shot." He goes, "Okay, we'll do it." We could never have done that on our own, ever.

Debbie [01:17:05] I would add to that. That had feedback throughout the union, because that was the first [time], that I am aware, that we got involved in antitrust in front of the Department of Justice.

Linda [01:17:21] It's the second, actually, but the first one wasn't success -- it was before your time with me.

Debbie [01:17:25] When was that?

Linda [01:17:27] San Antonio. We did something in San Antonio and came really close to keeping the *San Antonio Light* afloat. But it didn't work. The court ruled against us. That was the first time. The *Star-Bulletin* was the first and maybe the only time that it worked.

Debbie [01:17:42] In newspaper.

Linda [01:17:43] In the newspaper industry, yeah.

Debbie [01:17:43] But we learned a lot throughout the union about that. That brings me to the next question. You were also very involved in proceedings at the FCC [Federal Communications Commission] because this was a period in which there was a lot of pressure to weaken the media ownership rules, and particularly the ban on newspaper/broadcast cross-ownership.

Linda [01:18:07] Yes.

Debbie [01:18:08] I want you to talk about why you did that. And if now seeing where the newspaper industry has gone, if you think that was the right decision.

Linda [01:18:20] Let me take the last part of that first. If I'm looking at it objectively, I'd say "No, it probably wasn't." We probably should have let them merge. But you can't say that because it was a different time and it was a different market. I can't second guess that. The whole thing was about independent journalism. That's why I cared about it so much -- independent journalism. I wanted to make sure that we preserved independent journalism. To have independent journalism, you have to have independent news organizations. Sounds silly saying it now, though, because journalism is such a mess. But you have to have news organizations that have the wherewithal to support professional journalism with wages, etc. Combined ownership took away from that and sacrificed robust professional journalism for expediency. That was good for the investors, but it was terrible for journalism. So that's one of the big reasons I got involved in it. I think the other aspect of it was that these companies were just getting too big. The nice thing about the newspaper industry, when we think of it nostalgically, is that these were local companies that were good companies, good places to work, made money, made a lot of money. Good places to work, local companies serving the local people in a community. As the consolidation happened, you got further and further away from that. You got to the point where you might have a newsroom, but you're not even printing the paper in the same city, if you're printing the paper at all. It allowed them to consolidate different departments, and it allowed them to consolidate the newsroom too.

Debbie [01:20:39] Did it also mean that you, through the Guild and through coalitions with groups that otherwise --

Linda [01:20:47] Oh, yeah.

Debbie [01:20:48] Talk about that.

Debbie [01:20:52] So there was a whole movement around us. Even when I was not in [Guild] leadership and I was a staffer, I would attend meetings on media concentration. A lot of people would show up and they would be, for lack of a better term, old hippies. Sometimes, it'd be one guy putting out a newspaper. "I got my newspaper." But there were some good things going on. At one of those meetings in the early [19]90s. That guy Bob -- now I forget his -- …

Debbie [01:21:33] McChesney.

Linda [01:21:34] McChesney. Bob McChesney was there and he was like a rock star.

Debbie [01:21:37] Professor from --

Linda [01:21:38] University of Illinois. And people were like, "McChesney, he's great on this issue." He and I started to talk and then we formed a relationship. He and this other guy, John Nichols, who was from Wisconsin, founded an organization called Free Press. I'm still not clear where they got all their money but they were fighting for independence and fighting against media consolidation. They got to be quite big. This was a time when either [Ronald] Reagan or [George] Bush was president. The country was pretty far to the right and these folks were all like "lefties." [Now we would call them "progressives."] So it became kind of like this stand-in for a new movement of left-leaning people. I'm not saying we led to the election of Barack Obama or anything like that, but there were a lot of people. I met people like Al Franken and Jesse Jackson and Bernie Sanders. They were all at these conferences, speaking and talking about media concentration because they recognized -- and we can see it now – that if you didn't pay attention to this, it was detrimental to democracy. All of these political leaders were there for that reason. Ralph Nader showed up at one point, although no one wanted to talk to him, but he showed up at one point. They would get like 2,000 people at these conferences. They would get all these people at these conferences and these were people for whom this was a big issue. I think they did see that media technology was not just for news, but for content in general, because we had a lot of music people there. They saw a bad trend that was coming. And they were right. So, yeah, it allowed me to form a lot of coalitions with different people. And I got to meet Phil Donahue! [*Laughs*].

Jeff [01:23:46] Cleveland guy.

Linda [01:23:46] Yeah, Cleveland guy, who's still alive, by the way.

Debbie [01:23:49] You were [Guild] president until 2008.

Linda [01:23:53] Yes.

Debbie [01:23:53] I want to move on to after that, but before I do -- anything else you want to add, or Jeff, you want ask? Anything else you want to add about your tenure or should we move on after that?

Linda [01:24:03] No. I loved it. I loved doing it. I loved being in CWA. I met so many good people in CWA. I met a lot of good people in The Newspaper Guild, too, very interesting people. And I loved it.

Debbie [01:24:20] What was it like to be one of the few women on the executive board?

Linda [01:24:25] On the CWA executive board? I mean, yeah, you'd look around and say, "Well, we could use more women." But remember, Barbara Easterling was secretary-treasurer when I first started to interact with CWA and that was a big deal. We'd go to these secretary-treasurer conferences together [before merger]. Barbara Easterling, myself, a woman from the brewery workers, and Sharon from AFA were the only -- four out of all the unions in the AFL-CIO who were women secretary-treasurers. Barbara Easterling being a secretary-treasurer of the CWA was a big deal. I always felt like CWA did pretty well in that area. Not perfect. There were individuals who didn't do so well. But I mean, as an institution, I felt like [CWA] did better than the Guild. We always had a lot of women on our executive board in the Guild, but I think that CWA did as well or better than the Guild on that score. I never felt that I was not heard or that I was in a minority or that I was somehow looked down upon when I was on the CWA executive board. I never felt that.

Debbie [01:25:30] Did you see a role for yourself as fighting for more women and more roles for women within the labor movement?

Linda [01:25:50] Yes. But I was pretty busy doing other things. I say yes, but remember, I also established the Berger-Marks Foundation with Louise Walsh, Yvette Herrera, and Kitty Peddicord. That was a little foundation where we funded women to do leadership training. We funded women organizers. That's a whole other part of my life that I could talk about for a long time, but I think it was the most important work I did there in terms of women, other than being a role model, which I think I was.

Jeff [01:26:32] Talk a little bit more about Berger-Marks, because I think this is really an interesting story. And the origins of it.

Linda [01:26:38] We had a woman rep in the Guild, before my time, really. Her name was Edna Berger. She was a legend. She reminded me a lot of Dina Beaumont, actually. [Dina Beaumont was executive assistant to Morty Bahr.] But like a lot of women who were in the labor movement at that time, she was very, I hate to say it, masculine and she was very aggressive. You had to be, because it was their [the men's] world. She was very successful as a rep and beloved. She retired. At my first convention, she was retiring. So she retired, but then she started to slip. Her husband was a Tin Pan Alley musician. He was older than she was, and he had a whole song catalog. His most venerable song was the song "All of Me." You know, the jazz standard -- [*sings*] "All of me, wanna take all of me." When Edna passed away, Louise Walsh, who had been active in the Guild and was then at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies, came to me and said, "I was really good friends with Edna. I really want to honor her. Would you be open to setting up a scholarship fund for her?" I said yes. So we set up a scholarship fund and we figured locals could contribute and we'd send somebody to the George Meany Center and they could take training. Women could take training. Then

when Gerald found out about it -- and this time he was well into his 90's -- his accountant called me up and said, "Mr. Marks would like to meet with you about the scholarship fund. And I'm going to tell you, it'll really be worth your while to do that." I said, "Okay." I would have done it anyway. So I went up to New York, had a delightful time with him. He was a delightful person. He was like 96 years old. The accountant called me after that visit and said, "Mr. Marks really, really liked you." He did make a contribution to the fund of several thousand dollars. And he said, "I just want to tell you that Mr. Marks said if you change the name of the scholarship from the Edna Berger Scholarship Fund to the Edna Berger-Gerald Marks Scholarship Fund, you'll be in for a lot more money when he passes away." I said, "Done." [*All laugh*] We thought we were going to get thousands of dollars. We ended up getting millions of dollars. I don't mean like $10 million but it was like $6 million altogether. And so we put together this board, and we really did some neat stuff. We would give an award every year called the Edna Award. I used to think of it as a mini MacArthur grant to women under 35, and we were adamant about that. [People would say,] "Well, I'm 36, but I just turned 36." Sorry. You have to be under 35. You have to be 35 by the end of the year. If you're 35 on December 31, you get to participate. Otherwise, sorry. If you turned 35 on December 30th, you're not eligible." Yvette[Herrera] was a big part of this and this is where Yvette and I really got close doing this. It was a fabulous board. People would apply for the award and we picked ten finalists and then we had a panel of women outside of the Berger-Marks Foundation that included Liz Shuler [currently AFL-CIO president] and Terry O'Neill from NOW [National Organization of Women] and Mary Kay Henry [SEIU president] who actually picked the winners. We had a winner and two runners up, and then we brought everybody [to Washington] for the awards ceremony, all of the top ten finalists. We brought them all, paid for their hotel room, took them to dinner that night, and had a big event at the [National] Press Club. We did that for about five years, I think. It was really a great thing.

Debbie [01:30:43] What would you get the award for?

Linda [01:30:45] For being a leader in [the] social justice movement.

Debbie [01:30:48] Not necessarily the labor movement.

Linda [01:30:50] No. Allies. Later we did institute another award that was just for union organizers. But it was less.

Debbie [01:31:01] And you got the money?

Linda [01:31:03] We had the money.

Debbie [01:31:04] I mean, that was what the award was? Money?

Linda [01:31:06] Yeah. It was money. It was just like a MacArthur grant. We just gave you the money and said --

Jeff [01:31:10] Go do good things.

Linda [01:31:11] "Go do good things." And we had a ceremony.

Debbie [01:31:14] Does it still exist?

Linda [01:31:16] No. I'm also kind of proud of this. Toward the end of our tenure, Carolyn Jacobson [editor of the Bakery and Confectionary Workers union newspaper] died. She was on our board and she unfortunately died of cancer. It was very sad. Louise, who was the chair -- I was the president -- she and I talked and she said, "Carolyn is in bad shape. And Kitty Peddicord is moving to the West Coast. Do we really want to keep doing this? It's getting to be a struggle for us. We would hate for it to just fade away." We came up with the idea that we would go to some organizations. We picked organizations that we had worked with and said, "Submit an RFP and we'll give you whatever's left." "Whatever's left" ended up being like $2 million. "So we'll give you whatever's left because we're going to go out of business. But you give us a plan that you're going to work with women and develop women leaders and we'll look at it. Whoever does the best job, we'll let you know if you get the remaining money." We gave it to a joint project between the Kalmanovitz Initiative [for Labor and the Working Poor] at Georgetown and Marilyn Sneiderman's program at Rutgers. The joint program is called WILL Empower.

Linda [01:32:35] We gave them the money and they're still doing it. I said to Louise after that, "I'm really proud of us." I mean, we could have just gone off and had dinners. I said, "But we decided we weren't going to do that." So that was a really fun thing to do. Berger-Marks was the best thing I did for women, I think.

Debbie [01:32:55] That sounds fabulous.

Linda [01:32:57] It was. It was fun.

Jeff [01:32:59] Do you still get royalties from "All of Me?"

Linda [01:33:00] No. What happened was, we were getting royalties from "All of Me" but we were not set up to really deal with that. People would call all the time and say, "I want to use it in a cartoon. Can I use it?" At some point, those copyrights run out. So we hired a lawyer, a music industry lawyer. Wish I could remember her name. She was full of bling. She'd come and she'd have these diamond purses and Louise would go, "I love her." Anyway, we hired her and she said, "Look, the rights are going to run out. See if you can sell the song catalog." Because you have to sell the whole catalog. "See if you can sell the song catalog and see what you can get for it. Let's just try it." She went and set it up and we got bids. Warner Music bought it. For the whole song catalog, I think we got $2 or $3 million.. We were like, "Okay, we'll take that." The administration of the song catalog was getting to be really boring for us. Still, when I'd go into a bar or when I was with the International Federation of Journalists and I was in Australia or something, I'd say, "Watch this." I'd go up to the piano bar and say, "Can you play 'All of Me?'" Then they would play "All of Me" and then I would tell them the story. [*Laughs*]

Jeff [01:34:24] Cha-ching!

Linda [01:34:25] Cha-ching! That's what I'd say, "Cha-ching!"

Debbie [01:34:29] Oh, how fun. Okay, let's move on to the very end -- which is that you were elected to the Maryland state legislature and you wanted to talk about that, and particularly what your leadership in The Newspaper Guild and in CWA contributed to you being able to be --

Linda [01:34:49] Well, let's just start here -- it exposed me to politics. That was the CWA part of it because in the Guild we really weren't that exposed to politics. So being exposed to politics. But it's easy to see the nexus between politics and unions. I'm a hell of a door knocker, by the way, because I spent my career doing that. I love it because it's what I grew up doing. I think the other part of it is, after I left CWA, I didn't know what to do and I decided I was going to get involved in local politics. I live in Montgomery County, Maryland, which is a good place to be involved in politics. People are very engaged here. I ran for the Central Committee, the Democratic Central Committee of Montgomery County, and that's an elected position. Actually, I was unopposed because they elect a man and a woman. So I was unopposed. I got on the Central Committee and then the Central Committee kind of blew up over finances. They came to me and said, "You have all this union background. You have real experience with this stuff. Would you consider being chair?" I wasn't sure. I asked my friend Lily Qi, who's now a delegate with me here in District 1 , "Lily, what do you think? Should I do it?" She goes, "Well, let me just put it this way. It can't be any worse." I said, "Okay, okay. You're right." So I took that on. Then Covid hit. But the bottom line was, we turned the Central Committee around. It's Montgomery County. It's not hard to raise money here. Okay, not hard to raise money here for Democrats. So we turned it around. Our coffers were full. We were the first ones in the Maryland politics to really do zoom meetings for town halls and other political stuff. Our elected leaders loved it because we set it [Zoom technology] all up. I became pretty well known among the elected leaders. And then at the end of 2021, Kathleen Dumais, who was a delegate from this district, who's a lawyer, got appointed judge, and that left a vacancy. I was chair of the Central Committee. Central Committee makes the appointment. I did recuse myself but I got appointed to fill the vacancy. That was [the] 2022 session. At the end of the 2022 session, I had to stand for election because the elections were being held in 2022. It was weird because they kept postponing the primary because there was a court case over redistricting. But anyway, I got elected delegate.

Debbie [01:37:57] What's your district number?

Linda [01:38:00] 15. It's District 15. In Maryland, there are three delegates for every district, more or less. There's one senator. I'm one of three delegates for District 15.

Debbie [01:38:10] You were telling us in the beginning some of the other things that you learned from being a CWA leader.

Linda [01:38:16] Yeah. I mentioned door knocking. You know, the organizing part is important. And also bringing people together. Being able to compromise. I love my colleagues in Annapolis for the most part, but there are some that who don't get it. They don't understand how you bring people together and compromise. That's how do you get to an agreement on something. And for legislation, it can't be my way or the highway. You have to compromise even if you don't have Republican opposition, in my case. Still have their interests and you have to figure out -- how do we address their interests without losing the core part of what we want? That's very much like union bargaining or contract bargaining. Learning that was [a] really important skill for me. Also realizing that there's always another day. You can always live to fight another day. You don't have to have all this pressure. The stakes were higher in the union movement. But even in Detroit, we lived to fight another day. And that was a horrible situation. That was a tough one, that strike, and there's no way we won that strike. But we did live to fight another day. There's always tomorrow. That is very relaxing when you think about in this kind of job. [*Laughs*] So there's that. I think another part was --

after being president of The News Guild and being in CWA and being a vice president, working on the media concentration on the national stage -- I came into this with a lot of confidence and understanding. Even if I didn't get elected there's something else. It's not the end of the world.

Debbie [01:40:02] Before we went on tape, you used two other phrases. Risk taking and courage.

Linda [01:40:08] Right. Before I got in the union movement, I was pretty risk averse. Yeah, I was. I had a pretty comfortable life. My parents were very cautious. What the union movement taught me was to take risks. I don't mean physical danger, although there was some of that, but you can take risks and go out on a limb for what you think is important. It doesn't mean you're going to win all the time, but you'll never lose doing that. You'll never lose. As long as you're true to that, you'll never lose. You might not win, but you'll never lose. Being in Annapolis and voting on bills is nothing compared to being on the picket line in Detroit and having people run at you with scab vans. That's a physical thing. Or having to negotiate a contract or rolling the dice to see if you can save the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. The stakes there were so much higher in the union movement even than they are here [Maryland legislature]. Because I'm one of 200 and some people. What I do is not unimportant. It is important, but my effect can only be so much. That's part of the union movement, too, which is we're all together. It's all about community.

Debbie [01:41:47] And courage? Or have you just already answered that?

Linda [01:41:48] I think that's part of it. Not being risk averse, I think takes some courage. It took me a while to get up the courage. It's not like I don't sometimes, at night, say, "What am I doing? Oh my gosh, what am I doing?" But I'm able to calm myself down because, I'm able to say, "Well, yeah, but this wasn't as hard as when we were bargaining in Seattle or when we were trying to get an agreement to go back to work and we misstated what the agreement said." [*Laughs*] That was a whole different thing. Or, "The stakes aren't as high as taking the Guild and merging it with CWA." So it does give you a little bit of courage. I think it's just kind of like at this stage, there's not a lot in my professional career as a legislator that would be catastrophic.

Debbie [01:42:44] When you said that you had been risk averse, and now we've gone through this interview and listened to all of the risks that you took, it's interesting to hear you characterize yourself as having once been risk averse because you took quite a number of jumps.

Linda [01:43:02] I did. I did. Yeah, I did.

Debbie [01:43:07] Jeff, any more questions?

Jeff [01:43:09] No.

Linda [01:43:09] Okay, good.

Debbie [01:43:09] And Linda, anything that you'd like to add at the very end?

Linda [01:43:15] No, I think I talked enough. [*All laugh*] I talked enough.

Debbie [01:43:18] Well, I think that your warmth and your personality and your enjoyment of people definitely comes out through all the stories. If you were talking to a younger person getting involved in the Guild in this environment where being in journalism is such a tough time right now --

Linda [01:43:41] What would I tell them?

Debbie [01:43:42] Yeah.

Linda [01:43:44] Even though it's a really tough time, I think journalism is incredibly important. It's incredibly important work. Most people who go into it feel that way, I think. Because they don't go into it to get rich. So, it's incredibly important work and they need to stick with it because of that. I don't know what form it's going to take in the future and I hope the future's bright. I can't even say that. But I do think that it's important to stick with it because it is important. And I will say this. The unionization of journalists and journalism is incredibly important. You have to be able to stand up for yourself first before you stand up for the afflicted. You're supposed to comfort the afflicted and on the powers that be.

Jeff [01:44:43] And afflict the comfortable.

Linda [01:44:43] And afflict the comfortable. Thank you. Yeah. You can't really do that if you're not standing up for yourself. So you got to stand up for yourself first. The best way to do that, always is a union because you can never do it on your own. These companies are big. Even if they weren't big you couldn't do it on your own. You need your coworkers to be there with you. You need to be able to be together. I would add that you have to work with your colleagues in the union and make sure that you are standing up for yourselves because that's the only way you're going to maintain any standards. There's no pushback other than the union and its members. It is a tough time for it, for journalism, but I think it probably will survive. It just might not look like what it looks like now.