

Communications Workers of America Oral History Project

Interviewee: Shea, Pat

Interviewer: Jeff Rechenbach

Date of Interview: January 9, 2024

Place of Interview: Washington, D.C.

Page Total: 24

A raw transcript of the interview was first produced by machine via Trint.com. The raw transcript was then audited and edited 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.

Jeff [00:00:00] I'm Jeff Reichenbach. We are recording today an interview with Pat Shea. Also present are Debbie Goldman and Hannah Goldman. This is the 9th of January, 2024. Debbie, Pat and Hannah are in Washington, DC, and I'm in Cleveland, Ohio.

Jeff [00:00:36] Where did it begin for you?

Pat [00:00:37] May 19, 1957 in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Jeff [00:00:47] Tell us a little bit about your childhood experiences and what growing up in Worcester was like.

Pat [00:00:51] I grew up about a block and a half from Lake Quinsigamond, which is a three-mile long lake. It's probably only three-quarters of a mile across, but it's long. I grew up in a predominantly Italian-, Irish-American working class neighborhood. Working, lower middle class. We went out in the morning and my mother locked the screen door. We came home when the streetlights went on. No, we had to be home for dinner, then we could go back out. We had to be home when the street lights were on at night. It was a pretty magical childhood. There were lots of kids in the neighborhood. Older kids, younger kids. Everybody took care of each other. Of course we learned how to swim at a very early age because we lived a block and a half from a lake. As soon as we were able to leave the yard, we would go to the lake. It was fun. And I joined a sailing club at the lake when I was 12. The first year it was \$10 for the entire summer. I could sit with lessons and I could sail from 9:00 until 3:00. The early mornings and late afternoons were reserved for adults. We couldn't do the whole three miles of the lake because there was a bridge in between, and the mast of the sailboat couldn't get under the bridge.

Jeff [00:02:35] What kind of town was Worcester back then? What was Worcester known for?

Pat [00:02:38] It was originally known as a manufacturing town. They had shoe factories and rug factories and all kinds of factories all over the place that are now being refurbished into condos and all kinds of stuff. There's a park in Worcester, Elm Park, if I'm not mistaken. That's one of the first big parks in the country. Worcester was founded in the 1700s or something like that. Late 1700s. Robert Goddard grew up in the town next to us. The smiley face was invented in Worcester. The Valentine's Day card was invented in Worcester.

Pat [00:03:36] There was a big abolitionist movement in Worcester. We had an underground railroad, houses where people would stay when they were traveling on the Underground Railroad. It was a neat place to grow up. Lots of Immigrants, lots of Irish immigrants, Italian immigrants, Czechoslovakian, Polish. And there were all these little pockets in the city where we had two Catholic churches literally across the street from each other. One was the French church and one was the Italian church. It was a fun place to grow up.

Jeff [00:04:17] Tell us a little bit about your parents, what did they do for a living?

Pat [00:04:20] My father was initially a salesman. He worked for a company called B.T. Babbitt. They used to make Babbo. Do you remember Babbo? It was like a Comet type substance. And then Babbo folded. And he went to work for New England Power Company. He was a member of IBEW. He was a local officer of the IBEW local in Worcester. My mother was a telephone operator right

out of high school. She, of course, lied about being pregnant with me because they would have made her leave two months early.

Pat [00:05:01] When I was in seventh grade she went back to nursing school. She had five kids. I was in seventh grade. My youngest brothers were twins. She went to nursing school, got her degree in two years and became a nurse and was still working up until the pandemic. She's 86 years-old. She was still working up until the pandemic.

Jeff [00:05:34] What a role model. Was she an IBEW member when she was working at the phone company? Because I think the operators up there were part of the IBEW.

Pat [00:05:44] New England Tel was IBEW. She probably was. One hospital she worked at was a private hospital, and they did not have a union. And then she went to work for a state adult residential facility for adult mentally and physically disabled people. They had a union. So she became a member of the Mass. whatever it is. When she was in the private facility, she was always very hesitant about joining a union as a nurse because in her mind, the patients came first and she couldn't imagine going out on strike and leaving the patients.

Jeff [00:06:34] So was there talk at the dinner table about unions, or was that just part of who they were?

Pat [00:06:40] A little bit. I remember one time when my twin brothers were maybe seven or something. Honest to God it seemed like my father was on strike every year, which he might have been. They might have just had one-year contracts, I don't know. But anyway, IBEW was on strike and my brothers were out walking the dog. And unfortunately, the company was so stupid that they put first line managers to work in their own neighborhoods. So here's this guy that lives up the street, that's the first line, and he's up the telephone pole across the street from our house. The twins went and stood under the telephone pole with the dog and the dogs bark, bark, bark, bark, bark. So the guy was afraid to come down the pole, even though, you know, you clap at the dog, it would run away. (she claps). Somehow he hooked into the telephone lines and called the police. The police come. And there's these two little seven year-old Identical twins (laughs) with their dog on a leash. And of course, the cops in Worcester were organized. So they supported the strikers. My father, of course, is across the street in our house watching this whole thing, laughing his ass off.

Jeff [00:08:05] So really, we can trace the roots of mobilization back to Worcester?

Pat [00:08:10] Yeah. Right, right, right.

Jeff [00:08:13] Yeah. Job actions. Where'd you go to school? Start with elementary, high school.

Pat [00:08:20] I went to public elementary school, public junior high school. And then the high school that I would have gone to was in the middle of racial issues and drug issues and knifing things. And so my parents wouldn't let me go there. So I had a choice of going to either the diocesan Catholic school or there was a private Catholic all-girls high school in the rich part of town. I refused to take the entrance exam for the diocesan school. So I was stuck then with just having to take the entrance exam to the other school, and I was gonna blow it. I went there intentionally with the thought that I would just blow it, but then my pride got the better of me. So I got in and I had to

go there. But it was a wonderful, wonderful experience. Some of my closest friends still to this day are my high school girlfriends. We do a trip every year, long weekend trip .

[00:09:35] Were you raised Catholic?

Pat [00:09:38] Yes. I'm lapsed now.

Jeff [00:09:43] Aren't we all? And then from high school where did you go?

Pat [00:09:49] From high school I went to Holy Cross College, which is in Worcester, so I lived at home. Towards the end of my college career I worked two jobs. I worked at Memorial Hospital, where my mother was a head nurse. I started out in the dietary department.

Pat [00:10:09] Oh, we did a job action there, too. I started out as a dietary aide, putting the food on the trays and delivering trays to people. And then eventually my friend Donna and I, they had us in the summertime, they would put us on as cooks. We would cook the mashed potatoes and the carrots and one day the boss, we were like the pets, me and my friend Donna, we would do anything they wanted to. We'd work like 15 hours a day if they wanted us to because we wanted to make the money. And so the boss called us into his office and said: "You should ask me for cooks' pay when you're cooking." Now he worked for a vendor to the hospital, Silas Corporation. He had to go to HR. And so he goes to HR and they said no. He comes back to us and he says well they said no, I've done all that I could. That Saturday comes or I don't remember if it was a Saturday, and we would normally open the kitchen, we would be there at 5:00 in the morning. I got up about six, and my father and I are sitting at the kitchen table, but we didn't go to work. We were on the schedule during the day as cooks and then from 4 to 7 delivering trays or something. People start calling the house about quarter to six when the other people start getting in. They're like, where's Patty and Donna? The kitchen's dark and, you know, nobody's making oatmeal. My father answers the phone and he says, well, they went to the beach. They went to the beach last night, and they're at the beach today, but they'll be back for their 4:00 shift. So the day goes by, 4:00 comes, we go up to the hospital, we walk in and the boss does one of these (gestures to come in) and there's a big window outside his office. We go in his office and he says, you know, he's the one who told us (laughs), ask me for cooks' pay. But, you know. We all play the game. We know he's got to be stern. Where were you guys this morning? Blah blah, blah, blah, blah. He said: you were on the schedule. We said: why would we be here this morning? The schedule's right outside your office where we're on the schedule for four. He said, well, you were on the cook schedule, which is in a whole different place in the kitchen. We said:, why would we look at the cook's schedule? We're not cooks. Anyway, they went the whole day, everything was screwed up for the whole day. Then he went back to HR and they ended up paying us cooks' pay, which was like a \$3 an hour difference. They couldn't figure out how to pay us cooks' pay when we cooked, but when we did dietary aides stuff pay us \$3 less an hour. So they paid us for the whole summer and into October as cooks (laughs). We thought we were like millionaires we were making so much money.

Jeff [00:13:30] Power to the people.

Pat [00:13:31] Yeah, right.

Jeff [00:13:34] What did you major in at Holy Cross?

Pat Shea Interview – January 9, 2024

Pat [00:13:36] Political science. And then minored in history.

Jeff [00:13:44] Doesn't every political science major minor in history?

Pat [00:13:47] I think so.

Jeff [00:13:51] After college, where'd you go next?

Pat [00:13:52] After college, I went to Catholic University law school here in D.C. I moved down here in 1979 to start law school. I got an apartment with two of my high school girlfriends. One was going to Gallaudet, the other was going to Catholic University social work school. We lived in Hyattsville, which was about four miles from DC. I would hop on the bus and go down the street and go to Catholic University for law school. Once I moved down here for law school, I never went back. I went back to visit and stuff, but never moved back.

Jeff [00:14:35] The choice of Catholic University, was it because your friends were going to DC or....

Pat [00:14:39] No, it was because it was in DC. I applied to all the schools in DC. Georgetown was a little pricey. Catholic had a big union-side labor curriculum, and they still do. I knew I wanted to do either labor law or pull-the-plug health law. But when I realized that there's very few pull-the-plug cases that mostly what you end up doing is Medicare reimbursement (laughs), I said, let's leave that alone and do labor studies.

Jeff [00:15:19] Tell me more about Catholic University and your labor law studies there.

Pat [00:15:25] The first year at Catholic was the first year since I turned 16 that I didn't work at least one job because I thought, okay, I have no idea what I'm getting myself into. I won't work. I'll just study. And that summer came, and I hated the law. I hated law professors. I didn't want anything... So I took a job as a waitress that summer, and I made oodles of money and volunteered at the Women's Legal Defense Fund to kind of get my legal experience.

Pat [00:16:08] That was 79 into 80. Second year law school comes in September of 80 and in January of 81, Adair, Scanlon, McHugh, the law firm that used to be general counsel to CWA, posted an ad. I happened to be in the Career Services department when it came in, so I heard her talking to them, and I applied for the job, as did many of my other students, because labor law was a big deal at Catholic. I got the job largely because I think they didn't have any women. And of course, they were dealing with Dina [Beaumont] and Barbara Easterling and Patsy Fryman and people like that who are in the top echelon of CWA. So I think they wanted to hire a woman.

Jeff [00:17:14] So this is after graduation.

Pat [00:17:15] No, this is while I'm still in school. And then I worked between 25 and 30 hours a week for the rest of my career in law school. When I graduated in the summer or spring of 1982, Adair, Scanlon and McHugh offered me a position as an associate. I was an associate there. I've never worked for... Well, I've done a few cases for other clients, but I've always worked at CWA. I mean, my first job was at 1925 K [Street NW in Washington DC]. Then we moved to 501 Third [Street NW in Washington DC].

Pat [00:18:00] I was offered a job in the summer of 1982. I became a partner in the law firm in 1987. In 1985 when Louis Knecht and Glenn Watts retired. [Glenn Watts was CWA president, 1974-1985. Louis Knecht was CWA secretary-treasurer 1974-1985. He was Native-American.] Morty [Bahr] and Jim Booe became president and secretary-treasurer, respectively, and they decided they did not want the overhead of a law firm structure there. So the law firm dissolved in January of 1988. Most of us became independent contractors.

Pat [00:18:42] Pat Scanlon became the acting general counsel for a while. Then once he was made the general counsel, he became the only CWA lawyer that was employed by CWA, except Ann Hoffman, who wasn't really... She had been a district one lawyer, but when Morty hired or rehired her she was an administrative assistant.

Debbie [00:19:07] Can I jump in with one question? Why did you choose to go to law school and why focus on labor law?

Pat [00:19:18] I chose to go to law school because I watched too much Perry Mason as a kid. I just thought it was really a cool thing to do. I also was kind of contrarian. I wanted to do something that most little girls didn't do. I chose labor law because of my family background in labor law. My great uncle was at one point the vice president of the state Fed. Worcester has a long, long, long history of unionism and everybody's union in Worcester. And, I just wanted to help people.

Pat [00:20:10] One of my favorite cases. I'd been a lawyer for maybe six years or something, and I was assigned a case out of the Boston Printers local. And this guy, his wife had died. He worked the night shift. His wife had died. He took the three days off that the contract allowed for, went back to work. And he was having a really hard time one night at work and he asked his boss, could he go home? The boss said, no. He left anyway, so they fired him. It was a small printer, small private printer. We were going to take his case to arbitration. His daughter was in law school, and she calls me and she says, I'll help you. I'm thinking, oh, shit. Now she's going to second guess everything I do. But she was actually very helpful. She researched all the arbitrators for me. I gave her grunt work to do. She was very helpful though. I go up for the prep a couple days before the hearing and she gets up to go to the ladies room and her father says to me, I don't want to arbitrate. I'd rather settle this because I don't want my daughter to have to sit there and go through listening to what I went through when my wife was dying. Then she comes back. The father, gets up to use the bathroom. She says the same thing to me. I don't want my father to have to go through this and relieve this. So I call the company lawyer. They agree to settle. He already had a job, a new job with the Boston Globe making more money. So they agreed to settle. The company was just about going out of business, so they couldn't settle all at once. I think the lawyer recognized that they were going to lose. This was such a heart wrenching case. So he agrees to settle for the full back pay, but it would have to be paid in installments, a third, a third, and a third over the course of three months. Guy agrees to that, and ultimately he did get paid the whole thing. The weekend comes and I spend the weekend up in Worcester. Then I come back and on Monday morning there's this big bouquet of flowers that they had sent me, and it was just, I don't know, just tugged at my heart for some reason.

Jeff [00:23:02] Does this predate the [CWA] merger with the printers?

Pat [00:23:04] No, it was after that. They joined CWA in 1987.

Pat Shea Interview – January 9, 2024

Jeff [00:23:14] Talk about that moment in time, the late 80s. You're at the Scanlon law firm. You make partner in 87, 88, the firm's dissolved.

Pat [00:23:27] They blamed me because I was the only woman partner.

Jeff [00:23:30] Right, right. Pat [Scanlon] becomes the de facto general counsel and then general counsel. Does Tom Adair do District Three work?

Pat [00:23:43] No. He retired. He had done District Three work.

Jeff [00:23:46] Okay.

Pat [00:23:48] Tom was actually instrumental in writing CWA's first constitution. I have notes from the Tamiment Library [at New York University] in Tom's handwriting.

Jeff [00:24:00] Oh, wow. That's very cool. And what happens to you at this point? You said you became an independent contractor.

Pat [00:24:10] Took a cut in pay. Lost my insurance. It was pretty, pretty miserable and I always thought CWA was extremely, extremely hypocritical for doing that. But on the other hand, I had my oldest son in 1987, my daughter in 89, and my youngest son in 91. And in order to meet the Independent contractor test, they can't tell you, you have to be to work at 9:00 and work until five, and you have to work Monday through Friday. In fact, they really can't tell you anything about how and when to do the job. Just this job needs to be done. When my kids had doctor's appointments, I'd take half a day off. When my kids had dentist appointments, I'd take half a day off. So, you know, it kind of worked out for me a little bit.

Pat [00:25:15] About three years into it, even though we, my husband and I, were both professionals, we were making maybe \$25,000 a year, which back then wasn't that much money. We finally bought a house and sold a house and so we had somebody do our taxes. Glen had a friend who was an architect who was married to a CPA. Glen's my husband. So the CPA did our taxes, and he was like, why aren't you in a SEP, a self-employed pension plan? And we were like, we can't afford it. And he said, okay, you can either pay the government \$5,000 in taxes or you can pay \$8,000, some of it to the SEP, some of it to the government, but \$5000 of it will be yours. When he explained it that way, we pinched the pennies and started doing it. So when I retired in addition to the CWA pension plan, I had a healthy nest egg from my self-employed pension plan.

Jeff [00:26:39] Were you domiciled in the building as an independent contractor?

Pat [00:26:46] My secretary was an employee.

Jeff [00:26:49] An employee of CWA?

Pat [00:26:50] Yes. My secretary was an employee.

Pat [00:26:52] All my equipment was provided by CWA. Back then we didn't have computers, but my phone, my office, my desk, all that. The only thing that wasn't CWA was me.

Pat Shea Interview – January 9, 2024

Jeff [00:27:07] When does it transition from you being an independent contractor to ultimately becoming an employee of CWA?

Pat [00:27:14] That happened in 2007.

Jeff [00:27:17] Oh, wow. That long? I had no idea.

Pat [00:27:19] Yeah, we were the laughing stock of the union bar legal community in DC for many, many years. Mary O'Melveney made that her first mission when she became general counsel in 2005.

Jeff [00:27:39] Good for her.

Pat [00:27:42] And again, we took another cut in pay when that happened.

Jeff [00:27:47] But you got benefits.

Pat [00:27:48] We got benefits. Right.

Jeff [00:27:54] Let's focus on your CWA time then, and talk about some of the different types of assignments that you've done over the years. When you first started working at the Scanlon firm, what kind of things did they give you to do?

Pat [00:28:11] When I first started working, they would give me research. I remember the very first memo I ever wrote to Patrick was on the Vietnam Veterans Reemployment Act. A guy by the name of Hubert Pierson had written a memo to Scanlon asking him some question. So I did the research and I wrote a letter to Hubert, Dear Hubert. Patrick didn't notice that I had said, Dear Hubert, and so he signed it. Hubert wasn't called Hubert. He was called Beeman Pierson.

Pat [00:28:59] They would give me research assignments pretty early on, after I'd been a lawyer for like two years, they started me doing arbitration cases, mostly attendance cases, because you weren't ever going to win an attendance case so it didn't matter if the young lawyer screwed it up. Then I ended up doing a lot of AT&T cases, manufacturing, sales, installation a little later in my career.

Pat [00:29:36] In 1983, local officer elections came around and we started getting appeals. Neither Patrick nor Jim Copess, who was the other lawyer in the office at the time, or anybody knew all that much about local elections. So they started giving me appeals. Here, figure this out. I started learning internal election law and as a result of working on elections, I ended up working a lot with one of my favorite mentors, Dina Beaumont.

Jeff [00:30:30] I'm going to get to Dina in a while. That's a big part of what I'm trying to capture. Tell me a little bit about some of those cases, any interesting turns or experiences working on those particular cases?

Pat [00:30:49] I remember one out of [Local] 1101 [in New York City.] Al Ruggiero. You'll remember that name. Al was a part of the executive board, but he wasn't part of the in team. So the Executive board put out a calendar two months before the election. They put up this local calendar

with all the executive boards' names on it, but they didn't put Al's name on it. (laughs). And that was the election appeal that came to us.

Pat [00:31:24] Jewel White and Gail Gray, you'll know those names. [Local] 5050 I think. I worked on their election appeal. Jewel White was a piece of work. She threw everything in the kitchen sink and still lost. My very first convention in, I think, 1990, I got to meet Gail Gray. I was like, oh, I worked on your election case years ago. I can't remember early on any other cases that that raised novel issues or anything.

Pat [00:32:17] I did work on the Pisha, Sunkett, Bixler rerun elections.

Jeff [00:32:27] Talk a little bit about that. I mean that was quite a moment in CWA history.

Pat [00:32:32] Right. They were elected in 1991. CWA does not have any internal appeals process for national officer elections. And so they went to the Department of Labor.

Jeff [00:32:52] Who went to the Department of Labor?

Pat [00:32:54] Adrian Taylor who had run against Brook Sunkett. Janice Wood had won the first election, so Tony Bixler was the one that went to the DOL and I can't remember who ran against Pisha. But anyway, [Districts] Nine, Seven and the Public Workers had to be redone.

Jeff [00:33:30] But basically the three defeated candidates in the first election went to the Department of Labor.

[00:33:37] Yes. And back then we had an accounting firm. I don't know why unions used accounting firms to do elections, but we had an accounting firm that did the election. And back then they had manual physical ballots that people would write the name of the candidate on and the ballot would contain their voting strength, handwritten by the judge of elections.

Jeff [00:34:09] Explain voting strength for those that don't know what that is.

Pat [00:34:13] Voting strength in the CWA Constitution, each delegate to the CWA convention is entitled to a certain voting strength. That is the total membership of the local, based on a formula for five months before the convening of the convention, the number of paid dues units, not paid members, paid dues units, and each delegate gets an equal share. So if the local has a thousand delegates, a thousand votes, and they send five delegates, each delegate would get 200 votes with the chair of the delegation, usually the local president, getting the odd number of votes. That's the voting strength. In this case, the delegate was given the ballot with their voting strength written on the bottom of it, and they voted and folded the ballot in half and then gave it back to the tellers of election and the tellers of election opened the ballot to make sure that the number hadn't been tampered with while the person who voted that ballot was standing in front of them. It voided the secrecy of the ballot, which was required at that time for national officers under the CWA constitution, not under the law.

Pat [00:35:56] The DOL decided it had to be rerun. Morty [Bahr] consulted with all three candidates. All three candidates said, let's just do it and get it over with. And so we did. In the public worker race, we had an issue. The Mississippi Alliance of State Employees did not pay full

1.3 dues. They paid some lesser amount. At that time, we prorated the number of delegate votes that the entire local got to two fully paid dues units. So the local only got like I can't remember the numbers, but say they had 1000 members, but they only had 750 fully paid dues units. They only got 750 votes for purposes of voting strength, and the Department of Labor did not like that at all. But I was able to work out a deal with the head of the chief of enforcement at the time, that we had to beat the spread. Kind of like a football card. If you can beat the spread, you win. Brooks [Sunkett] ended up beating the spread, so he won.

Jeff [00:37:29] These elections take place generally at a convention. How did the rerun election take place then?

Pat [00:37:36] The rerun election took place by mail ballot. It was a pain in the ass. We created monopoly money with denominations of one, five, ten, 25, 50, 100 and the Department of Labor agreed to...they kind of did a spot check of our locals to make sure that they had, in fact, elected their delegates appropriately. We had some Canadian locals that, of course, the US Department of Labor had no jurisdiction over. They asked us to do a random check and just make sure that they had followed the rules as well. And so we did that. And then every time we printed the monopoly money, the Department of Labor person would come over and stand down in the print shop and watch us print the monopoly money and count how many had been printed of each denomination and bundle it up. And then she would take it with her. We mailed them out. Individual delegates got an envelope with a ballot, multiple ballots because they got all these monopoly money ballots. They mailed them back in to the Department of Labor and then we counted them. We counted the public workers in DC. Pisha's was counted in Denver and Bixler was counted in San Francisco or LA, but they were all counted the same day. I was traipsing across the country that day, following all the votes. I don't know how it happened. I still to this day have no idea. We're in California counting the Bixler/Wood ballots. Everybody had given up their cell phones when we walked in the room. Cell phones were still fairly new back then. As soon as the vote was over, nobody was allowed to leave the room yet except for me so I could call Morty [Bahr]. Morty already knew. I don't know how, who called him. I don't know how they got to him, because nobody except the people in the room knew for a fact who had won. And Morty already knew. So somebody did something. I don't know what.

Jeff [00:40:27] Let's talk about some of the folks that you've interacted with in leadership positions at CWA over the years and hold back on Dina a little bit because I want to spend a significant amount of time talking about your relationship with her. But, some of the others that you've worked with over the years.

Pat [00:40:45] I've worked with every president except Joe Beirne. I remember I don't even know if I was a lawyer yet, Glen Watts called down. He wanted to know what the status of the 4309 versus 4306 lawsuit was which you'll remember. I'm not sure if it was the Rechenbach v or the Reimer v or the 4306 v, but he wanted to know what the status of that case was. Tom wasn't in the office that day. Patrick was out in a meeting, and I was the only other one who knew anything about that case. And so secretary buzzes me and says, Mr. Watts is on the phone and wants to talk to you. And I'm like, Holy shit. I wanted to crawl under my desk because I was afraid to talk to the president of the union. But I worked with and for some people [who] were part of the founding generation of CWA, like Billy Webb. Billy Webb was an assistant to Louis Knecht. Fred Hanson, Gloria Shepherdson. Barbara Easterling, when she was in an assistant to the president. Dina was then assistant to the president. Patsy Fryman was an assistant to the president. Jimmy Gee was an

Pat Shea Interview – January 9, 2024

assistant to Knecht. Johnny Carroll, John Kulstad, Jim Booe. Carroll, Booe, Billy Webb. Those were all the founding generation. You hear about Joe Beirne mostly, but those guys were around back then, too. Pretty much from 1982 or 83 forward. I've worked with everybody.

Jeff [00:43:01] You're in something of a unique position in that you worked relatively closely with five national presidents of CWA. Can I ask you to critique each of their leadership styles?

Pat [00:43:20] Their leadership styles?

Jeff [00:43:21] Yeah.

Pat [00:43:27] Morty [Bahr] was very measured. He would think things out sometimes before whatever happened really even happened. He would already know what he was going to do if x, y, z happened. And he would talk it out with his assistants before he made a decision. Of course, Morty was...How many years was he president? 20, 100 or something? No, he was president from 2005 until 2015. I'm sorry, not 2005, 1985 until 2005.

Jeff [00:44:26] Right.

Pat [00:44:27] Then Larry [Cohen] came in 2005. He was president from 2005 to 2015. Then Chris [Shelton] became president from 2015 until 2022. [DG correction, 2023]. And then Claude [Cummings] was elected.

Pat [00:44:48] Larry was Larry. I do not know how he made his decisions. Quite honestly, I was probably the closest to Chris just because we kind of grew up together (in CWA) and in CWA some people used to call me the Chris Whisperer because they'd say, what do you think Chris'll do? When I tell them what I thought Chris would do, 99.9% of the time, I'd be right.

Jeff [00:45:34] And by then you're general counsel at some point during

Pat [00:45:39] At some point during Chris' tenure.

Jeff [00:45:45] What about some of the other counsel that you've worked with, both general and those that were peers at the time, I guess.

Pat [00:45:55] I like to say that I've had three main mentors at CWA. Pat Scanlon, who taught me the law, Dina Beaumont, who taught me how to be Machiavellian, and Jim Irvine, who taught me how to listen to local officers and how to have fun. You know, you've worked hard all day, you could play hard at night as long as you were where you were supposed to be at the time you were supposed to be the next day ready to work hard again. I can't really think of anybody who could have three better mentors than that.

Jeff [00:46:42] By the way, I have lunch with Jim every Saturday. I will make sure and tell him that we've done this today.

Pat [00:46:52] They sometimes call me or they used to when it was Eddie [Phillips] and Jim and Hugh Walsh and Sal. They would call me occasionally.

Jeff [00:47:06] I don't think Sal ever went to lunch with us.

Pat [00:47:12] There were four of them, I thought.

Jeff [00:47:18] Anyway, we digress. You're in the sweet spot of what we're trying to capture here in this oral history project of ours from the 80s up until the 2020 churn and the changes that happened both in the industries that we represent and then within the union itself. So first, talk a little bit about any thoughts about the industries and how those have changed and what that meant for the union over that time.

Pat [00:48:08] Of course. Technology just exploded and keeps exploding exponentially. The biggest impact that obviously had on our union was decreasing our numbers substantially. But I think that some of what that also did was we started doing stuff like CWA NETT, training people and negotiating contract clauses where the new jobs of the future were filled by old time technology people who were trained for new jobs. CWA and its locals started doing training. CWA technicians that had taken a systems tech job or a service tech job would jot down what they could remember of the tests after the tests, and locals would create a training program to help their members to realize their potential and study up and learn what the job was going to be. I think that was largely a part of the changes in technology that kept happening and continue to happen. It made CWA become leaner and meaner. We didn't have the luxury of [unintelligible] [00:49:52] or inviting foreign guests to our convention, or giving out Steuben ware glassware to every visitor to the convention. We just didn't have that kind of money anymore.

Pat [00:50:12] It also changed in some ways the culture of CWA. For example, when I started CWA, Tom Adair, as the general counsel, recommended that we start the system of district counsel to handle arbitration cases. The thought initially was that we'd hire young kids right out of law school or a year or two out of law school. They'd try arbitration cases for a year or two, and then they'd move on, and we wouldn't have to pay them that much money because they were brand new and it didn't work out like that because many of them stayed forever and a day. But they did all the arbitrations, staff didn't do arbitrations back then and ultimately when we started tightening our belts and it was like, we can't arbitrate every case. Now we have to have staff start arbitrating some of these cases which staff was very resistant to at first. I remember going to convention and they all had buttons on. Lela Foreman was driving Dina [Beaumont] and me back to the hotel, and a staff person wanted a ride back, but he had a “no arbitration” staff union button or something on. Dina said, not with that button. He took it off for the price of a ride back to the hotel.

Jeff [00:51:58] So much for your principles.

Pat [00:52:01] Right.

Debbie [00:52:01] Do you remember when this was.

Pat [00:52:07] I don't remember. But I didn't start going to conventions until 1990. So maybe around 88, 89 was when they started assigning arbitration cases to non-lawyers.

Jeff [00:52:21] That seems about right.

Pat [00:52:29] And then the mergers of everybody with CWA.

Jeff [00:52:34] You just anticipated my next question to talk a little bit about managing those mergers. Obviously legal gets involved with that, all the machinations that go on to bring two unions together.

Pat [00:52:49] The former ITU [International Typographical Union] was the first one, and that happened in 1987. I can remember. I reviewed the ITU constitution to compare it to the CWA constitution to determine what they would have to change and what we would have to change in our constitution. I remember Larry Cohen, who at the time I believe was the director of organizing. He called me up and he said, can you come up here and talk to us about some of these things you've written in this memo. I said, sure. I go up and Bill Boarman's in the room. Bill Boarman is the guy that we're negotiating with, and Larry starts asking me questions about my opinion. I'm like, you want me to talk about this in front of the guy we're negotiating with? I don't understand, but... ITU was first and then, I think, NABET [National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians], AFA [Association of Flight Attendants], The Guild [The Newspaper Guild], and IUE [International Union of Electrical Workers] was the last.

Pat [00:54:15] And we had our own sectors, if you will. We didn't call them that. But there was the public workers initially and there was AT&T. AT&T initially had four directors what ultimately became Jim Irvine's job had four directors. There was a national director for installation, manufacturing, sales and Long lines. Long Lines and those four people had a voice but no vote on the executive board. There was no vice president for AT&T at that point. There was the public workers who had a director. I don't think he even had a voice on the board initially. In 1984, the public workers and AT&T sectors got together and they pushed a constitutional amendment making Irvine and Allen vice presidents over ATTIS and ATTCOM, respectively.

Debbie [00:55:41] AT&T Information Services.

Pat [00:55:43] AT&T Information System which would have been Ron Allen. Jim Irvine was Comtech which it was at the time. That passed in 1984. In 1985, they got together again and they passed the public worker VP. I don't think either unit could have done it alone. They decided that trying to do 3 in 1 year was too many. So they staggered them, but they got it done.

Jeff [00:56:19] Can you talk a little bit about that tumultuous time with the AT&T Information Systems and AT&T communications having vice presidents, but it was a dicey time.

Pat [00:56:36] It was a dicey time. And I remember [00:56:38] Florene Koole who [1.5s] was Johnny Carroll's assistant. She had to put, I think it was 37 contracts together to create the ATTIS contract. And every contract had its sacred cows that nobody could get rid of this provision or that provision. She had to try to merge them all into one ATTIS agreement. It took probably a good 18 months to get that done. But they got it done. Over the years I've heard virtually everybody say that Johnny Carroll was the best negotiator CWA ever had. And what people have told me he used to do was he'd say, well, this language means x, y, and z, and the company would say no, no, no it means ABC. Later on, this language means x, y, z. No no, no, it means ABC. He'd just keep at that until he finally wore them down and they'd finally say okay, it's x, y, z.

Pat [00:57:58] That was a trying time for Florene especially. Of course Allen and Irvine were like two peas in a pod. One would lie and the other would swear to it. They had a unique partnership,

they really did. They were like best friends and they complemented one another well. They were crazy both of them were crazy, but they complemented one another.

Pat [00:58:34] By the time the next round of elections came along, they had decided that having two vice presidents in the AT&T world was too many. So they led the charge to merge those two V.P. positions into one position, which Irvine took and then Allen became his assistant until Morty stole him from Jim.

Debbie [00:59:01] Why were there 47 contracts under what became the AT&T Information Systems?

Pat [00:59:12] 37. Because each Bell Operating Company had its own individual contract that had people who were ultimately going into ATTIS. At divestiture, AT&T kept information systems. So all of that had to come out of the Bell Operating Company contracts. That's right, isn't it Jeff?

Jeff [00:59:36] That's right. So people from Ohio Bell, from Michigan Bell, and each one of those had their own contracts. New England Tel, they all wound up in this ATTIS group and had to figure out how to bring all of these contracts together. It led to some tense moments at conventions and leading up to conventions as well.

Pat [01:00:00] Right, because of the sacred cows.

Debbie [01:00:05] Whereas the AT&T Communications [contract] came out of the Long Lines contract and therefore you didn't have to have the separate Bell contracts merged. Is that the difference?

Pat [01:00:23] It's a little bit of the difference except that like manufacturing, installation, sales, they continued to have their own separate contracts. And then you had the ATTCOM contract, which was essentially the old Long Lines contract, and then operator services for a while continued to have its own agreement until they finally put it as an appendix under the old Long Lines contract.

Debbie [01:00:53] The ATTCOM contract?

Pat [01:00:54] The ATTCOM contract. Right.

Jeff [01:00:57] There was an existing Long Lines contract versus on the ATTIS side there was no sort of existing contract that the people came into. So some of the folks that did wind up going from a Bell Operating Company into ATTCOM were just sort of absorbed into this existing contract. That didn't happen on the other side of the equation.

Pat [01:01:21] Right.

Jeff [01:01:25] Let's talk about your relationship with Dina Beaumont and some of the experiences you had working with her. She was at the center of almost everything that took place within CWA over that 30 plus years I would guess. Right?

Pat [01:01:49] Of me working with Dina? Dina was already in DC. She was already the executive assistant to President Watts.

Jeff [01:01:58] This is Dina Beaumont. She'd been a vice president out in California district.

Pat [01:02:03] District 11.

Jeff [01:02:03] She brought in a group that she had or helped organize, and they merged into CWA and created a district out of that group.

Pat [01:02:14] Yes. She was the president of her little group of primarily operators. [DG note: it was not so little. There were 10,000.] She merged with CWA and they created district 11, which was essentially Southern California. All the operator services in Southern California, plus everybody else in Southern California. Dina became the vice president in Southern California. She as the first female VP, I believe, though we had a female division director prior to that. When CWA first started, divisions were, like each little independent telephone company or not independent in the way we think of it, but each Bell Operating Company, an independent company, had its own division director. So there were like 30 some of them. Then in the early 70s, I think it was, they went from divisions to districts and consolidated all that power.

Debbie [01:03:40] And that's when it became an all-male bastion?

Pat [01:03:45] It had been an all-male bastion. Well, pretty much. There had been one [female] director.

Pat [01:03:54] Anyway, she was a tornado. She was a powerhouse. When she retired, somebody gave her a United States Constitution. I went out to visit her one time and she had it on a table next to her couch, and she would open it up and read it. She had a mind like a steel trap. She would forget things, even early on. Once the problem was resolved, it left her head. She was like okay, I don't have room for that in my head anymore, so I'm going to just let it go. There were a few things, like an opponent which never left her head. She was a force to be reckoned with. And somehow, I don't know how she did this, but somehow she knew which...We addressed all kinds of appeals that came to the president's office, arbitration appeals, internal appeals, charges, election appeals, complaints. Somehow she knew which ones Morty would want to review himself. And sometimes, Morty would take a different position than the legal department had taken, more than Dina had taken. Inevitably, Morty always ended up being right.

Jeff [01:05:36] Good answer.

Pat [01:05:39] I think he understood the politics of it. Certainly better than I did.

Pat [01:05:51] When Dina moved from California to D.C., she stayed on California time until the day she retired she was still on California time. She would get into the office around ten, 10:30. But she would be there until ten, 10:30 at night because she'd be taking calls from California. At night was when she had her quiet time, after everybody would leave the office and she'd pour herself a scotch and sit there at her desk and...I remember getting a call at like 5:00 saying, can you call back? I'd go up there and again before cell phones. I can remember my husband calling the office and he knew Dina's extension. He would just call Dina's office because he would figure if I didn't get home by 6:30, I was probably up with Dina. And he was probably right.

Jeff [01:06:55] Can you talk about some of the more interesting cases you might have worked on with her.

Pat [01:07:10] I've worked with the appeals committee at convention, as you know Jeff, for years and years and years.

Debbie [01:07:16] Explain what the appeals committee is.

Pat [01:07:17] The Appeals Committee at Convention is a committee that's put together by the president's office. The executive board approves the committee. It's a committee of five people who address all appeals that are coming before the convention. And they actually physically go through each file, page by page by page, and make a determination as to whether the executive board should be upheld or should be overturned. They do overturn the board on occasion. These are cases appealing the executive board decision not to bring something to arbitration. They could be anything; there could be arbitration appeals not just not to bring a case to arbitration, they could be election appeals in which we said this election should be run or this guy won or that guy won. They could be internal complaints. Somebody files a complaint against Jeff as the VP of the district. Somebody files a complaint against a staff person, which we wouldn't let them do under the Constitution, but... Charges. Somebody crosses a picket line and we file charges. Somebody files charges against him, and they get expelled. Could be any number of cases.

Pat [01:08:47] Dina kind of oversaw the appeals. When the appeals were pretty much done and ready to go to print, which was usually Monday night, the staff who was staffing the appeals committee would bring the drafts up to Dina's room at midnight. I can remember one Sunday night before convention, I was at the welcome reception. I had just gotten to the welcome reception. Dave Palmer was the staff, and he brought the decisions up to Dina, and he calls me. I had just ordered my first glass of wine. He calls me and says, you better come up here. I go up to Dina's office and it was freezing in her room and I had just like short sleeves on. She gives me her bathrobe to put on over my whatever I had on. She had a suite and were sitting at the dining room table, which was glass. Dave Palmer starts arguing with her about something, and I'm kicking Dave under the table, because we'll be here for five hours if you start arguing with Dina. I go back to my room, I change whatever she wanted changed, and then Dave calls me the next morning at like 6:30 and says I gave her the changes. She wants it changed back. I was like, okay, just change it back.

Pat [01:10:28] I can remember being up with her at midnight in her room, where she would get different delegates together, trying to resolve some dispute before it hit the floor of the convention. I worked on some of the most sensitive things with her like complaints against vice presidents, complaints or charges against local presidents. Marty Hughes (laughs). We had a locked office in the legal department that contained all the discovery in the Marty Hughes case.

Debbie [01:11:25] Do you want to say anything more about that on tape?

Pat [01:11:30] Marty Hughes was a CWA vice president who was charged by the Department of Labor with violating the Day Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act. He was ultimately found guilty, and he was pardoned by President Clinton on Clinton's last day of office.

Debbie [01:11:52] What was national CWA's position?

Pat [01:11:56] CWA national executive board as a body publicly supported Marty Hughes. But the Department of Labor was requesting information from us, like vouchers and Marty's expense reports and checks we had paid to him, COPE [Committee on Political Education] checks we had paid to various politicians that he supported and was recommending CWA donate to. We had to provide all that stuff to the Department of Labor. And like I said, we had a locked closet in the CWA legal department.

Debbie [01:12:43] So that was the legal department's role. You were not defending his...

Pat [01:12:48] No, no, no. Neither CWA nor the legal department were actively involved in the case. Some of the officers had to be witnesses in the case and some were deposed. But CWA had no active role in the litigation.

Debbie [01:13:07] What year was this?

Pat [01:13:14] We were still on K Street. So prior to 1991. Was that when we moved to 501 Third [St NW]?

Jeff [01:13:28] I think it was the mid to late 80s, mid 80s.

Pat [01:13:32] Yeah, because I had my youngest in 1991. I didn't have to help move because I was seven months pregnant.

Jeff [01:13:45] Some people do anything.

Pat [01:13:46] I know, I know.

Jeff [01:13:53] It just seems like everything interesting and challenging that occurred within CWA at some point or another came across Dina's desk when she was in a large part Glenn's [Watts] fixer and then Morty's [Bahr] fixer. So all the trouble spots she had her fingers on.

Pat [01:14:22] And if it came across her desk, it came across my desk pretty much.

Jeff [01:14:29] Talk about some of those.

Pat [01:14:33] I used to call myself the assistant to the assistant to the president. Elections were always controversial. National officer elections. Traditionally in CWA, if you're an officer of a district, you don't get involved in the other district's politics, at least not openly. It's no secret Dina was a big supporter of Tony Bixler. She was in the middle of that fight. The Bixler/Janice [Wood] wars. But I have to say she held Tony to the same standards when he got elected the second round as she held Janice to. If she thought Tony was doing something wrong, she'd call him up and yell at him. If she thought Janice was doing something wrong, she'd call her up and yell at her.

Pat [01:16:05] If we'd call a staff to ask a question about an election appeal or some kind of internal appeal we had going, they'd be petrified to talk to her because she would drill down to the tiniest, minutest point. I remember Jeff Miller. She always reviewed the CWA News before it went out. Jeff Miller was at the time the communications director, and he used to put together the CWA News, which is the newspaper that went out periodically to CWA membership. And I remember him

telling me one time she changed a comma to a semicolon. How she knew what the difference was, I don't know, but that's how detail oriented she would get.

Pat [01:17:05] She could see the big picture. One thing she did before she came to DC was she signed off on the GTE contract without putting it out for ratification. She signed off in the face of a bargaining team that was not going to recommend ratification. She was vice president at the time. She took a ton of heat for that. I was just talking to somebody the other day about this. She didn't think she had a choice because she thought they had gotten as far as they were going to get. She knew that if the bargaining team didn't recommend ratification, it wouldn't get ratified. There were rumors that there was maybe a decert [decertification] effort in the background going on. So she did it. And she took the lumps and the punches and everything else that went along with making that kind of a decision. She wasn't afraid to be a leader and make hard decisions and roll with the punches of it.

Debbie [01:18:29] I want to add one anecdote about Dina, who also was a mentor to the research department. She very much mentored George Kohl in the research department as well. He talked about that. One of my assignments was to go to the annual commercial marketing or what became renamed the customer service conference. Dina represented Morty there. She would sit at the bar and local leaders, from stewards to local presidents would come up to talk to her about a problem they were having. She would never give them the answer. She would just keep asking questions and in essence, model for them and teach them how to think through a problem. Especially she would ask them, what is the employer's interest in this? Think like they do. That will help you think about how you can get a solution. She would do that hours and hours on end. I wanted to add that anecdote because you're talking about how she solved constitutional and electoral problems. She also cared a lot about mentoring and developing local leadership and stewards representing the members. One other anecdote, which is why she was so loyal as an executive assistant. Morty was supposed to deliver a keynote at one of these conferences, and he wasn't able to come. Dina had his speech, and she came to me and said, I'm going to have to deliver the speech for him. And naively, I said to her, well, Dina, you know what you would want to say. Why don't you give your speech? She said, no, this is Morty's speech. Back to you, Jeff.

Jeff [01:20:53] I'll toss my little Dina as well. You mentioned earlier about staff being petrified when she would call, and it was because she would ask questions, and we never knew for sure if she knew the answer before she asked. So, you know, there have been some staff that have been known to color stories.

Pat [01:21:14] Well, and I'm sure you remember going up to her room delivering the appeals when you staffed the appeals committee.

Jeff [01:21:22] Absolutely.

Pat [01:21:23] When Jeff first became a vice president... We were on the podium. I said, Jeff, you're going to become the first vice president who still has a staff assignment at convention.

Jeff [01:21:35] Not me. I was happy to pass that one on. Anything else about Dina and any other recollections that you want to share with us? One of the reasons we're doing this is, CWA did some oral histories back in the 70s, and then we haven't done it since. We've missed out on a lot of really important leadership in the union to capture some of their stories.

Pat [01:22:06] I told Debbie, I remember them doing a similar project in the early to mid [19]80s. People like Glenn Watts, Billy Webb, John Carroll, maybe Nichols, I'm pretty sure were interviewed. Lela Foreman was probably interviewed, long term staff and elected people. I don't know who did it or what happened to them.

Jeff [01:22:43] Any other recollections about other leaders you might have interacted with that won't be able to tell their own stories?

Pat [01:22:53] Nick Nichols was a piece of work. Whenever I would talk to him, he'd say, well, I slept since then. We'd be dealing through an issue over the week before, and I've slept since, then remind me what we were talking about.

Jeff [01:23:18] And he had some interactions with Glenn Watts, right?

Pat [01:23:20] Oh, yeah.

Jeff [01:23:22] What was he like?

Pat [01:23:24] He was the quintessential gentleman. I personally never heard him raise his voice. I've heard all the other presidents raise their voice. But I never heard Watts raise his voice. I think Watts was the right guy for the time. I really think all of our national presidents have been the right person for their time. Morty was Morty for 20 years. He's the one who kind of got us going down the mobilization, and we're not going to strike, road. I remember him telling a story about how I think it was Verizon. We weren't on strike. The contract had expired with Verizon. We're still working. Meanwhile, Verizon has replacement workers that they're putting up in the hotel. And one of the replacement workers called Morty, called CWA, and wanted to know how to organize. (laughs) and was complaining about the food that they were serving. I've worked with every leader both in D.C. and in the districts for 42 years.

Debbie [01:25:07] Is it fair to say, Pat, that your main role in the legal department was to deal with internal issues?

Pat [01:25:19] I became the expert in internal issues. I dealt with everything else under the sun, anything that walked in the legal department, I had a hand in. If you go down to the legal department and open any file drawer, you will find files with my fingerprints all over them. But I became the expert in internal matters because, in a way, the same issues come up time and time and time. Can retirees be board members? Do they have to maintain the membership from the get go? Back when I first started doing research on the Constitution, we didn't have a digitized database. We had binders with typewritten executive board minutes. And if you wanted to find has the executive board ever addressed this issue, you had to open binder number one and start at page one and go through every page. I started annotating my own copies of the Constitution with things I wasn't even researching, but I'd run across and I'd say, oh, I know this is going to come up again. I'd make a notation of it. Colin Westcott has inherited all my annotated constitutions. Colin is a young lawyer at CWA now.

Debbie [01:26:54] Where are all the binders with the executive board minutes?

Pat [01:26:58] They're there in the legal department.

Debbie [01:27:01] Never given to archives?

Pat [01:27:04] Well, maybe copies of them have been given to archives, but there's copies of them in the Secretary Treasurer's office. There's copies in the president's office. There's copies in the legal department online. They have all executive board minutes online from 1947 forward. They only have conventions I think 1987 forward. But we have a complete set of convention proceedings in the legal department. You used to have them in the research department.

Debbie [01:27:42] When we moved I sent them all to the Tamiment [library at NYU.]

Pat [01:27:46] Right. I took the ones that we were missing first.

Jeff [01:27:53] We still do complete transcripts of conventions. Thinking back over your career, you've been involved in so many things. What are some of your proudest accomplishments, things that you've been involved in, maybe not the driving force, but the catalysts that made something happen.

Pat [01:28:33] I think my expertise in the internal workings of the union, just because of the way I had to do that research, page by page by page. I don't think anybody, no matter how many years they do this, will ever have the expertise that I have. When I get calls from people, and I'm still getting calls from people, I'm able to say, I can't remember the year, but look up [01:29:13]Hamilton Burchette [1.8s] so-and-so. I remember the names and what the cases stood for, mostly because I drafted them all. But I think that I would consider that my biggest accomplishment and what most people in CWA rely on me for. Everybody from the lowliest clerk who just needs to find something up to the president of the union.

Jeff [01:29:57] You mentioned earlier one particularly interesting arbitration case that really touched you with the member acknowledging the work that you did for him. How about some other interesting arbitration cases?

Pat [01:30:18] Tried one of the ATTCOM 3% cases. They had a contract clause that if they were having a layoff, the company could, out of seniority order, save 3% of the workforce. We had, I think, four cases that involved the 3% clause. One of them, Charlie Brumfield, who was the company labor relations guy, was in the room, but he did not testify. There was nobody to rebut what Irvine and Allen said that clause meant. I tried one of those and I won it. I can't remember what exactly the issue was, but I remember people didn't think I would be able to win it. We had won the first two and mine was the third. People were like, we're not going to win this because we won the first two and I was able to win it so that was a proud accomplishment.

Debbie [01:31:30] These were members who were laid off out of seniority?

Pat [01:31:34] Well, that's probably who filed the grievance. It was about how you would interpret that clause. Was it 3% of the entire workforce, was at 3% per location? Details about how you how you interpreted that clause.

Pat [01:31:55] My other favorite case is a case that came out of the Radford manufacturing plant. This guy lived on his father's farm, rural Virginia. He was married, young guy, had a young child and lived in a separate house but on his father's farm. The family was totally dysfunctional. He would have perfect attendance for like a year, and then something would blow up in the family. The sister would overdose or... So he's off and on in attendance trouble. He's driving past his father's garage one day on his way to work. He sees his father sitting in the garage with the garage door up with a shotgun in his mouth. And so, of course, he doesn't continue on to work. He stops. Anyway, that resolves itself. The father lives, but the company fires him because he's like three hours late for work. So the company fires him and they just would not cut this guy a break. I combed through his attendance record. At the time, there was a clause in the contract that if you had perfect attendance for six months, you got a free day and you could use that day. However, it was like a personal day, you could use it however you want it. He did call when he sees the father with the shotgun, he did call the company and say, I'm going to be late. He didn't have any more vacation left that he could use or any more personal days, but as the company had calculated correctly, he would have had that one day he could have used, which would have kept him out of attendance trouble. So I give my opening statement and the company gives their opening statement and the arbitrator says okay, let's go outside. We went outside and the arbitrator said to the company, is she correct that he would have had one day? And they said, yeah, we missed that. She is correct that if you calculated it, he would have had one day. The arbitrator said, well, unless you've got something really good I'm going to rule in the union's favor. We ended up settling it. We didn't have to go to arbitration. The guy in the meantime, well, it took a year and a half to get the case to arbitration, he's taken on a job as a long haul truck driver. He missed his kids first steps. He missed his kids first word. When I called him to tell him he had won the case or he was there with us, I guess, so I told him in person. He started crying. He was this big truck driver looking guy. And he just started crying. He wrote me a letter, a note, about five years later. He was ultimately promoted to management. He moved off the father's farm so he wasn't in the middle of all that chaos anymore, couldn't see it every day when he was going to work. He eventually gets promoted to management. And when he was promoted, he wrote me a note: I wouldn't be here if you didn't win that case. So that's my other favorite case.

Pat [01:35:54] I have to say. I've said it so many times in the last couple of years, but it truly has been an honor and a privilege to work for CWA and for all the leaders, both local leaders as well as national leaders who just have such a passion for helping their fellow workers and for doing what's right and trying to make sure that the company that's making all these profits, that at least a little bit of it trickles down to us.

Pat [01:36:40] There's only 1 or 2 people in CWA that I actively disliked. I like some more than I like others, but there's only 1 or 2 that I actively disliked.

Jeff [01:36:53] Did you want to go on the record with them?

Pat [01:36:57] No. Both of them were local officers, though who were pains in the ass. I've enjoyed most minutes of it. Maybe not right when it was happening, but in retrospect, it was kind of fun and always educational. Always. I created personal relationships all over this union. I used to tell my kids, my daughter was on a softball team, I'd say, if you're in Saint Louis, call this person. If you get hurt, if you're in Cleveland, call this person. If you get hurt at any place, I could give her a name of somebody to call if she got hurt. I remember one time Glen and I and the kids were driving out to Indiana because that's where his family is originally from, and we stopped to get lunch somewhere, and there's a Holiday Inn across the street, and it has a big sign on their marquee saying, CWA

bargaining team is here. So I went across the street. I forget even who it was that was in there, but I knew them. And then just a few years ago, we had a strike against Verizon, and there's a CO, central office, near where I was living at the time. There's Kentucky Fried Chicken right across from the central office, and the central office you have to be down this long driveway. It's a street, but it's more like a driveway to the CO. I go over to Kentucky Fried Chicken. I got a big bucket of chicken and bunch of drinks, and I go across the street and it's a highway or major road. Go across the street and I pull up as though I'm going down to this CO. Because I can't stop on the main drag, and I'm getting all these dirty looks from the picketers. And so I take my Kentucky Fried out of my trunk, and I take all the drinks out, and I bring them up. And the picket captain said, they're all looking at me like, I've got two heads. I'm the general counsel by now. I hand them over to the picket guys, and the captain says to me, thank you for supporting the strike. Do you know what the issues in the strike are about? I said, well, as it happens, I do because I work for you guys. I didn't know any of them. They were all from Marilyn Irwin's local. I didn't know any of them, and they didn't know me from a hole in the wall. But that was really fun for me to be able to do that.

Jeff [01:40:07] Do you have anything else you want to ask?

Debbie [01:40:10] I want to ask a big picture question. First, this has been absolutely fascinating, and you've talked a lot about the ways in which you and the leadership intervened around issues of union democracy. I'd like you to kind of speculate. There's a lot of criticism sometimes about unions. CWA is often considered a very democratic union. I'd like you to talk about CWA as a democratic union, both its achievements and why and maybe some of the cautions.

Pat [01:40:49] CWA is one of, if not the most democratic unions. We recently became even more so when we got rid of the secret ballot vote for national officer elections which was in our Constitution. We got rid of that because we had to do the monopoly money, and elections were just taking way too long. So we got rid of the secret ballot election. It's still a private election in that the results aren't shown to anybody, nobody has to raise their hand. But it's not secret in the way that the DOL would consider to be secret. So that's more democratic than this....It's more transparent. I wouldn't say necessarily more democratic, but it's more transparent than having a secret ballot because the delegates are casting their ballots for other people. It's not like when I go to the polls and we're casting our ballot for ourselves, they're casting their ballots for other people.

Debbie [01:41:58] Explain what you mean getting rid of the secret ballot.

Pat [01:42:11] In the old days, you had to mark, depending on how many officers were up for election and how many races you got to participate in, you could be marking up to 20, 30 ballots for each. You had to write in the candidate's name every time. so it could take hours even if it goes perfectly, which it did one year, but still it took until midnight before we were done with the counting and there had to be a runoff, which meant we couldn't start a runoff at 1:30 in the morning. So that delayed the convention opening the next day. We had to do the monopoly money because secret ballot was required under our Constitution. The law would allow a candidate to be nominated, and people just raised their hands on the convention floor. So we took out of the Constitution the secret ballot requirement. So now we could go to raising your hands on the convention floor under our Constitution. But the Constitution Committee and leadership committed that we would continue to have private elections. If you're a local officer and you're voting 1200 votes for Jeff Rechenbach and you've been telling everybody you'll vote for Jeff's opponent. I don't think that's right either. So I think the transparency adds to the democracy in CWA.

Debbie [01:44:14] You're saying that they would know that people would know that John Doe had voted 1200 votes for Jeffrey Rechenbach?

Pat [01:44:22] No, because we don't release the numbers. We don't release the voting strength and how that voting strength voted because you could figure out how people voted. But just the mere fact that it's not secret anymore makes for more transparency. Like in the in the Wood/Bixler vote. Janice Wood thought she had a Local's votes, and that Local ended up flipping and voting for Tony, and Janice lost by that exact number of votes that the Local had carried . That became apparent because the number is clear.

Debbie [01:45:14] At any rate, back to the big picture question about union democracy. There's always challenges that those who have been elected have ways in which they can use their power to perpetuate their election. How has within CWA been able to maintain a democratic union?

Pat [01:45:42] There's always in any election, be it a public election or an internal union election, there's always the power of the incumbency, which is just the incumbent has a little bit of a leg up. In CWA, there's traditionally a trajectory. The assistant to the vice president is usually the heir apparent to that vice president. When that person decides to resign or retire on occasion, Jim Irvine being one of them, the assistant takes on the VP. Jim Irvine ran against his principal and beat him. Larry Mancino took on Jan Pierce and there wasn't an election because Larry was going to win so Jan ended up pulling out. But same thing with Pete Catucci and George [01:46:49]Strict. [0.0s] George Strict was the vice president of District Two prior to Pete. Pete ran against him in one round and lost and was running against him the next round and it was clear he was going to win. So George didn't run again.

Pat [01:47:09] Look at [01:47:10] the EVP race [0.0s] and Nick Nichols. He's a local officer. He's a local president out of Houston, Texas, and he runs to be executive vice president. One of three executive vice presidents at that time. And he wins, beating out Dina Beaumont, Barbara Easterling, and I think Gloria Shepherdson, all of whom were in the president or secretary treasurer's office. There are those who will say that he won because he was a guy and it was the good old boys network and all the other three were women. Maybe that's true. Maybe it's partially true. I don't know, but it just goes to show you that you can be...Pete Catucci is another example. He was a local president, never on staff. Actually most of the staff at the time and the district leadership didn't like Pete because he was a troublemaker. He was always challenging them. He runs as a local president, and he beats the incumbent, George Strict. Harry Ibsen is an example, out in district nine, Harry was a local officer, ran as a local president for district VP and never served on staff, never did much of anything, never served on a committee. And he beat everybody that he was running against.

Pat [01:48:52] I also think there's a lot to be said for training, coming up through the ranks, learning the ropes. Some of those vice presidents, like Harry Ibsen, he appointed as his assistant another local officer. They had no idea how to run the office. They had no idea how to do a voucher. They had no idea. At the time, we had BAPs, bills approved for payment. They had no idea how to do a BAP and get a bill paid. Logistics, practical stuff. No idea how to order letterhead or paper or anything. There's a lot to be said for coming up through the ranks.

Pat [01:49:42] But yeah, I've seen democracy in action. And you see it more often in local elections where somebody gets pissed off at a local president and they take them on and they get other people

Pat Shea Interview – January 9, 2024

to get pissed off at the local president and they beat him. They need some hand-holding after that just to get them up to speed. But it works.

Pat [01:50:18] Well, this has been wonderful. This has been fun.

Jeff [01:50:20] Really cool. I've really enjoyed this. It's been a pleasure. Thanks for agreeing to do it. Really appreciate it. I don't think there's anything you need to retract, but we will definitely send you the transcript.

Pat [01:50:34] I tried to be thoughtful before I answered.

Jeff [01:50:37] I gathered that.

Debbie [01:50:41] Jeff, I do have one more question. I jotted down some names. There's some women from the prior generation that you mentioned. [01:50:51]Florene Cool. [0.6s] Patsy Fryman. Lela Foreman, we've talked about Barbara Easterling and Dina Beaumont. I'm not sure which other women you would want to mention, but I would be interested to hear a little bit about that generation of women.

Pat [01:51:14] Patsy Fryman was an assistant to president. Was it Billy? She was assistant to one of the VP's.

Jeff [01:51:29] Or was it one of the EVPs?

Pat [01:51:30] It was one of the EVPs.

Pat [01:51:31] But it might have been Booe when he was EVP.

Jeff [01:51:34] Yeah.

Debbie [01:51:36] And what led to her becoming elevated at the National?

Pat [01:51:41] She opposed Marty Hughes, so they had to get her out of the district.

Jeff [01:51:45] Okay.

Pat [01:51:47] She one time told me. I have a garage full of documents. If anybody ever asks me for them. I'm not going to volunteer them, but if anybody ever asks, I have a garage full.

Debbie [01:52:01] What state was she from?

Pat [01:52:03] Michigan.

Debbie [01:52:05] And was she an operator?

Pat [01:52:08] I don't remember what her background was.

Jeff [01:52:11] I think she was out of commercial, service rep.

Pat [01:52:15] Yeah.

Pat [01:52:16] Lela Foreman came out of district six, the MOKA (Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas).

Pat [01:52:23] What used to be district seven, right?

Debbie [01:52:27] I know she was from Oklahoma.

Pat [01:52:33] She rose to the level of being the director of women's affairs at CWA. Gloria Shepardson was an African-American woman who was an assistant to Louis Knecht. I don't know where Gloria came from or what her background was.

Pat [01:53:01] Florine Koole. I think Florine came out of operator services, didn't she?

Jeff [01:53:09] I think she did, yes.

Pat [01:53:11] I'm not sure. What was she, district four as well?

Jeff [01:53:18] May have been. It predated me coming around, at least if she was there.

Pat [01:53:29] Back in the day... Now, if you're hired as a staff rep, you stay in the district you lived in and were brought up in. Back in the day when Joe Beirne hired you, he would not let you stay in your district. You had to switch districts. I remember Jack [01:53:50]Bacari [0.0s] telling me this story. Jack Bacari was a crazy man. He was also the president of the staff union. At one point he told me that he was first hired as a research economist. He lived in the Boston area. Joe Beirne hired him and Joe told him, we have an opening in Birmingham and we have an opening somewhere out west. Jack decided to use reverse psychology. So he told Joe, well, I'm from New England, I love to ski, and I'd like that job out in Denver or wherever it was. And of course he got assigned to Birmingham which was where he really wanted to be all along. So his reverse psychology worked.

Pat [01:54:38] John Carroll was originally from district seven, I think, but he had to leave district seven when he came on staff.

Debbie [01:54:49] I think there's a story to be written about that generation of women. It's interesting.

Pat [01:54:54] Yeah. j

Debbie [01:54:55] I heard a lot of district four. You had Catherine Conroy, who was quite a dynamo out of district four.

Pat [01:55:04] No, that was Donna Conroy out of district one.

Debbie [01:55:08] No, that's not who I think she was. CWA leader in Wisconsin and then one of the founders of NOW [National Organization of Women].

Pat Shea Interview – January 9, 2024

Jeff [01:55:17] Yeah.

Pat [01:55:17] Oh, I don't remember that.

Debbie [01:55:19] Donna Conroy was an operator leader in district one.

Pat [01:55:22] I was thinking of Annie Crump.

Jeff [01:55:25] Annie was mentored by Catherine [Conroy].

Jeff [01:55:32] That was district five back then, predates the district four.

Pat [01:55:44] The merger of the districts happened in 1983 at the special Committee of the Future convention. Special convention was called. You had in some cases an incumbent national officer running against an incumbent national officer. The convention was in DC at that time, I was at the convention just as a guest. I was up in the bleachers because it was in DC. The accounting firm that we used to count the officer elections votes gave Morty the wrong winner. Morty announced it was Jack Lovett running against T.O. Parsons, was it?

Pat [01:56:41] And Morty announced. I forget who, I can't remember actually won, but Morty announced the wrong winner. So the other one goes up to his room to pack before anybody realizes that they announced the wrong winner. Then somebody had to go up and tell them, well you really won. That accounting firm got fired that year.

Jeff [01:57:06] It was our version of La La Land. Wasn't that long after that that we stopped using accounting firms. We can make our own mistakes. Thank you very much. Anyway, this was fun. Thank you.

Pat [01:57:29] Thank you. Walk down memory lane.

Jeff [01:57:32] It's been a real treat listening to some of these interviews over the past few days. So Committee of the Future, I believe, was in 1982. Tell what it was and why it was important.

Pat [01:57:47] The Committee of the Future was an appointed committee initially. It was created, I believe, in 1980. In 1981 when it was created. In 82, they came out with a report. The delegates didn't like the report, didn't like the way the committee had been just appointed. They decided to elect a Committee of the Future. I don't remember how they did it, but they elected a Committee of the Future who came out with two different recommendations. Recommendation A and recommendation B. The delegates voted on which way to go. It was a roadmap for CWA's future.

Jeff [01:58:50] Was it about structure or policy?

Pat [01:58:52] It was about both. But it kind of came about because divestiture was coming up. What are we going to do? All these companies are going to be merging and, as we've seen over the years, [this] is exactly what happened. AT&T is back to being a behemoth again. But a lot of it was about the structure of CWA. How we should restructure ourselves to meet the new challenges that we're going to face. CWA as divestiture happened and as a new entity kind of took over. But it's fascinating to read the Committee of the Future. Like, for example, one recommendation that they

made was that the CWA Executive board would clearly define categories of membership, which the Executive board never did except on a case by case basis. So that's why we get all these appeals and election appeals and everything else that concern membership eligibility, membership questions about whether somebody is eligible to be a member, whether they're paying the correct dues because the board just never did what the Committee of the Future recommended, which is create specific categories of membership. Associate members under the current CWA structure, we have such a thing as associate members. They don't pay dues. They don't have any rights of membership except whatever the local may decide to let them come to meetings. They might have to sit in a separate section. Local might invite them to Christmas parties, but they're there, but they only have whatever rights the local decides to give them.

Pat [02:01:04] The Committee of the Future recommended that the board create or specify these categories of membership, what an associate member is, what a retired member is, which the board never did as a whole. Okay, these are the categories of membership. They've done it on an ad hoc basis through the appeals that have gotten to them. I think it was pivotal. The structure of CWA as we know it now came out of that Committee of the Future. A lot of it anyway. That and the 71 dues fight. On my bulletin board, I have a little pin and it's a potato. It says "no small potatoes" which was the slogan on the two hour dues issue.