

Interview with Lorraine Hickey-Korf

LHK. My name is Lorraine Hickey-Korf. I was hired on January 14, 1985. I worked upstairs in Membership first, which was a great place because I learned about the foundation of the whole organization. And then I used 7 to do part time work; any overtime I used to take, I used to work in the posting department also, and I also did some keypunching. Then in 1989, I moved down into the executive office. When I first started working for CSEA, McGowan was president. Then when I went to the executive office in 1989, it was April 1989, Joe McDermott was president, and Mary Sullivan was treasurer at that time, so I served as Mary's secretary at that time. I went on strike a year after I was hired by CSEA, which was quite an experience for me.

FV: Struck against CSEA?

LHK: No, I was on ...because within CSFA, we had the HSU union and then we had management. And, wow, it was like day and night. Here I worked for Maude, who is retired now. She was my supervisor. Lovely person; we got along great. And all of a sudden, the word came down that we were going on strike. And she told me to clear out my desk. I didn't have my key, to unlock some of my stuff. I had to call my daughter to get my key. She went from being nice to being my enemy within that short period of time. It was devastating for me, the way that was all handled. So, she felt bad afterwards, when we came in off the strike. She apologized, but she was doing what she was told. But, just at that moment, that was quite a moment for me at CSEA.

FV: It was really strange, wasn't it?

LHK: Yes, yes.

FV: Here you are in a different union striking against the management of a union.

LHK: Right. Well, I've always had that gripe against CSEA. I would like to be a member of CSEA, not in management or not HSU. I think the greatest thing it'll probably never happen-would be for the staff to be able to be members because I think sometimes there's a staff infection. This is how management thinks, okay? But on the other hand, I also wanted to say that management did great for me. It educated me. I went to seminars. I went to conferences. I traveled and really got, like a college education. I would love to go into a room and committee meeting and find out it's okay to disagree and still walk out of there and shake hands, you know. And that's what it's all about. So, that has been great for me. I totally, totally enjoy that. Then, McGowan retired and then Danny came on board, and then Mary moved up to vice-president, and then I became Maureen Malone's-who was elected the treasurer of CSEA-so I worked with Maureen for quite a period of time. So, I've been in the executive office, seen a lot of changes. Right now, I think it's going through a big change. I, being there, working there, I'm concerned about it. I don't know where they're going with the changes, but it seems to me like it's very hectic and you can't get an answer. Just from before, I just don't know. I'm concerned about it.

FV: What was CSEA like when you were young? You say it's changed now. From what?

LHK: Well, it's just like there's no direction. There's no, how do I say this? You just can't seem to get an answer from all the departments.

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FV: And you could before?

LHK: And you could before, yes. But, maybe it'll change. Maybe it takes a while for it to roll over and, you know, but, I just thought that, I've seen changes. And right now, I'm concerned for the changes. They don't look good. But then, change never does look good in the beginning and then it turns out okay.

FV: What about the people? You got any stories that we should know about some of these people?

LHK: No, probably stories about myself (laughs).

FV: Well, that's alright.

LHK: Well, I used to--they call me Champagne Lorraine because when I have my couple of drinks, like a truth serum; you can ask me anything and I'll tell you. (laughs) But, no there was quite a bit ... I can remember, at different holiday parties, one in particular. We went out and I can remember Michelle Agnew at that time was the assistant to the president, and I kind of just told her off, how I felt about her. I wasn't quite sure I was going to have a job when I came back the next day, but I did. Another time, I volunteered to go to a seminar to speak out, to learn to speak and say it as it is, and she told me she didn't think I had any problem. I said I'd like to do it without alcohol in me, though, so I did go to the seminar. I'm trying to think. You get up here and you just freeze. You do freeze.

FV: Well, what about the most important events during your involvement with CSEA? What happened that you think were the biggest moments in CSEA's history. Because you were talking about how..

LHK: Oh, I just--I love the union. I love the union for the way it stands up for the workers. I just--I'm in awe of that, you know, and I have learned a lot about that. I suppose that's the primary. I'm just giving you, you know, as I was working. But, no--as I said it was quite an education for me, really. I thank them for it very much. I had a great ride with CSEA.

FV: Alright, you're a little worried about the future, but what do you think--what kind of lessons from history does CSEA remember for the future? From the past, the formation of the union and, its goals and objectives, and the way it works.

LHK: I think it really should listen to the members and it should listen very hard. I think that the members feel that they're not getting all their answers. Not being a member, I don't really know, but just listening to people. So, let's not get lost in it and let a get back to the members and see what they have to say.

FV: Good. What are you most proud of?

LHK: I'm proud that I worked for CSEA, I had a chance to work for CSEA. I'm very proud. Again, I thank them for the education that I received.

FV: Anything else you can think of?

LHK: No, that's it.

FV: Okay.