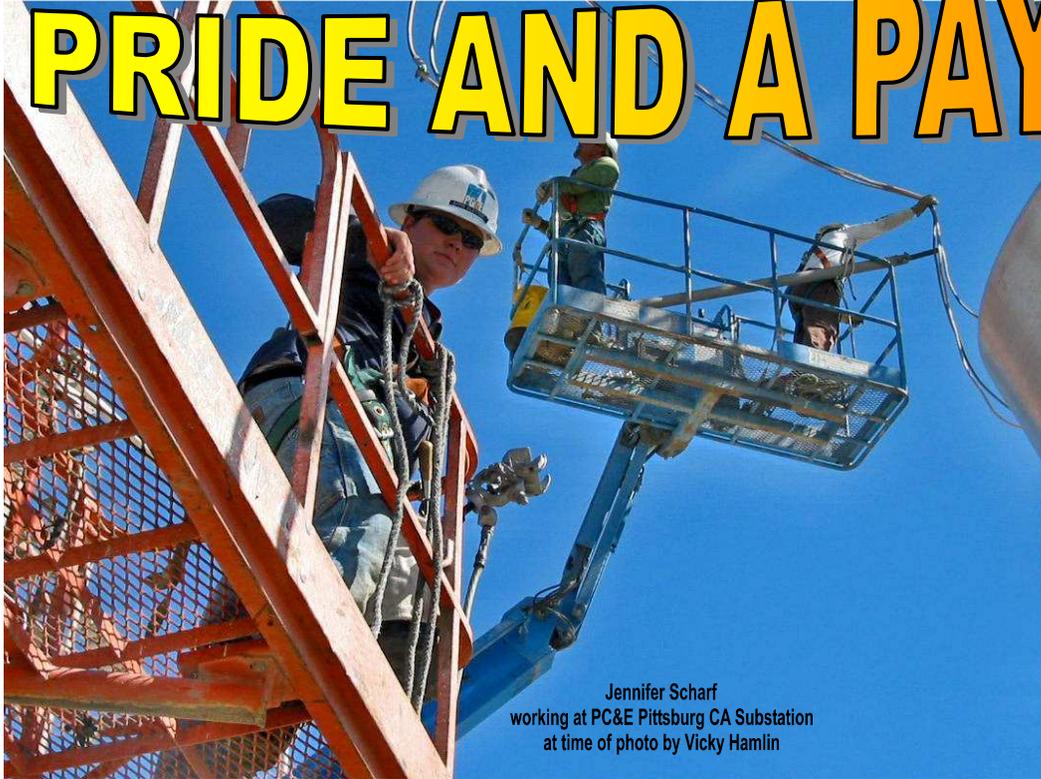


PRIDE AND A PAYCHECK



Jennifer Scharf
working at PC&E Pittsburg CA Substation
at time of photo by Vicky Hamlin

Below is a true story about courage, determination and triumph. Railroad worker Sheila White's Supreme Court victory is one for all railroad women, women in construction and other blue collar jobs as well as women in all work places. **The Court's determination in this case is president setting because it found that retaliation does not have to be an adverse employment action to be unlawful.** To read the whole court case (it's not difficult to read) go to [Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railway Co. v. White - ...](#) Argued April 17, 2006 and decided June 22, 2006. Full case name, Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company, Petitioner v. Sheila White. We are proud to publish our sister Sheila White's story.

MY FIGHT WITH A GIANT

© 2011 by Sheila White

This story is about my work on the railroad and about why I had to fight a giant through taking legal action. In 1997 I began working for Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railway Company in the Tennessee Yards, Memphis, Tennessee. I was hired as a forklift operator in the Maintenance of Way Department.

On the very first day of work I learned that I was the only female worker in this work group of new hires. The group of men and I stood in a circle outside a building while waiting for the foreman. He was to talk to us and assign us to our positions. The foreman came and introduced himself and said that he would be our foreman. He then had us introduce ourselves to each other. He said we would be working together. I later learned that I would be the only female worker in the Department where I was to be assigned.

At the end of the introductions, our foreman looked at me and called out loudly, *"Hey Sheila, when you come on your period, let me know so that I can make your job lighter."* All of the men looked at me in shock, with their mouths open. I did not respond to him. I just looked at him. I could not believe that he said that. This man did not know me and he had just learned my name. No one had ever done that to me. That remark was on my mind all during the day because I did not know what he would say next. I was wondering what kind of man he was and what fool would say that to a woman.



Sheila White
Memphis TN

This was the first day of my probationary period on the job. So I had to be calm. This turned out to be 'Nightmare on Elm Street' and my foreman was "Freddy Kruger". Hard times came every day for me while I tried to make it through probation. Everyday my foreman asked me to find another job because the railroad was not a place for women. Each time, I told him that I had to feed my family just like he did. I had two daughters in college and a son in high school.

My foreman and his boss, the Road Master, were busy trying to see how they could disqualify me before my probationary period was up. Guess what? Both of them did not realize I was three days ahead of them! I derailed them, and became officially a railroader. After probation my foreman continued making remarks that were inappropriate and disgusting. I decided to report this matter because the situation was getting worse day by day.

The remarks made by my foreman the very first day led me to keep a daily journal. This journal became a part of me and it played a very important role later on. I wrote down what my foreman said to me, the names of the workers or persons who were present when he made his remarks, the weather conditions and the time and place where this situation occurred. **(Continued on the next page.)**

MY FIGHT WITH A GIANT.....continued

My back was against the wall when I reported my foreman's conduct on sexual harassment to the Company heads. Before I could get out of the office and the building, I could hear the staff whispering. News about my complaint spread like wildfire from state to state. The superintendent, supervisors and foremen all laughed and joked about this matter. Two days later I was called into the Superintendent's office. He told me that they were going to look into the allegation.

After the investigation, my foreman and I were called to the Superintendent's office. I sat in the hallway waiting to be called and informed of the outcome of the investigation. My foreman was seen first. After he left the office, I was called in. In a nasty tone the Superintendent told me that I would no longer be operating the forklift. I would work with the men on the tracks. He said that my foreman had a fifteen day suspension and a requirement to attend a sexual harassment class. I was so upset. I started crying and I told the Superintendent that they were wrong in taking the forklift position from me.

I reported to the job the next day. Everybody looked at me like I had killed their best friend. A few of the men told me that I had done the right thing and to just go with the flow. My job title was Trackman, but when I filled out papers, I put Track person. I was reassigned to my old foreman after his suspension was over. I had to file another complaint. I was then assigned to another foreman. My work assignments had me traveling to work sites in several states to service and repair tracks. I was on a track gang and it was very rare that I would see or work with women. I had a good working relationship with some of the men but with others, there was no getting along. My problems came from management with headquarters in Kansas City, Chicago and Texas. Unfair treatment continued no matter where I worked. The Company rules! Who are they for? With me, they were not followed. The Company broke them in many ways. I started using my knowledge of the rules – my empowerment tool – when I knew it was unsafe for me to do a job as ordered.

Yes, I was in the Union – Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way. The Union Reps stayed in Memphis to help so much for me. When they arrived on site for a conference with the Company and me, I met with them before the conference and said, *"Let me talk and handle this situation. You step in when needed."* They did just that and they learned that I was good in protecting myself. They saw that I had myself together with my information and documentation. The Company could not dispute or disprove what I had to say. Whenever the Reps would see me, they would ask their favorite question: *"Sheila, What have you done now?"* My answer was: *"Protecting my rights!"*

The job of track persons is to service and repair the rails for the train to run on, clear train derailments and lay new tracks. This work is done in all kinds of weather. They are responsible for taking with them all of the equipment they will need to do the job.

Some of the jobs I performed included: Unloading equipment from work trucks such as hydraulic jack hammers, spikers, tampers, shovels, machines and whatever else was needed for the job (Tool weight range was between 10 pounds to 50 pounds plus). There were times when help wasn't available with the heavy equipment but I found a way to push this equipment off the truck. I unloading 10 to 50 pound kegs filled with spikes from trains at sidings. I set work trucks to High Rail. I unloaded chat from moving train boxcars. I often walked many miles doing this job. I removed and replaced spikes and plates from railroad tires while riding on a moving flat car (Each iron plate weighed more than 5 pounds.)

What actions did Burlington take against me? Burlington fired me several times – once in December 1997 right before Christmas, for what they called insubordination and another time in December 1998. Each time Burlington had to reinstate me after an investigation proved they had acted wrongfully. Another time Burlington furloughed a number of workers, including me. I found work in another state and worked there for several months. I found that Burlington had reclassified the position of trackman and had given it a new title. Burlington also had hired new people to fill these positions. Very few of the furloughed workers had been recalled to work. I bid on a position in the Memphis Yard and received it. Upon my return to work I was sent often to work sites in Mississippi, Alabama and Arkansas. At each work site I found myself to be under surveillance based on conversations with the foreman, and some workers. In Memphis when the Road Master or foreman learned that I had bid on a job, they would cut the job off. The situation at work had begun to get more stressful after I filed legal action against Burlington on August 22, 1999. I realized that this turmoil was affecting my physical health. I had to take medical leave in 2002 for an indefinite period. In the meanwhile I began working closely with my attorneys on my legal action against Burlington on charges of sexual harassment, discrimination and retaliation.

I am proud to say that I, a woman, worked for the railroad and that I had the courage to confront Burlington with serious charges and pursue them through the U. S. District Court for Western Tennessee, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals and the U. S. Supreme Court. I am also proud to say that my actions were not just for me, but for all "Sisters" in the workplace. The Supreme Court decision of June 22, 2006 on harassment, discrimination and retaliation applied to all companies with employees. My actions shook the foundations of Burlington from State to State and I caused the 'Greatest Train Wreck'.

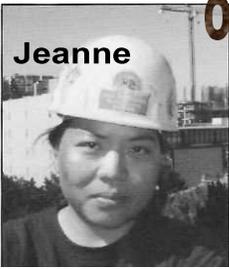
Incidents of sexual harassment, discrimination and retaliation in the workplace are frequently reported in the news media. Women should not fear retaliation for standing up for their rights. The workplace needs to be shaken up again! I am interested in raising greater awareness of this issue and the need for making change in the workplace. "Sisters", will you join me in supporting Women's Rights in the Workplace by signing my petition at: **Sheila White Act Change.org**? You can read more about my story in my book, **FIGHTING THE GIANT** (by Sheila White; Robertson Publishing, 2007). Additionally, I am available for speaking engagements to women's organizations. I thank you for letting me share this story with you and for taking time to read it. **Sheila White, Memphis TN.**

FUERZA DE MUJER

WOMEN STRENGTH

婦女力量

**Translation thanks to San Francisco's
Chinese For Affirmative Action.**



Jeanne

OUR BOOTS ARE MADE FOR WORKING! "Dear Sisters" by Ironworker, Jeanne Park

Dear Sisters: It's always a good time to make sure your tools are in working order. And by "tools" I mean the day-to-day items you need to get the job done. And in this particular article, I mean your boots.

In construction, as well as other blue collar hard-working jobs, you tend to be on your feet a lot. The ground is sometimes dirt, sometimes gravel, metal decking, raw iron, or concrete. There could be mud in your path or piles of material or random nails or screws that some careless wood-butcher or tin-knocker has dropped.

If you can't get from point A to B in reasonable time, your day, if not your job, is over. So why take the risk? Take care of your feet, and get yourself some decent boots!

There are many reasons why work boots are mandatory. The soles have got to resist puncture and yet offer some traction. Ankle support can be a lifesaver on uneven ground. Even the material the boot is made of is important. Depending on your work conditions, you may need boots that will resist water, heat or just something that will ward off random sharp objects. Some jobs require steel toes, and they can be nice to have when you stub your toes on random objects or drop other things on them. Ironworkers generally don't wear steel toes due to some theories about dropping beams on feet. I've kind of grown fond of steel toes, in some cases, when I've had to kick steel into place. (Not recommended. Use real tools for that, please.) If there isn't a particular type of boot that is called for on your job, look around and see what everyone else in your trade is wearing on the job. That isn't always the best solution, but it will give you a good place to start.

If your feet are unhappy, you become unhappy. And for heaven's sakes, find a pair that fits. Breaking in helps make sure your boots fit snug, even if you have to buy a different size for each foot. I've occasionally had to put in an insole to tighten things up. Your toes shouldn't be pinched, and your heel shouldn't wind up a mess at the end of every day.

Put in another insole if the surface you're working on is hard. You wouldn't believe how badly concrete can beat up your feet when you're walking on it all day.

I know a lot of us women have a hard time finding durable boots for work. I happen to be lucky to wear a women's 8.5s. That roughly translates to a men's size 7 boot—often the smallest size offered in men's style boots. The military offers boots in a wide range of sizes, so sometimes army surplus can be a solution. Some women I know have taken to wearing boy's sized boots. Lately there are some companies making construction boots of good quality especially for women. Do some research and ask around. The Internet can be a great place to look for reviews and products as well as discounts as well as auctions of new and gently used items.

Lastly—your boots are a tool and an investment. Take care of them. Good quality boots can run you a couple hundred dollars. I like to have two pairs of boots that I switch out: They get a day to dry out when I'm not wearing them, and if I blow out a pair, I have a spare until I can go get them fixed or replaced. I wear leather boots, so I make sure to oil the leather, especially during the rainy months to keep the moisture out. This is good for the boots and good for my feet. I also like to apply an epoxy toe cover to the boots. I've had great boots that have quickly gone bad from a short time working on my knees and wearing out the toes on cement. Find a good, reputable shoe place that repairs and reconditions work boots. Depending on what you're doing, a re-sole of a perfectly broken in set of boots can make a whole lot more sense than starting with a squeaky new pair.

Be kind to your feet! They are the foundation of a good day of work! Take care, work safe.

© 2012 Jeanne Park, Ironworker, Local 377, San Francisco

A WALL FOR US!!!! (Long Beach California) by Pat Williams, Los Angeles CA

You may be aware of Long Beach City Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske. She wrote a book "Rosie the Riveter in Long Beach" (2008, Arcadia Publishing, Images of America series). Councilwoman Schipske was also the impetus behind creating a very cool Rosie the Riveter Park and Interpretive Center in Long beach. Recently the park installed a Memorial wall which was originally meant as a memorial and tribute to the WWII Rosies who worked in factories across the nation. After a discussion with Council Woman Schipske's office, it was decided that the left portion of the wall will remain as originally intended. The right side of the wall will be dedicated to us, women who, inspired by the 1940's Rosies, a few decades later became Tradeswomen in all phases of construction, building trades, railroads, factories and other blue collar work. The concept is to honor the traditions began in the 40's, continue with the present and going into the future.

Consider purchasing a tile for yourself, a graduating apprentice, a tradeswoman you want to honor, or a tradeswoman who has passed on. Include names, union or trade, initiation dates, years of service, positions and titles. Costs for the engraved granite tiles are: 4" x 8" tile \$100 each up to 4 lines with 21 characters per line, 8" x 8" are \$200 for 8 lines with 21 characters per line. **(Contact me for an order form: patjwilliams4@aol.com)**

When we have a good number of tiles purchased (probably 10 to 15) and installed, we will have a dedication type ceremony with media coverage. For more information, please contact me or Councilwoman Schipske's office at Amy Graham, Executive Assistant, City of Long Beach, Office of Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske, 333 West Ocean Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90802, 562-570-6932. My Facebook page has 26 photos that I took at the park, including the Memorial wall, both distant and close ups, of what our tiles will look like. By looking at the photos you will be able to see how beautiful the park is. The more tiles we purchase and have installed, the bigger statement it will make about our pride as Tradeswomen.

Pat Williams, Operating Engineers Local 501, since 1979

**Visit our website at www.prideandapaycheck.com for back issues, tradeswomen resources and more!
Also welcome to comment on our facebook page: [Pride and a Paycheck!](#)**

PRIDE AND A PAYCHECK'S PHONE IS (510) 627-0063. Mailing Address is 484 Lake Park Avenue, #315, Oakland CA 94610. Email us at: tradesis@aol.com. Send your poetry and work stories to this address! **Special thanks to Madeline Mixer for her indispensable production support, funding and proofreading skills as well as topic ideas.** Thanks to my railroad sister, Electrician **Penny Artis** and railroad brother, Locomotive Engineer **Ron Kaminkow** for their support. And thanks for special support to **Larry Robbin, Joycelyn Robinson-Hughes, Jeanne Park, Joanna Perry-Kujala, Chantel Lewis, Joe Mixer, Vicky Hamlin**, as well as the **WATT Woman Electricians of Houston Texas & their President Pat Burnham. Thank you Pat Williams, (our LA "connection") and Melina Harris & Mercy Haley from Sisters in the Building Trades.** Thanks to **WINTER** for being our fiscal agent. **We also want to thank the Northern CA Drywall Lathing Apprenticeship for their consistent support and donations.** **Sue Doro**, the Editor of *Pride and a Paycheck* is a retired Railroad Machinist and member of the National Writers Union, Local 1981 (UAW Affiliate). She is also a member of the United Association of Labor Education, Local 189 (Affiliate of CWA), & Working Class Studies Assoc. (www.wcstudies.org), Railroad Workers United (www.railroadworkersunited.org) as well as **NAWIC** (National Assoc. of Women in Construction) and the **Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW)** and a retired member of the **American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)** and **International Association of Machinists (IAM)**. **Sue** is a disabled worker, injured in a previous (white-collar) job and uses voice-activated computer technology to machine the newsletter. *Pride and a Paycheck* is produced by the Editor, with funds from a San Francisco Foundation private grant thanks to **Madeline Mixer**. The Editor is solely responsible for the content of this newsletter. Thanks to **Fastprint**, Lakeshore Ave. Oakland for printing & mailing. Thanks to **Vicky Hamlin** for photo on page one. **Free subs tradesis@aol.com www.prideandapaycheck.com**
PRIDE DONATIONS CAN BE MADE OUT TO W.I.N.T.E.R.
(our fiscal agent) AND MAILED TO OUR ADDRESS.

Volunteer at Rebuilding Together Oakland to give back to your community. www.rtoakland.org Also check out other Rebuilding Together organizations around the country. www.rebuildingtogether.org

**FROM: Pride and a Paycheck, Sue Doro, Editor
 484 Lake Park Ave. #315, Oakland CA 94610**

Just a note to announce that railroad women have organized an internet support group. I'm proud to be a member! It's hard for women in transportation to enjoy the in-person help-groups that have been functioning in many sisters' local areas in the construction field for years. This is a real break-through in helping railroad sisters communicate with each other **and to work as a group to deal with issues that they all have to face on a daily basis.** Hard Hats off to these sisters! The Engineers, Electricians, Mechanics, Maintenance of Way... and all the jobs in the shops and on the tracks criss-crossing our nation! They don't have the "luxury" of being able to meet each other in person but they figured out a way to "get the job done"!
 Sue Doro, Editor

Proud to be working on our 14th year!!!

ATTENTION! Pride and a Paycheck is now a link on www.mikeroweworks.com (website for the "Dirty Jobs" TV show on the Discovery Channel! They have a "Women in the Trades" page! <http://www.mikeroweworks.com/job-site/women-in-the-trades/>



Caution Men at Work

superMAN?
 proving his MANhood
 high-voltage lineMAN
 two-MAN crew
 for a one-MAN job
 on the aerial MAN-lift
 danger! MAN on line do not energize!
 uh-oh MAN down
 workMAN's comp claim
 you didn't read the MANual?
 no, it was thick as a roMANce novel!
 get a repriMAND
 from the MAN in charge
 wonder woMAN
 perforMANce always excellent
 MANaging just fine
 with her craftsMAN tools
 minding her MANners (mostly)
 some attitude is MANdatory
 MANning the forklift
 earning foreMAN's wage
 a woMAN doesn't belong?
 I stole a MAN's spot on the books?
 MAN, you better stop that
 a good workMAN wouldn't care
 that it's woMAN's work now too
 perMANently. **get used to it!**

© 2012 Joanna Perry-Kujala, Concord CA
 Electrician, IBEW Local 302

**2012 Women Building CA and the Nation
 Conference...May 19 - 20...Sacramento CA
<http://www.sbctc.org> BE THERE!**