

"Sheet Metal Cindy in the Rafters"

Oil paint and digital photo on paper.

by Vicky Hamlin, tradeswoman, photographer and artist.

Pride and a Paycheck

Women's Guide to Blue Collar Jobs
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Make a Good Living!
Make a Good Life!

*(We are proud to publish Rita Magner's inspiring
Keynote speech given at the May 2010
Women Building California Conference
in Oakland. Full text begins below.
Thank you Rita!)*

"By way of introduction, my name is Rita Magner and I'm a sheet metal worker with Local 104. A sheet metal worker fabricates and installs heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems as well as other metal work and in our local we fabricate all of our installed work in union shops.

104 covers 17 counties, follows the Pacific Coast from the Oregon border down to Monterey County and we have approximately 6000 members. I've been a member for 18 years this month. I'm a Trustee with the union and join 12 of my sisters here today in representing our local with honor and pride. When I was asked to give this year's speech, I initially told them that I'd have to think about it.

Not so much from the fear of talking in front of a group because, really, if there was ever a group of people more open and receptive to a woman in the trades, I have yet to meet them. It was because I wondered if I had anything of import to say.

A few weeks prior, I had a conversation with a sister that got me thinking about the value of telling one's story. After meeting with Patricia Hsu the National Director of OFCCP (US Dept. of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs) and her associates in San Francisco, I had started to tell a sister about an incident that happened to me and she stopped me and said "You don't need to tell me. Your story is my story." These two statements kept rolling around in my brain for days. **You don't need to tell me. Your story is my story.**

And then my mind heard it differently and I realized that because the second sentence was true; it made the first one false. And as I worked on this speech, I realized that I could not tell my story without telling the story of the sisters who came before me.

It is my hope today that as you listen you will reflect on: your story and your history, the first chapters as you started in your trade, your learning experiences, your high points and your low ones as I stand here and tell you mine.

I started in the trade in 1992 as a pre-apprentice with a very small company - - small meaning five employees if you include the owner and myself. I, like you, was apprehensive, but willing to do my best. The owner, Ray Paulson, treated me like a daughter AND an equal. He was fair and patient and a good teacher.

(Continued on the next page.)





(Continued from page one.)

I did what I could to help the company. I even made coffee! Ray was totally aghast - - I think he was afraid of being accused of sexism. He seemed fine when I told them to relax - - it's not a gender thing, it's an apprentice thing. One of the first things I learned is NEVER CLEAN THE COFFEE POT. Those years of built-up brew are what gives that coffee its own special flavor.

When Ray showed me how to lay out a fitting called a "Wye", I looked at the pattern and said excitedly, "Oh my gosh! The pattern for the sleeve looks exactly like the sleeve of a dress!" To which he replied "No it doesn't. It's nothing like that!" Now I've been sewing since I was eight and although I said nothing, I knew exactly what I was looking at and knew I'd be fine in the trade.

I worked hard every day and Ray noticed because after a couple months he told me that he had gone down to the hall to talk to someone to get me into the apprenticeship program.

At the same company, the shop foreman was the opposite of Ray. He would give me wrong directions to supply houses I had to make runs to. He gave me the wrong flux and solder when I did my first soldering job and did other things to undermine my confidence. When he found out that I had been accepted into the apprenticeship program after only three months he warned me to "watch my back" because there were guys who had waited years to get into the program. He inferred that I "might want to think about it". Not knowing anyone I could confide in, I told no one, and on orientation day, I stood in front of the building, thinking "If my back is a target I will stand tall and give them something to shoot for".

I straightened up and walked through the door.

It was the best career decision I ever made. Five years later, I stood again and accepted the award for top apprentice.

In my nearly 2 decades, I have worked all over the area from San Francisco landmarks like the Asian Art Museum, Moscone West and the Embarcadero to tract homes in Antioch and Brentwood. I have installed furnaces and duct work in schools and hospitals; capping on movie theaters and a roof next to the flight line at Travis Air Force Base. I was knocked off the ladder while working on the 26th floor of Embarcadero 4, landing with my butt on the floor and my back against the breakaway window.

I have seen a Blue Angel pilot fly by me at my eye level while installing gutters on a house in Tiburon and have also felt the reverb when they hit their afterburners leaving Travis Air Force Base. I have watched more sunrises and experienced more breathtaking views than I ever imagined.

In all this, I have not only made a good living, I have made a good life.

My last few jobs have been working on the duct pressure testing crews at the California Genentech facilities in Vacaville and Dixon. This entails reading the blueprints; doing the required math to measure and calculate the cubic footage of the duct work; figuring out acceptable leakage levels; sealing off sections of ductwork, pumping it up with air, then finding and sealing leaks to maintain required pressure with minimal leakage. It is the most exasperating and the most rewarding of all the jobs I have done in my trade.

On my last job, I headed up testing and quality control at the Genentech research facility in Dixon. I worked with engineers and inspectors. I chased down leaks, fixed them and called the inspectors and engineers out for final signoff. Test after test was coming out with zero leakage; so often that I gave them an open invitation to audit the test equipment anytime they chose. I even cut into the plastic at the ends of the runs to show them that leakages would register.

In talking with one of the engineers one day, I told him that the reason I wanted to give Genentech the best product possible was because my sister had been diagnosed with brain cancer. The Vacaville facility that I worked on when I was an apprentice, made the *Avastin* that was shrinking her tumor and keeping her alive. That made it personal to me.

If you ever think that what you do is unimportant, call a sister and have her tell you her story. **What we do may be considered manual labor but it is not menial labor.**

We do more than connect wires, install HVAC systems, pour concrete, place windows and paint walls. We build the structures where adults go to earn a living; children go to get an education; and families call "home". We have built the facilities where researchers work to find cures for incurable illnesses. They are there because you were there.

So tell your story. Tell it to me because I have been made stronger by every sister who laced up a pair of work boots before I even knew I could be a tradeswoman. My gratitude goes to every woman whose back I watch as they walk the path before me.

We all have stories that interconnect and make us stronger when they are told. And our collective story is what we are and always will be.... WOMEN BUILDING CALIFORNIA."

PLAN ON ATTENDING THE 2011 WOMEN BUILDING CA CONFERENCE ON APRIL 30-MAY 1, AT THE MARRIOTT OAKLAND CITY CENTER!

Vicky Hamlin's "*Sheet Metal Cindy in the Rafters*" on the cover is one of a set of six different greeting cards benefiting Tradeswomen, Inc. Go to www.tradeswomeninc.org and click on the big red oval in the top right corner of the home page for ordering the 2011 Calendars AND Vicky's cards are also there.

Welcome Electrician Chantel Lewis as a new Pride columnist!

(Written at the 2010 Women Building CA Conference
Blue Jean Pocket Writers' Workshop)

One... "They Didn't Think"

They didn't think I could fit in the hole.
What is the right size to be a construction worker anyway?
I love my full breasts, wide hips and big butt!
I do good work...Respect ME....Let Me Do The Work!

Two... "Big C"

One of my fondest memories is of "Big C".
(That's what we'll call him.)
He taught me so much about the trade,
But most of all he was my friend.
At work he had the title of journeyman
And I...of apprentice,
But I saw him as a dad.
One day "Big C" filled my lunchbox with sand
And I set out to get him back.
And...Ooh! Ooh! I did!
First, he had a habit of borrowing tools from my bucket.
So I brought as many tampons from my house as I could find
And I filled my bucket with them.
I was in another room and I heard him scream like a girl.
I knew he had found the present I'd left him.
He kicked the bucket over like it was kryptonite.
I don't think I've ever laughed that hard!



Chantel Lewis

© 2010 Chantel Lewis, Journey Electrician

RAEQUEL TELLS IT LIKE IT IS

© 2010
Raequel
Papillon Smith



(The article below is the second in a 2 part series on sexual harassment. Raequel's first piece appeared in the Sept/Oct issue.)

Harassment, hostile work environments are one thing Local 261 does not tolerate. That's my union. The fact that we have unions is something that is not just a privilege it is a benefit that I have been using pretty often lately.

Learning to use my benefits is essential in dealing with delicate issues of harassment. Most times what I do is cross over with my appointed officials what is what. I can get pretty animated and sensitive when it comes to my rights and those rights being violated. Even more important is to know those civil rights and employee rights for myself. Another asset is Human Resources and we have attached the number on our Women's Enrichment Group's Website so that employees are aware of confidential support that is available to them. Now let me talk about the real deal: muster up the courage to make a complaint or grievance if you really feel you have been treated in any unprofessional manner. Retaliation is a possibility especially if your grievance is against a supervisor. One way to determine if it's worth the trouble is to weigh all variables and to use your union and Human Resources Department. Every situation has to be dealt with awareness and support.

We matter and our rights count. Because I am union means I am protected, but it also can mean confrontation, so each person has to determine whether the cause is worth the fight. Some indicators are that if you find that you are taking days off work to avoid a person; you do not feel safe around a person or a group; you have held your voice so long that you are about ready to scream; or you pick work to evade confrontation, it is probably time to deal with what is at hand. Remember that with a union, you are united with the forces of many years of women and men that had at first no way to fight the injustices of harassments. **But we no longer have to suffer in defeat. We can choose to meet any injustice with courage and say our piece.**

A closed mouth don't get fed. I betcha I'm gonna eat!

(Raequel Papillon Smith is a City of San Francisco Trucker/Laborer as well as song stylist and spoken word artist)



Joanna Perry-Kujala is a third generation IBEW Electrician. Her grandfather recently received his 65 year pin! This is a poem about Joanna and her dad pictured here working together.

Memory Lane (Oct 10, 2010)

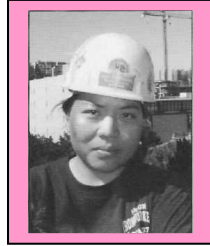
I was riding home from work
the other day with my dad.
We're both IBEW members
and working by chance
for the same company.
He had to make a stop
to fill up his truck.
I said I'd stay in the cab
so he didn't have to take the keys.
It made me think after he left
of how I used to beg
to be allowed to stay in the car.
It was like one step up
from getting to stay home alone
when your parents went out.

The radio was on, telling me
about traffic, weather, & sports.
I dozed in the truck
and inhaled the air freshener smell.
It was a relaxing citrus blend.
Much different from
the pine scented trees
he always used to get.

I woke to the sound
of the truck door opening,
and the peculiar smell
of pepperoni and grease.
I opened my eyes and my dad
was holding out one of my favorite
convenience store snacks (aside from pork skins).
"I got you a beef stick," he said smiling.

A beef stick! Yes!
Not quite jerky, and
not quite a sausage.
Now all I needed was
a nice cold cherry slurpee
and this childhood reverie
would be complete.
Except this time
I can see over the dashboard.

© 2010 Joanna Perry-Kujala Concord CA



Jeanne Park

It's time for the 2011 Ironworker Women calendar! You've got to get your own copy and order more for friends! San Francisco Ironworker **Jeanne Park** has been the producer, artistic director, photographer, computer techie tradeswoman on this labor of pride since 2004. I was honored to be asked to write something for the "thank you" page. I also offered to do this announcement in lieu of Jeanne's regular "Dear Sisters" column in order to give her a much needed break.

To order calendars go to www.ironworkergear.com or call 1-800-834-2303.

Remember: all ironworker women get a calendar free for the asking. Just email Jeanne at

Jeanne@ironworking.com And watch for her column in the January February 2011 issue of *Pride*!

(About the cover!! It features Jeanne's structural belt & tools in the girliest pink she could find to deter theft!)

Sue Doro, Editor

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!

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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 (a UAW Affiliate). She is also a member of the United Association of Labor Education, Local 189 (Affiliate of CWA), and the Working Class Studies Association (www.wcstudies.org), Railroad Workers United (www.railroadworkersunited.org) as well 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. **Free subscriptions tradesis@aol.com**

AND GO TO OUR WEBSITE AT www.prideandapaycheck.com FOR MORE NEWS ITEMS & RESOURCES. UPDATED ON A REGULAR BASIS.

Pride and a Paycheck

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Orgullo y Paga

From: **Pride and a Paycheck**
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Thank you to tradeswomen
Jeanetta Mish, Norman OK
and **Susan Flashman, Mount Rainer MD**
for your generous donations to *Pride*.
Your support is appreciated!

(We use donations such as theirs
to send packets of *Pride*
to even more schools and training programs!)

Tradeswomen Inc. announces their 2011
Calendar! "Women Pass It On". Full
color images of working tradeswomen
from WWII to the 1970's and up through
today. Call 510-891-8773 Ext 315 or go
to www.tradeswomen.org

Circulation now more than 10,000 thanks to Sisters In The Building Trades "Chatter Page" and Pride's website: www.prideandapaycheck.com

This is the spot in *Pride and a Paycheck* where you've been used to seeing a list of resources and training programs. **This list as well as a ton of other resources and back issues are now on *Pride's* web site so that we have more room on these pages for articles etc.** If you don't have a computer, you can go to any public library for internet access to log on to our site and find the resources as well as their own sites to "click on". Enjoy more articles, poetry, photographs of tradeswomen at work and links to organizations in your own neck of the woods! Enjoy www.prideandapaycheck.com Tradeswomen...start your "clicking"!!