



PRIDE AND A PAYCHECK

Women's Guide to
Blue Collar Jobs
Vol. 15, # Three,
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WHAT KIND OF WOMAN IS A TRADESWOMAN?

She's strong in spirit and muscle. She doesn't mind getting her hands dirty to make a living. Her generous paycheck, benefits, vacation and retirement package are worth more than any long painted fingernails. (She can always use "press-ons" if she wants to dress up on the weekend!)

She is every color, every ethnicity, every age and every shape. Her sexuality is her own business. She has children. She doesn't. She's determined to succeed in whatever she does. She learns from mistakes. She's not afraid to ask for help because she knows what teamwork means.

She's fiercely independent. Sometimes it comes off as stubbornness to those who don't understand. Most of the time she doesn't consider herself a pioneer. But then there are those days on the job site when she looks around and sees no one else like her. Those are the days that make her sad, defiant, persistent and proud all at the same time!

Her confidence is something she works on daily. She has to. Because on the job site there are still those few men who don't want her there...want to break her will to succeed.

There are even some family members or friends who think she shouldn't be doing blue-collar work. So she has to rise above it all....has to be good at her job...really good. Has to convince her employer, her union, her male co-workers, her friends and family that she **is** up to the task. While in her heart she knows that some of these people will never be won over. It doesn't make her happy, but she faces that reality too. And she moves on.

After all, she's a tradeswoman!

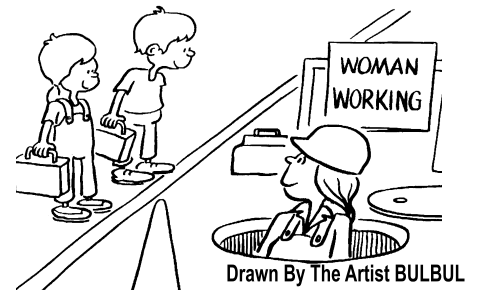
FUERZA DE MUJER

婦女力量

WOMEN STRENGTH

BLUE COLLAR MOMS!

One of the main reasons women with children want to work in the blue-collar trade is that their paychecks and health benefits will be able to better keep up with the demands of family needs. But one of the hardest things a mother can do, (no matter what kind of career), is to leave her children with another person or in day care and go to work. If anyone tries to tell her it's easy, they're wrong. If anyone tries to tell her it can't be done, they're wrong too.



One of the things that she can do is to make sure that she finds out as much as she can about the job before she starts. The more confident she can be about her ability to do the work, the better able she will be to explain it. And children want to know. They don't like to be surprised about something as big as their mother going away for a whole day at a time and returning grungy and grimy!

Before she starts her job she can talk about it with her kids. It's harder for the blue collar mom to explain in words they can understand because kids don't see as many examples of people that look like their moms on TV or in their story books. It's better now than a few years ago as far as television goes. There are house repair etc. that feature female blue collar workers. Depending on the age of child, the description of her work day doesn't have to be very complicated. She can take them past the construction site she's currently working on or drive past an open factory doorway so they can see inside. She can show them photos from Pride and a Paycheck's website and Sisters in the Building trades. As far as the people she works with, she can tell them that there are some she enjoys and others that she just has to get along with for the time she's there. Then there are also those she tries to avoid! Kids understand this concept because they run into the same human interactions at school.

When she comes home from work after a hard day, and plumps down on the couch, and doesn't feel like making dinner, and doesn't want TV on, the kids want to know why. It's okay to tell them that it was a really bad day. It's also okay to tell them that there will be good days and bad days on a job. It's okay to tell them that she's going to be grouchy for a little while and she'll get over with it. And most importantly...it's not their fault that she's grouchy. She loves them. And she even loves her job most days. She can tell them it's the nature of work. Showing all sides, the good and the bad, will prepare them for their own job futures!

Entering the field of blue-collar work in careers that have been held traditionally by men automatically makes any female a kind of super-woman. It's a tough title to hold. The kind of woman who chooses these kinds of jobs is special. She is strong. She is hard-working and consistent. She is independent. She's persistent. These are some of the same qualities as good "mothering"! The Tradeswoman who is a mother should have statues erected of her in parks and public places. She should be given awards and blue ribbons. Small airplanes should pull banners with her name across the sky.

Instead she gets something better! The hugs and kisses of little ones when she gets home from a hard day on the work site. The high wages that will pay for the best childcare she can find as well as paid vacations, health benefits, and a retirement plan. And don't forget the PRIDE that comes with all of it! (S.D....Retired Machinist and MOM!)

(Work Piece written by Nilsa Lopez, Sheet Metal Union 28, NYC @ 2013 Blue Jean Pocket Writers workshop, Women Building CA and the Nation conference.)

I started working in sheet metal when I was 28 years old. My child was small at the time. When I got laid off she would be full of joy. (*Because I was home*). (*While*) I would worry for the payment of bills. As she got older she thought of me as a super woman. She bragged about me to everyone; tells me how proud she is of me being a construction worker. It made me want to learn more. So I went to college and got my welding degree and certification through the union.

I'm an eight year breast cancer survivor and had three doctors tell me I couldn't work anymore. I cried like a baby because I know what it's like not to work. Then little by little my strength returned and I came back to work soon after.

I can still work! My daughter is still very proud of me!

© Nilsa Lopez, 2013

This poem from a Blue Jean Writers Workshop 2012. Beth wrote the poem inside a drawing of a tradeswomen on a 3 foot by 4 foot giant "post-it" to be enjoyed by the whole 2012 conference participants on the walls of the main hall! Here is a typed version of the work piece by Beth Barton, Carpenter and member of Missouri Women in the Trades! Picture the drawing in your mind enjoy!

A Woman In Construction © Beth Barton, Luebbering MO

What is it I want to say about work? That I LOVE it. I fear it. I need it. I am realizing my dream for myself that I can be loved (and be a woman) (and do dirty work) AND LOVE MYSELF. (When no one else loves me.) AND I CAN Figure it out (when I've never done it before.) AND I CAN MAKE IT LOOK EASY. Effortless – Fearless. (Even though I am a meek little girl inside ~~sometimes~~) I will learn for myself that a little girl can be a QUEEN. That a wallflower will become a WARRIOR. And that the universe loves this little girl. And then I will go out and create a new world where a woman in construction is a wonderful thing and help other women do the same.

IT WASN'T EASY GETTING HERE... By Cassie Hammond, Laborers Union Local 107, Tulsa OK

It wasn't easy getting here. Some days were really tough. Sometimes I wonder what I've done. Sometimes it's way too much. People seem surprised that I am where I am. Some people wonder: *who do I think I am*. I think I am the luckiest woman in the trades because I am not afraid to stand up for working people each and every day!

(Another Work Piece Written at the 2012 Blue Jean Pocket Writers Workshop)

THE TREE & ME

See that tree.

The one that is growing in three inches of dirt
That built up in the beam overtime.
It has a will to survive
Even in the winter,
It manages to stay alive.
There's little space to grow its roots
Yet it adapts and gets its footing.

I love that tree

It reminds me of me.

A woman out in the mills
With a great will to survive
No matter how little ground I have been given
To grow in, I'll get my footing.
And I will survive.

© 2012 Donna De Graaf-Smith,
Worker-writer & Gary Indiana Steel Mill worker

**PRIDE AND A PAYCHECK'S mailing address is
484 Lake Park Avenue, #315, Oakland CA 94610.**

Email us at: tradesis@aol.com and visit our website for back issues and tradeswomen resources in the US & beyond: www.prideandapaycheck.com Special thanks to Madeline Mixer, Jeanne Park and Joanna Parry-Kujala. Thanks also to Sisters in the Building Trades www.sitbt.org for support and photos. Thanks to artist Bulbul for cartoon on page 2. Thanks to 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) as well as the United Association of Labor Education, Local 189 (Affiliate of CWA), & Working Class Studies Assoc., Railroad Workers United (www.railroadworkersunited.org), NAWIC (National Assoc. of Women in Construction, the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), retired member of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) and International Association of Machinists (IAM). *Pride and a Paycheck's* produced by the Editor, with funds from a private grant thanks to Madeline Mixer. The Editor is solely responsible for the content. Printed at Fast-print, Oakland CA. LA's Women in Non Traditional Employment Roles (WINTER) is our current fiscal agent. **HELP US KEEP ON MAILING TO SCHOOLS AND APPRENTICESHIPS PROGRAMS. SEND US A ROLL OF STAMPS OR AS MANY AS YOU CAN AFFORD TO THE ADDRESS ABOVE!!!**

2013 Building Workforce Partnerships Conference – May 29-31, Hilton, San Jose. Register now at: <http://www.calaborfed.org>
Sponsored by the CA Labor Federation's Workforce and Economic Development Program, the annual Building Workforce Partnerships event draws together a diverse and national group of labor leaders, local and state policymakers, community advocates, environmentalists, educators, and job training and economic development professionals to debate the critical issues of the economy and the future of our society. This unique event is ultimately about collaboration -- only working together can labor, business, government, and communities bridge the economic needs of working families and the challenge of sustainable economic recovery and growth.

Report on the 2013 Women Building California and the Nation Conference

The Women Building California and the Nation conference in April 2013 was such a huge success, with a record 650 in attendance! And it's on to becoming International for 2014! Please join in to help make Women Build the Nations, April 25th – 27th 2014, Sacramento CA, the largest all-crafts tradeswomen conference in herstory.

The 2013 conference was the 3rd Annual for California and the Nation. Prior to this, for nine years, it was a California event. In 2011 the National Building and Construction Trades Department (BCTD) joined as a co-sponsor. 2013's event was jointly planned by the California Building Trades Council, Tradeswomen Inc. and the BCTD's Committee for Women in the Trades. These conferences are put on by Tradeswomen. No one was paid to do classes, workshops, outreach, videos, media, speak, stuff bags, beg for donations, set it up, take it down, etc.... Those were your Sisters, just pitching in. Sisters just like you. Everyone is welcome to be part of it and it is only with the help of hundreds of us that it will continue to be, bigger, better, badder and continue to make a difference.

To get an idea of the event, the Conference page is at <https://www.facebook.com/womenbuildcalifornia> The Women Build the Nation Conference page has thousands of photos, from 2008 to 2013. Go to Photos, and then click Albums. The photos are sorted in Albums. If you went to the conference you can help document this wonderful event by tagging, and filling in details about photos you know. Who is in them? From where? What trade? What was going on? What class, workshop? Who taught? What were you discussing? Why are you laughing? This is the only way that those details will be archived properly. Also if you have any photos or short vids or links to video taken at any of the conferences you wish to share with all, send to Melina Harris by e-mail as an attachment shyeshye@gmail.com or on a CD by snail mail. Sisters in the Building Trades, 17701 108th Avenue SE, PMB #131, Renton, WA 98055. This effort also allows women who met those they connected with at the conference to find and friend or send a hello to those women, networking us for the next one, and for progress on our needs, wants and issues as tradeswomen. So those that have questions, need mentors, etc. can reach us. It also helps women who have attended over the last decade find the page and participate. And those thinking of attending know what to expect. Please use the photos, and posted info to send thanks to anyone who sponsored you, and make sure you help your apprentices to do so. **(Conference info thanks to Melina Harris from Sisters in the Building Trades. www.sitbt.org and Tradeswomen, Inc. www.tradedswomen.org)** Also go to this site for more on the conference: http://california.construction.com/california_construction_news/2013/0422-union-tradeswomen-urged-to-become-leaders-at-big-sacramento-gathering.asp

Work Piece description and Haiku from the Blue Jean Pocket Writers workshop at the 2013 Women Building California and the Nation Conference from Dana Cross, Carpenter, Local 1325, Alberta Canada. *"This Poem expresses the surge of emotion I felt today while watching the slide show showing so many women in the trades. I feel honored to be a part of the group. For all the times I felt like the only woman in the industry, now I am a part of a whole and it feels so great to know I'm not alone."*

*Watching a slide show.
Profound. Simply a photo.
I am not alone.*

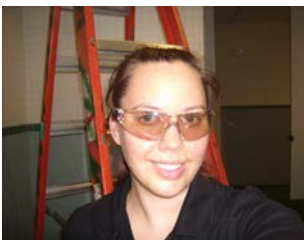
© Dana Cross, 2013

To see the tradeswomen conference photo video Dana is talking about go to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uhCdYkHPC30>



**2013 Conference! Picture yourself here
on April 25th -27th in 2014!**



Joanna

A special thank you to Joanna Perry-Kujala, Poet and Electrician IBEW Local 302 for facilitating the Blue Jean Pocket Writers Workshop at the 2013 conference. The number of powerful work pieces produced at the workshop are a testament to Joanna's skills as a leader in inspiring other tradeswomen to write about their crafts, families and feelings. Her talent as a Haiku poet inspired several participants to try their hands at the skill! Thank you Joanna for developing more sister worker-writers to use their creative forces in recording the herstory of women in the trades!

Pride and a Paycheck contact info is on page 3.