

Q: And how did that shift? What did you learn later about being a union organizer?

MR: Well, I think there are other things that became obvious once you're doing the work that that doesn't tell you. You have to be able to -- it's hard work. It's work that you have to work at very hard and it takes a great deal of dedication and commitment to work through it. And you have to be willing to work through problems and deal with very down side. You have to be willing to work with loses if that's necessary. You have to be willing to push people. And --

Q: Does being a woman -- did that have something to do with you being a little unsure about being a union organizer in the beginning?

MR: Probably because I don't think there were too many models for women leadership at the time. And -- I mean union organizers that I've met, men and women seem so knowing and competent. And they knew all about labor movement. And they were sharp politicians. I mean, they knew all about so many of these things. And I thought that would be very...

But I was also afraid of getting stuck in union organizing. And I still had in the back of my mind that somehow it was going to be some other lif p^o78326(r)-4967(-) H .59(A)11.15(n)]TJ 230.28 0 Td [(d)-6.024(-)-51.208(I)-4^o (2I)-4^o (2I)-4^o (2I)-4^o (No^o€ Eyp4^o)-

MR: I don't think it does very much anymore. At least not the clerical workers that I meet today. I think when -- in the seventies, there were probably a bunch of people -- women like me -- who took jobs at universities who had, you know, while they were doing something else. You know, they were artists or they

Q: What was the most important issue in that first contract?

MR: Well, wages, which were low, and not only the fact

Q: It had a culture.

MR: Yeah. It had a long history and a lot of progressive people in New York. knew District 65. And then the Columbia election kind of put us on the map again. Because it was a big win in New York.

Q: So, what happened next?

MR: Well, we had the first conference, but I was assigned to handle the grievances. To be kind of a contact administrator or business agent. They called them "organizers" at District 65. So, I was still called an organizer. We worked with our section of the union which was called the "Technical Office and Professional Division." It was mainly women. And the Vice President for the section at this point was a woman. So, we were separate from a lot of the union. I spent a lot of my time up at Columbia. We had sort of a crummy office up there that I stayed I most of the time.

Q: This is on campus or off-campus?

MR: It's actually on campus. It still has this kind of [LAUGHS] ...It's the 190th Street and Amsterdam area. It's a dungeon. My only experience was in going to the negotiations at Columbia. So I had to kind of learn everything from scratch.

Q: So you had stewards at that point in the local?

MR: Well, we elected stewards. We weren't really a local at that point. I guess you'd call it the Columbia local. We elected stewards and so on. And I was supposed to work with the stewards. And none of us knew how to do anything. None of us [LAUGHS] -- you know, we sort of learned. We kind of trained ourselves. There was a contract. We struggled with it. We tried to figure out how to do things. But none of us knew how to do anything. And then I handled a lot of grievances. It was like a sink or swim situation. So, I'm kind of grateful for that experience in a way because over a period of a few years I just handled hundreds of grievances.
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MR: Because I knew that it was a progressive union. And I had heard about it.

