

Interview with Marcia Reid
Shop Steward at AFT
February 2018

1. For how long have you worked at AFT?

I came to AFT as a consultant in December 1987, and was hired full-time permanent December 11, 1988. I will be honored for 30 years of service at AFT's National Staff Meeting in December 2018.

2. Overall, has it changed?

Yes. When I first came to AFT, I felt like I landed in a workplace Utopia. The pay was great, the benefits were phenomenal, and there appeared to be a great deal of comradery amongst the employees. Now, everyone appears to be uptight and operating as if they were competitors on "Survivor." It's not just happening in my shop, it's happening all across Labor. We need to create more bonding activities.

3. For how long have you been Shop Steward?

I've been the elected shop steward (or assistant shop steward) for over 20 of my 30 years at AFT.

4. Why did you originally run to become Shop Steward? Did you have a sense of what you were getting into?

My mother was president of her AFGE local for over 20 years, and my father was a cement mason, and very active in his union, so I grew up in an active labor union home. During a point in my employment, I was angry about something that the personnel director (pre- creation of HR department) had done and I accepted the nomination to run for shop steward so that I could be on equal footing to fight with her. Once the playing field was a little more balanced, we began to see the challenges from each other's perspective...which improved our ability to progressively improve working conditions for my unit members. We eventually gained respect for each other and actually became good friends.

5. What are some of the lessons you've learned from being Shop Steward?

- Not all managers are "The Devil" 😊
- Unit members lie too 😞
- Helping someone to solve a problem is worth the pains that come with being a shop steward.

6. Any funny stories?

Yes, but I'm saving them for the screenplay I'm writing – LOL!

7. What's something you're proud of? It could be something you alone did or something you and your unit accomplished together.

I'm proud that many of my unit members still come to the monthly unit meetings and that during our internal election process, many clamor to get actively involved in our leadership roles and committees. I'm proud that we have a very progressive labor/management committee that Management has a great deal of respect for. I'm proud of the pride my unit members have about being an OPEIU member!

8. What would you like to see your unit accomplish within the next few years?

I would like to see my unit accomplish whatever it is that they want collectively. It's not about my vision, it's about OUR vision.

9. What are you finding to be most challenging as Shop Steward?

My biggest challenge is accepting "No" from Management, when I know the answer should be "YES!"

10. How would you like to grow in your role as Shop Steward?

I would like to continually encourage newcomers to the labor movement (young and old) to become more active in their union. I look forward to passing the shop steward torch to others who will be as passionate about improving and protecting our CBA as I have been.

11. Any words of wisdom for other Shop Stewards?

- It takes a great deal of compassion
- Listen with your ears (and your eyes)
- Form a connection with shop stewards at other employers, so you can help each other
- Attend the quarterly Local 2 membership meetings
- Participate in activities to raise funds for the Community Services Agency. You don't want to have to give a unit member a referral, but when you need to, you'll be glad that CSA is around!
- Quote from George Meany – "You only make progress by fighting for progress."

12. What's something you'd like others to know about your unit?

I'd like others to know that the OPEIU unit at AFT are an AMAZING group of people, who are very giving, supportive, Proud to be OPEIU, and that I love that they have repeatedly shown their trust in me to enforce our contract!

Something that I have posted at my desk, and that I regularly share with my unit members...a quote from Benjamin Franklin – "We must indeed all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately."