



**TURNING
THE PAGE**
The Newsletter
of the PSC
Retiree Chapter

*We asked retirees who have been members since 1972 to **TURN THE PAGES** -- to write about their most memorable PSC moment(s) as the union celebrates its 50th year.*

Joan Greenbaum, Editor
psc-cuny.org/retirees

OUR CAMPAIGN AGAINST MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PLUS

When a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.

Samuel Johnson

As a model of a solidarity campaign – of a sustained effort to educate, organize and mobilize rank-and-filers in their own interest and that of workers in general, with all its grass roots energy, its confusion, contingency and unpredictable outcome – not much surpasses our current fight with NYC and its Office of Labor Relations (OLR) over its attempt to force municipal retirees from Medicare to the private, for profit, so-called Medicare Advantage Plus health-insurance plan.

It started by word of mouth in the Spring of 2021. A heads-up from a District Council 37 retiree in Florida went to an MEA retiree in NYC: the Municipal Labor Committee (MLC) had quietly cut a deal with the OLR to try to save money at the expense of retirees. Background research by a PSC retiree and agitation by the union's Social Safety Net Working Group sparked a petition campaign organized by COMRO (The Council of Municipal Retirees Organizations). Next came a lawsuit filed by the ad hoc NYC Organization of Public Service Retirees, followed by a series of rallies and demonstrations by both active and retired city employees. Press coverage picked up. Union members lobbied public officials. There was a public hearing. More demonstrations. Community based and advocacy organizations began to headline the issue. The PSC researched and exposed the inadequacies of the contract between the MLC, the OLR and the private insurers. Outrage mushroomed over the lack of consultation and public discussion. Nearly one-third of those affected chose to opt out of the proposed change, even though that choice would cost an individual over \$2,000 a year. From the beginning, The PSC Retiree Chapter and the PSC Social Safety Net

Working Group networked tirelessly with PSC members, union and non-union retiree organizations and health care advocacy groups.

The union has begun to explore alternative health-care savings with sister unions both within the MLC and in the private sector. We've put the health care crisis on the table on behalf of all working people in NYC, union and non-union, employed and unemployed, documented and undocumented. But, of course, the future lies ahead. They're hell bent on privatizing everything.

Jim Perlstein, BMCC

EXERCISING UNION SOLIDARITY

Looking back over the 50 years I've been in the PSC, several moments stand out:

1. I was present in the meeting in the early days of the PSC when we voted for a strike authorization in response to CUNY Administration's stalling in the first contract negotiations. There was a sense of union solidarity and potential power, a willingness to use labor's strongest tool - withholding our labor, daring to disrupt the "machine". We didn't use the tool for a variety of reasons, but the expression of collective resistance was important.
1. Years later, in the 2000s, again in the context of contract negotiations, there was a very active mobilization to prepare for a strike authorization vote, resulting in a 92% "Yes" vote. Again, the strike was not used, but the union was stronger for having faced the possibility and expressed a willingness.
1. During the 2000s the union began to use labor civil disobedience as a tool of resistance and activism. Many people have been arrested in a series of actions in Albany and in the city, mainly around CUNY issues but also in solidarity with other workers (NYU grad students organizing campaign).

These were times when we weren't talking about union solidarity and power but were exercising it, experiencing it. History shows that unions are effective when they unite and fight. I'm glad that these struggles for our own interests and those of other parts of the working class have been part of the PSC's history. May they become stronger as we move forward.

John Hyland, LaGuardia

WOMEN'S LAWSUIT

Thank you for your invitation to write a paragraph regarding my PSC experience but the truth is, that I didn't pay much attention to the union nor did I even vote in favor of unionizing. Fortunately, clearer heads prevailed! And I will say I always used the pocket calendar that appeared every Autumn.

One pre-union event occurred that probably wouldn't happen now. When I signed on at city I was still working on my PhD so was appointed a lecturer with the proviso I would be promoted to Assistant Professor when the degree was completed. When that time

came my department chairman said nothing. When I approached him he said something to the effect of why did I care about the promotion and the money as he had heard my husband did well financially. And he was a very nice man!

Then there was the lawsuit brought by a group of women from Brooklyn College in the 1970s who realized women were earning considerably less than their male counterparts. I was astonished by that news. I received a settlement in the amount of about \$4,000 but the pay disparity was not addressed and continued on for the remainder of my years at City.

I will continue my membership in the PSC (due largely to the retirees and especially Bill Friedheim) but not happily given the resolution passed in 2021 regarding the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. To my knowledge it is only one of a handful of foreign policy positions the PSC has ever taken and this one is biased, thoughtless, erroneous and anti-Semitic at its core. It is even silly. Moreover, this resolution says little that's true about Israel but much about the PSC members who drafted and passed it. It shows that they are poor uninformed scholars, shallow thinkers easily persuaded to take harmful actions and essentially biased against Jews. They are indeed second rate and it is difficult for me to belong to a second rate and bigoted group. Some PSC members have dropped out...or tried... because of this resolution. They and I deserve a huge apology and the resolution must be rescinded.

Doris Weisberg, CCNY

SUPPORTING ADJUNCTS

As the Deputy Chair of the Dept. of Mathematics at Baruch College, I was in charge of hiring and supervising the adjunct staff, a very large contingent. So many of these members of the department were trying to make ends meet by teaching elsewhere as well. It was rough for them and they had my sympathy and understanding. I have been following, with great satisfaction, the steady progress that the PSC has made in supporting and adding benefits to this very vital part of the teaching staff at CUNY.

Dr. Susan L. Friedman, Baruch.

QUEENS COLLEGE

My husband, Patrick W. Brock arrived in NY to take a faculty position at Queens College in September, 1970, and so he has been connected to PSC-CUNY for nearly 52 years. The most memorable event, indeed the pivotal moment, occurred as he first planted himself in NYC. He had lived in six different countries over the previous 38 years, and he had no expectation of this pattern changing. However, he found that the way of life and conditions around faculty work at Queens College were welcoming and sufficiently congenial that he "*became stuck*"; he remained on the QC faculty until his retirement in 2013, and we still live in the neighborhood. The union's activities made a real contribution to the overall attractiveness of life as a QC faculty member.

Pamela Chase Brock, Queens

MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR CLTS

I was a high school science teacher and came to Hunter College to obtain my Master's degree. As I could not afford to attend full time, I worked as a College Laboratory Technician for the Medical Technology Program at Hunter College from its inception, then stayed until I retired as Chief CLT in 2006. I also taught as an adjunct instructor in a few programs and colleges at CUNY.

I was able to make a difference in the lives of CLTs at CUNY by my work at the PSC as CLT chapter vicepresident, as a member of the University Faculty Senate and as an Officer of the General Faculty at the Hunter College Delegate Assembly. And, I started the Hunter College Council of Laboratory Technicians.

There was so much that I was able to accomplish with the encouragement of good faculty and staff at the PSC, CUNY and at Hunter College. It would be too long a list here to include everyone and all that I was able to do, but I especially want to thank former HC President David Caputo, former HC Nursing Professor Margaret Magnus, and former HC School of Social Work Professor Paul Kurzman for their encouragement, and for giving me the opportunity to serve in various capacities.

Ellen P. Steinberg, Hunter

“PSC MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO STAY AT CITY”

I don't know what year I became a dues-paying member, but I began teaching in the City College music department (as it was then called) as a part-time lecturer in 1963, then full-time from '64-'73, and serving as an assistant professor from 1974-79, but not awarded tenure. This is where PSC comes in: our union had included in its negotiations that if a faculty member had taught as a lecturer, full-time, for seven years, she/he was granted tenure! That allowed me to continue publishing and teaching at CCNY, becoming assistant professor with tenure in 1982 and associate professor in 1986. I retired in Jan. 1 998 to conduct a community chorus and complete a book on Estonian music. In 2022 I'm still writing and singing, in part, because PSC made it possible for me to stay at CCNY for 34 years.

Mimi S. Daitz, CCNY

“A MUCH NEEDED BUT LITTLE NOTED SAFEGUARD”

I joined the PSC since its inception and continue to pay a voluntary contribution.

I was an avid supporter of Barbara Bowen as PSC President, and am still appreciative of her leadership.

One provision of the PSC-led contract, that might be little noticed, but for which I will always be grateful is the requirement that the chair of the department have an annual conference with all non-tenured members to inform them of their progress and tell them

what they need to achieve "satisfactory progress." This "record" could provide evidence for any dispute over tenure. I never had a problem with either tenure or promotion but very much appreciated the "peace of mind" this provided.

This provision was a much needed but little noted safeguard against arbitrary decisions by CUNY officials and administrators.

Irving Leonard Markovitz, Queens

CCNY CHAPTER CHAIR

I would note two points in the fifty years of my union membership, both having to do with elections. The first was the original election that established the union, when colleagues thought that professors were not workers, so didn't belong in a union.

Fortunately, much as some thought they were above all that, the majority had more sense. I do remember that one of my friends was really surprised that I was voting for the union; he could not imagine being in an actual union. Colleagues who are much younger, and still active, and claim to be politically at least liberal, are nevertheless very much anti-union. I have not understood their explanation. I

In addition, the conservative group did not disappear with the formation of the union. More than 30 years later, I got pushed into running for chapter chair, as no one else on our side was willing to take the job, and I got pushed to run—so I ran. My opponent made a lot of noise, but it was not much of a campaign. Since neither of us wanted to debate, it boiled down to alternating emails. I believe in the end I was the only one who read his emails, and he was the only one who read mine; his main campaign point seemed to be that his father was a friend of Teamster leader Jimmy Hoffa, a credential I could not match. If I remember correctly, he was not even the actual candidate, but got a friend to run for the chair.

I was, however, one of the young scientists in the 1970s who was recruited by famous safety and health labor activist Tony Mazzocchi to talk to workers in OCAW (Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers) District 8 about occupational hazards; I actually learned a fair amount from this myself. I used this to claim some union credentials too. Either way, in the end, I won by exactly one vote. With this landslide, the New Caucus held on to the chapter. We also kept the majority in the chapter executive committee. I must admit to a great sense of relief when a friend agreed to be chair three years later, so I did not have to run for re-election. Overall, I am very glad that we had the union—we really needed it.

Mike Green, City College

“THE UNION WAS ALWAYS THERE”

I joined when it started as an adjunct group, and was active at first but gradually let the pros take over. I started in 1969 as an adjunct at Brooklyn College Sociology; got full

time position in 1970ish. Deputy Department Chair for the School of General Studies (evening division) for years, and Department Head twice, both during fiscal crises. The union was always there to offer a hand to those of us who had the least pay and privileges, but, ironically, the most to lose. Thanks!

Jerome Krase, Brooklyn College

“FIGHTING FOR A BETTER CUNY”

A memorable moment, in fact a life-changing day in my fifty years at CUNY, was the day I went to testify against the end of Open Admissions and met activists from all over CUNY who were passionate about the right of all CUNY students to a great education. That is the day I first met the beauty of Barbara Bowen and so many other PSC activists. My CUNY life changed from one of isolation at York to joining with my colleagues, including Randy Punter and Peter Ranis of York, to fight for a better CUNY and a better world. We became the New Caucus at York. We won our chapter election around the same time Barbara Bowen became PSC President.

So much changed after that: pay increases we hadn't seen before, sabbaticals that more people could afford to take, healthcare for adjuncts and so much more. Working with the PSC was the beginning of some of the proudest, most memorable moments of my life, and I will be eternally grateful.

Janice Cline, York

THE MELANI CLASS ACTION

There are many significant PSC memories for me but one of the most powerful was in the third year of my career when I became an activist in the Melani Class action lawsuit. This court case focused on those whose promotions were held up, tenure refused, no access to significant committee assignments, etc. which resulted in a small minority of women in faculty positions. It was a decade-long battle.

The women were a relatively small group of more than 300 CUNY activists, led by a committed Brooklyn College English professor, Lilia Melani. In monthly meetings, we began to raise legal funds, gain access to the incriminating data and work undetected on campuses. This was a very unpopular cause, and those of us involved were constantly afraid of the backlash during that era.

I recall the elation when reading that the PSC was joining the effort! The union decided to contribute funds for the computer data analysis - and CUNY instantly recognized that this powerful ally was supporting *all* of its members. History would be made, two years later, as CUNY negotiated as they lost the court case.

As a side note, the settlement also included funding for the first Women's Leadership Institute* which then flourished from 1983 to 1992. As the director, I organized annual leadership conferences and workshops as well as professional scholarships for CUNY women and other regional higher education faculty and administrators.

Wonderful memories, PSC. Thank you.

J. Juechter, Bronx CC

SALARY STEPS AND “UNION ALL THE WAY”

One of the many aspects of union membership I benefitted from and enjoyed was the clear explication of salary steps. At non-union universities the yearly allotment of money can be divided in political, even haphazard ways. I was very relieved not to have to compete for my fair share of the pot, look over my shoulder, or stew over what the next guy might be getting. With clear salary steps, we knew what to expect and could plan accordingly.

Joanne E Bernstein, Brooklyn

THE PSC AND NEW BYLAWS AT QCC

As a result of the formation of the PSC, my college was given the opportunity to write and approve a 'new ' set of by-laws. It was my pleasure to be part of the 'faculty 'group that did so. It withstood many attempts to weaken it.

Paul Weiss, Queensborough

UFS AND PSC GO TO COURT

In the 1990's when Ann Reynolds was CUNY chancellor, the governor and the state legislature were playing their usual budget games and CUNY faced serious cuts sufficient so that the dread phrase "financial exigency" was loose in the land (or at least in the halls of 80th St.)

Having lived through the 1975-76 slash and burn cut backs, the last thing I wanted to see was more tenure breaking and faculty layoffs. After a few meetings with Irwin Polishook, then union president and Richard Boris, then vice president, the UFS and the PSC went to court and ... *mirabile dictu*... we won on the first round.

Meanwhile, as I had expected, the budget was revised upwards and the exigency averted. CUNY then won on the Appeals level and rather than appeal further. we worked out a deal. Naturally the Board of Trustees have ignored it and subsequent central offices act as if it was not binding. The deal was a compact that the Central administration and the chancellor would conduct serious discussions with the Union and the Senate if the financial outlook looked threatening. It was honored to a degree when Louise Mirrer was vice chancellor for academic affairs and ignored entirely by Alexandra Logue, author of "Pathways."

The University Faculty Senate considered its charge to oversee fair and cooperative governance and academic affairs as a serious trust.

By the way, the chancellor is a member of the University Faculty Senate and up to the current occupant of that post, the chancellor *a/ways* spoke at the monthly UFS meetings -- or sent a vice chancellor. When I retired, I was honored by the UFS with lifetime membership -- no vote, of course. I attended a UFS meeting when Chancellor Matos-Rodriguez had just been named. He came to a September meeting and has not come since.

Sandi Cooper, CSI (Past Chair of the UFS)

“I OWE A DEBT TO PSC AND PROFESSOR POLISHOOK”

I have been a proud member of PSC for the past 50 years. As a professor emerita of Lehman College, I know how important it is to have a union that protects the interests of all who are part of CUNY, including its retirees. This past year the PSC has been especially active in protecting the retiree healthcare program and I, as are all retirees, am so appreciative of their work on our behalf.

My interactions with PSC go beyond being an active member. It dates back nearly 50 years when I asked the psychology department of Lehman College to consider my promotion from assistant professor to associate professor. Although my department recommended me for promotion, the larger college group turned down the promotion. I was indeed disappointed because I believed I was qualified for the promotion. However, disappointment turned to anger when I learned that my Department Chair had not forwarded my full resume to the larger group. I then sent the fuller resume to the president asking for a review. He, in turn, upheld the decline of my promotion.

When I learned that the department chair had made some negative comments about my gender, this led me to believe that sex discrimination was involved in my being turned down for promotion. Professor Irwin Polishook was then the college union representative and I turned to him for help in challenging the college's decision to deny my promotion. He said he would and asked an attorney at PSC to represent me. My husband, who was an attorney, also volunteered to help with my case.

With both my husband and the PSC attorney working on my behalf, the matter of my being denied a promotion, with sexual discrimination as part of the reason for this denial, was sent to arbitration. The arbitrator listened to the arguments made by my attorneys and after their presentation asked to see resumes of other professors in my departments to compare them to the resume the department sent forward on my behalf. This information clearly demonstrated that the department chair deleted much vital data from my resume; thus, not allowing the larger college committee and the President to appropriately judge my qualifications for promotion.

Before the arbitrator could make a decision, Lehman's president granted my promotion. My attorneys accepted on my behalf, stressing that this decision took two years and they did not want my next promotion to be held up because of this

delay. The President agreed. My attorneys also granted the president's request that my case not be pursued legally beyond the college.

I owe a debt to PSC and Professor Polishook for pursuing a promotion case that most people told us could not be resolved to my satisfaction. It was and my promotion to full professor came quickly afterwards.

Arline Bronzaft, Lehman College

PSC DURING THE SEVENTIES FISCAL CRISIS

I remember when the PSC-CUNY became our bargaining unit. I was rather disturbed that some areas of faculty governance were now out of bounds because they were subjects of contractual negotiations. I wondered if my vote for the union had been wise.

Two memories:

I was on sabbatical and off to a week-long backpacking trip in the Adirondacks. As I was picking up last minute supplies in a small store, I noticed the headline "CUNY Closed." I decided to not read the story and off I went. Nice trip. When I got back, I realized how dire the situation was. Lots of us were scared we might lose our jobs in what had become a tight higher education job market.

My second memory was being in Glen Nygreen's office (Dean of Students at the time) rolling dice to determine the retrenchment order with the other simultaneous hires in the Philosophy Department.

Through this period I remember becoming happy that we did have a union; I believe CUNY would have suffered greater cuts if we weren't represented by the PSC.

Andrew McLaughlin, Lehman College

FROM A UNION FAMILY

I began my 35-year CUNY career in 1970. The son of a salesman who'd spent several nights in jail for union activities, I was very happy for the merger that created the PSC. I dropped out of the union for a few years when I found myself, as a department chair, the designated defendant at a grievance of a colleague whose reappointment I had strongly supported.

The 1970s financial crisis resulted in several dismissals of untenured faculty made from lists created by administration. I was glad to end that stint as chair and return - permanently - to union membership. Twenty years later I was again chair, and faced a management decision to close my department, teacher education. I worked closely with Cecilia McCall, then PSC chapter chair, to fight this action. We collaborated through our paired testimony to the CUNY Trustees. Alas, management power prevailed.

Jeff Golland, Baruch/Lehman

“A WELL-CRAFTED UNION GRIEVANCE SAVED MY BACON!”

I worked for several units in City University from 1972-2013. Taught General Psychology at Queens College as adjunct lecturer in summer 1972 in Room 222. Watched with interest as LC merged and became PSC. Early 1982-83 I chaired the DSC and wrote an article for the DSC newsletter “Adjunct Unrest in the Academic Villages” which led to launching our first decertification campaign because adjuncts earn \$40/hr not nearly prorated pay! Also, I challenged GC Prez Hal Proshansky to get CUNY Bylaws changed so Graduate Assistant A was reserved for Graduate Students only. Columbia, NYU, and Cornell grad students had monopolized those well-paid GA/A’s.

We had hired a law firm who didn’t represent management. During the PERB window of opportunity for getting Union membership signature cards, however the campus Administrations played dirty and kicked us off campus which limited our number of new Union members. Our lawyer sued and won for unfair labor practices. But we lost by 300 votes for a new election. In those days 5% raise for full professor salary was \$4000 whereas the low paid adjunct got \$2 on the \$40/hr pay scale. Not until Barbara Bowen and Steve London took the helm of the PSC did important things to improve academic life, not just salaries.

As an assistant professor, I brought in a quarter million dollars in prestigious grants in my first three years. However, administration practices favored department chairs as Principal Investigators. With two PhDs (philosophy 1990 and developmental psychology 2000) and an MPH in the history of public health and medicine from Columbia (2006) I was able to teach, write and publish across the disciplines as a tenured Associate Professor in the BMCC Social Science Department.

Petty jealousies almost cost me tenure but a well-crafted Union grievance saved my bacon! After 30 years of teaching college and a one-year sabbatical I was happy to retire in September 2013.

Jonathan Lang, BMCC

EQUAL PAY FOR WOMEN

I've been a member of the union for over 50 years and I am still grateful for its efforts on my behalf, for other women, and for all its members. Coming from a family that supported unions, I never had doubts about joining one. But the union's crusade for equal pay for women actually proved that I had made the right decision.

When I started teaching at Queens College in 1967, I was paid less than my male colleagues even though we received our Ph.D.'s at the same time and I had more publications. A familiar story but because of the union, "equal pay for equal work" became the rule in the City University. In addition, at that time paid maternity leave was not an option, which is no longer the case. After a 1972-73 maternity leave (without pay although a grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities supported the book I

was preparing), I was asked to start my steps to tenure all over again. Although I had been teaching full-time for 6 years, I was told that I would have to teach for another 6 years before being considered for tenure. I fought this decision with the help of the union and won. Without the PSC, I doubt that I would have been teaching until I chose to retire in 2016.

Rose-Carol Washton [Ricki] Long, Graduate Center

“DROPS OF WATER TURN A MILL; SINGLY NONE, SINGLY NONE...”

Here is a small story about the PSC at Brooklyn College.

I was active in the BC chapter, and was a delegate to the AFT conventions, in Detroit in 1980 and in Denver in 1981. I did, however, participate actively in the opposition caucuses at those conventions. In the Detroit convention, there was a vote for the full AFT leadership, and the incumbents insisted on an open ballot — meaning that each individual delegate’s votes for every position would become general knowledge. The progressive activists insisted that the open ballot was oppressive and intimidating, and called for secret ballots. As with so many issues at the time, of course, this one was decided in favor of the leadership view.

When the votes were published, the vertical line of x’s had a little break next to my name, like a missing tooth. My decision not to vote for Al Shanker’s re-election was noted; this was, I was told, an embarrassment to the PSC delegation leadership, which was solidly composed of City University Union Caucus (CUUC) members. The PSC had, it seemed, an obligation to demonstrate that it could keep its ducks all in a row. In the event, the CUUC leadership later retaliated, and bumped me off of the PSC slate of delegates for future AFT and NYSUT conventions.

When my time for re-election to the BC Executive Committee arrived, in the late 1980s, I decided to run as an independent. I circulated a statement, explaining the CUUC caucus’ need for complete unanimity and objecting to this and (of course) all of the rest of their positions. My statement was, of course, a precursor to what would become the New Caucus platform in the early 2000s. I campaigned hard at Brooklyn. In the end, I got 40% of the vote, which was regarded as quite respectable; but it turned out not to be enough to overcome the enormous weight of slate voting, as many people simply checked the CUUC slate box and avoided having to go down the ballot and vote for separate individuals.

Now fast forward a bit, to the late 1990s. Steve London came forward with a proposal that we run “a few” people in the next round of election for the BC Executive Committee. We talked about this. I told him of my earlier experience running as an individual independent, and its lesson: we would have to run a complete slate, not just contend for a few spots, if we hoped to counter the CUUC slate. That is what happened. We did put together a full slate — and we won. Steve became chapter

chair.

I believe the victory at Brooklyn College galvanized the movement, along with Queens, John Jay, BMCC, LaGuardia, etc., that led to the formation of the New Caucus and the victory in the union-wide elections some years later. So in my — obviously biased! — telling of the story, I turn out to have played a *key* early role in the chain of events that led to — us!

The moral is obvious, and can be stated briefly. Every little bit counts. “Drops of water turn a mill; singly none, singly none. . .”

David Laibman, Brooklyn College

EARLY DAYS AT QUEENS COLLEGE WITH THE FACULTY UNION

I came to Queens College in September of 1966 as a math lecturer. The chair of the math department was T. Freeman Cope, an affable Texan who was very conservative. Once, on seeing a male student with long hair, he wondered out loud, whether the student was male or female. I pointed out the George Washington also wore his hair long, but that didn't seem to make any difference to him.

My politics were radical, I was against the Vietnam War, and found like-minded people on campus, mostly outside of my department. Also, I soon became involved with the new faculty union on campus that represented the lecturers, the United Federation of College Teachers or UFCT. I became a grievance counselor, working under the very able Edgar Pauk, who was grievance chairman at Queens (He later became head of grievances for all of CUNY.)

The first few years under the new collective bargaining agreement between the UFCT and CUNY were difficult. Someone told me that when two parties can't agree on substance, they often agree on language. I believe that this is what happened here and it led to numerous grievances. However, one substantive area of agreement, that full-time employees in the unit would be eligible to achieve permanent status, was not popular with many departments at Queens. Under the new contract, lecturers that were hired for a sixth year received a “certificate of continuous employment.” This was roughly equivalent to tenure. The Sociology Department, on learning of this provision, fired those lecturers who had five years of service to prevent “being stuck” with them. In particular, I remember them firing a young lecturer who was, perhaps, the most popular teacher in the department.

I was the grievance counselor assigned to her and we first had an informal meeting with the Chairman and the Assistant Chairman. At that meeting, the Assistant Chairman complained about the contract and said that they never envisioned lecturers as permanent members of their department and also he would have difficulty writing a letter of recommendation for someone who filed a grievance!

We immediately filed a grievance on his “difficulty.” The grievance was “heard” by President McMurray’s designee, a sharp lawyer from Washington, D.C. He started off by warning everyone that the Assistant Chairman’s alleged statement was a seriously violation of the contract and wouldn’t be tolerated and then went around the table asking if anyone indeed made that threat. The grievant and I said he did; the others denied it. We failed to win the grievance or indeed to retain her job. However, no one ever threatened a grievant in that way again and the lecturer had no trouble getting another position; I assume she had good letters of recommendation from the Sociology Department.

In the Fall of 1968, we had to deal with trouble between the SEEK program and the College. SEEK proposed a list of faculty members that they intended to hire to the College. The College rejected 15 on the list and sent letters to all 15 informing them that they were not going to be hired by the College and that if they set foot on campus they would be subject to arrest! The union found out that all 15 had arrest records (evidently the College had been working with the police or FBI to identify potential “trouble makers.”). Fourteen of these were black students who had been arrested in April at Columbia during a sit in at Hamilton Hall and the 15th was a black woman who had been arrested during a civil rights march in the South. I recall vividly the step two grievance (at the chancellor’s level) for the woman arrested in the South. Vice Chancellor Mintz offered to allow her to work for SEEK for one year but then she would have to leave. When we rejected this offer, he told us that this was only the second time that a college president’s decision would be overturned and asked us, derisively, what it was that we wanted. Edgar Pauk, head of the grievance committee at Queens answered, “What do we want? We want Justice.” It was exactly right.

In 1971, the UFCT met with then President Joseph Murphy and I told him how valuable to our students the lecturers were at Queens College, because they only had a teaching commitment. I said that I thought that if they were replaced by Harvard faculty the results would be worse! He shot back, “How do you know, did you go to Harvard?” I replied that no, I went to Princeton, but that I think the results would be about the same.

In 1972 the UFCT merged with the Legislative Conference to form the Professional Staff Congress or PSC.

Robert Cowen, Queens

PSC CREDIT UNION

I arrived at Hunter in September, 1970 from the Federal Reserve Board, looking for an academic career. I had been witness to a tumultuous decade in Washington, with Vietnam and Civil Rights protests, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King’s ‘March for Freedom’ and then his shooting, riots in the streets, and Bobby Kennedy also shot dead.

The 1970s in New York at the City University were different. Open admissions brought in new students, sorely in need of remedial education; and then the city's descent in 1975 to the brink of bankruptcy, with pay suspended, a recovery with that ran into a garbage strike, stagflation and, at the end of the decade, interests rising toward 20 percent, two depressions and a transit strike—the serenity of academic life.

In the Fall of 1977, internal conflicts within the Municipal Credit Union lead to members withdrawing their funds. Fearing collapse, Muriel Siebert, then Superintendent of the New York State Banking Department, took control. I went to the Credit Union offices to watch as people stand in long lines to withdraw their money. I had read about bank-runs, but I had never seen one. Even with Banking Department representatives assuring those in line that their money was guaranteed by an agency of the Federal government, no one left. A week or so later, I was asked to join an emergency board for the Credit Union that Ms. Seibert had put in place.

The Municipal Credit Union's problems, and the on-going financial problems of faculty and staff, convinced me that the City University should have its own credit union. I talked about it with Dave Burkes (now deceased) who, as I recall, was the PSC representative at Hunter. He brought the suggestion to the PSC leadership who agreed to sponsor and provide facilities. We organized the PSC Credit Union, providing deposit and credit services. I sat on the Board for a few years, learned 'hands-on' from the inside about the work of a financial institution, and stayed a member after I retired, after I found it personally useful, and even after it merged—in part out of pride for what we had accomplished, and in part because I never wanted to give up my credit union account number, the single digit, '1.'

Bernard Shull, Hunter

CITY HALL CAMPSITE AND PROTEST

I am and have been a LC/PSC member since inception.

My most significant memory, amongst so many others, dates back to the NYC fiscal crisis of the 70's.

During the "lockout" wage freeze, I and a few other (then young) PSC members set up a round the clock campsite behind City Hall in Manhattan in an attempt to draw attention to our plight. We camped and protested for about a week attracting some press coverage and sympathy from many fellow NYers.

Food was brought to us by our union brethren and the local merchants and sports clubs supported us with toilet facilities and showers.

All in all a tedious but rewarding experience of union fellowship.

Sherman Heller CSI

UP THE ESCALATOR: BUILDING UNION POWER FROM BELOW.

On 9/11/01, BMCC lost a 15-story facility with 370,000 square feet of classroom space when parts of World Trade Center #7 collapsed on Fitterman Hall. As a result, by the fall of 2002, 18,000 students and 2,000 faculty and staff crowded into BMCC's main campus, a six-floor building constructed two decades earlier to house a maximum of 8,700 people. Conditions quickly deteriorated from bad to intolerable when sixteen of twenty escalators and all four elevators ground to a halt, with excessive strain on BMCC's "vertical transportation system" compounded by years of poor maintenance and neglect. Horror stories abounded. As reported in the December '02 *Clarion*, "one disabled student, who lost both legs a decade ago in a Bosnian land mine explosion, typically spends hours each week negotiating the vertical distance between his classes, often forced to leave the building to get from A to B." Asthmatics wheezed as they climbed stairs to sixth floor classes as did pregnant students.

The BMCC PSC chapter, with invaluable assistance from the central union, was the fulcrum for moving from crisis to solution, mobilizing the anger of faculty, staff and students, and reaching out to potential allies in the community, the trade union movement, the City Council and the media. We targeted the chancellery and State Dormitory Authority and in specific, Vice Chancellor Allan Dobrin, who had immediate responsibility for CUNY's physical plant. Our demand was multi-faceted.: Commit to full funding and a rapid timetable for short and mid-term repair of the escalators and elevators, ongoing maintenance and most important, long-term replacement.

Our main tool of organization was a college-wide petition with our demands directed to Dobrin, the chancellery and the State Dormitory Authority. We met with student government and enlisted their support, mobilized DC 37 secretaries and PSC HEOs to help with distribution and organized a core of PSC faculty activists to distribute petitions to colleagues at departmental meetings and the Faculty Council. Colleagues in turn circulated petitions in their classes. Within a month we had 5,700 signatures. Faculty and students visited City Council representatives. Articles in our regular chapter newsletter, *Clarion*, a student newspaper and a local Tribeca weekly spread the story. PSC central helped to broker a meeting with Dobrin and helped us to research the issue. The BMCC administration was a reluctant ally, wanting the situation remedied, but hesitant to push its superiors at 80th Street with the necessary urgency and rage.

We met with Dobrin, already embarrassed by bad publicity, in December, presenting our short- and long-term demands. WE WON EVERYTHING! Dobrin and the Dormitory Authority committed \$12 million to the project. Short-term repair began immediately. Maintenance was ongoing. Construction and replacement of new escalators and elevators was phased in over the next two years. By organizing and building alliances, the union made a difference.

Bill Friedheim, BMCC

IRWIN POLISHOOK AND TIAA:

“AN INVISIBLE PROCESS THAT PRODUCED A VITALLY IMPORTANT RESULT”

My memorable moment involves an invisible process that produced a vitally important result. There were no mass meetings, no demonstrations, no rousing speeches. Instead it was the work of the union – largely through the persistence of the president – that made the difference. My memorable moment is after-retirement health benefits for TIAA members.

Until 1983, TIAA members did not have after retirement health benefits as did those in TRS. Irwin Polishook, then the PSC president, realized that this had to change as more and more CUNY faculty wanted TIAA over the rapidly declining benefits of TRS. He approached NYC and argued that CUNY could not attract or retain quality faculty unless the TIAA option included after retirement health benefits. NYC balked because of cost and the fact that TRS provided such benefits: let faculty choose that retirement plan.

The PSC argued over and over that such an argument was destructive of the University since in the real-world quality faculty wanted TIAA, which was portable, over a deteriorating TRS that was limited to CUNY. Irwin Polishook made sure to gain the support of the United Federation of Teachers, whose members made up most of the TRS constituency, for the PSC position. At one meeting that I attended the NYC representatives said they would never agree because the cost would escalate over time as more and more TIAA members actually retired. PSC did not relent. Irwin Polishook argued consistently and vehemently that this was a necessity for the quality of the university, and not just a union demand.

I frankly did not think we could win this one, but somehow, I am not sure how, he succeeded. I think it was a combination of a real need for CUNY, the persistence of the PSC, and a temporarily more robust financial situation for NYC in the early 1980s after the trauma of the 1970s fiscal crisis. Many reading this piece owe their after-retirement health benefits to that largely invisible process.

Irwin Yellowitz, CCNY