

Grace Under Pressure: A Brief History of Our First Female Member

Laurie Faust began her career with the Boilermakers, Local 128 in 1981. A single mother at the time with a young son, she was working as a bank teller by day and a bar maid at night. She came into contact with tradespeople through her two jobs; that's when she started looking into apprenticeships. Laurie phoned every hall representing the trades. They flat out told her they didn't take women. The last one she called was the Boilermakers. Within two weeks she was writing the entrance exam. Within a month she was on the job.

Laurie's first job was at the Heavy Water Plant at the Bruce. Not knowing at first what Boilermakers even did, Laurie learned that she could do this job and enjoy it. The men working at the Heavy Water shutdown were accepting of a woman on the job; but each job could potentially be different.

Her next job was at Bruce B with Ontario Hydro. At first, Ontario Hydro would not take her. However, the Union Hall had her back and told them if they didn't take her they wouldn't send anymore apprentices to the site.

Laurie's first day at Ontario Hydro was spent sitting in the Apprenticeship Coordinator's office. He was an Iron Worker and told her that none of the Foremen wanted her in their gang. At the end of the day, Cy Santavy (Foreman at the Plate Shop and grandfather of Dalas Santavy) came and picked her up.

Being the only tradeswomen on the job was good and bad. There were plenty of people who didn't want her there. As an apprentice, she kept her head down and pushed through. Some days were like going to war. However, there were far more smart and kind tradesmen than the other. She realized it was a steeper learning curve for the men to accept her than it was for her to accept them.



Over the years, there were plenty of rumours and unkind words. However, Laurie's point of view was that they didn't deduct money off your cheque when someone didn't like you.

Laurie would go on to be Foreman on various jobs and was stepped up to General Foreman on a few occasions. Laurie retired in 2016 and now teaches Boilermaker apprentices at Georgian College in Owen Sound. She has two sons that are Boilermakers. She is grateful to Local 128 for giving her the opportunity to be a Boilermaker and for giving her sons that same opportunity.

Local 128 is believed to be the first Trade Union to give an apprenticeship to a women. Unity, Progress, Protection!