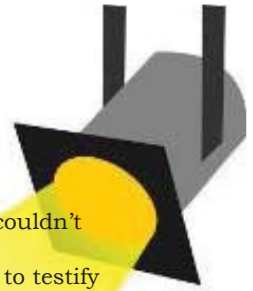


Spotlight

The PSC's Longest Tenured Employees



Mike Straub was attending a Business College when the school asked if he would be interested in interviewing for a job that was open in the PSC's Depreciation Department. "I went to the interview and was hired on the spot at a mind blowing salary of \$6,700 a year," said Straub. "I couldn't believe they were going to pay me such a high salary and in 1970 that was a very good salary."

One of Mike Straub's most vivid memories while at the PSC is in regard to the first time he was to testify before the Commission in a rate case on rate design. "Because it was a non-revenue issue, rate design was often the last issue of the proceedings and on a Friday. Therefore, I had all week to think about my strategy and how not to appear as a first timer but rather as a witness to which Perry Mason would be proud. With that pressure, I got very little sleep that entire week. On Friday, I was actually very surprised to see that my legs did get me to the witness stand and after answering a few questions in different high octave voices, I got off the witness stand, went home and slept for 18 hours straight."

Judy Pope was employed with the Missouri Bureau for the Blind in the spring of 1971. "Lenore Fain, wife of PSC Commissioner Charles Fain, was clerk-guide for the Supervisor of Home Teaching Services," Judy recalls. "She knew I wanted to change jobs and put in a good word for me with her husband. That's how I came to the PSC."

Judy Pope says one of her most challenging jobs at the PSC involved arranging the retirement luncheon for Commissioner Leah Brock McCartney in 1983. Why? "I had never done anything remotely similar in my life, and didn't know the first thing about how to go about it. It was more complicated than for most because Commissioner McCartney wanted a sit-down catered meal (which the McCartneys paid for) and they had a long list of friends and co-workers from her previous jobs to invite. With lots of help from the other Commissioners' Administrative Secretaries, the luncheon was set up and went smoothly." By the way, as an interesting tidbit, that event was held in the Governor Hotel Ballroom.

Bob Schallenberg was married, working full-time in 1976 and also attending school full-time. He needed to make a decision. "My options were to join a Big Eight Auditing firm, attend Navy Officers Training School or join the PSC. The PSC was opening an office in Kansas City and "the job requirements were a better match for my family commitments."

Bob Schallenberg says his most challenging job at the PSC is his current job as Director of Audits, Accounting and Financial Analysis. "The working with data and information while challenging, especially in the area of acquiring information, does not compare to the complexity of activities associated with managing employees. My initial expectations of management fell quite short of the mark when compared to the variety of the issues that I actually encountered and still address."

Debbie Bernsen was working on her Master's in Public Administration in 1976 at the University of Missouri when a summer internship opportunity became available at the PSC. "My first question was -- who are they?," said Bernsen. "Commissioner James Mulvaney was looking for an aide who was not an attorney and had a business background. After an interview with the commissioner and a tour of the impressive Commission offices on the 9th and 10th floors of the Jefferson State Office Building, there was no question that I would accept the internship for the summer." As the internship was ending, the Commission was opening a consumer services office in St. Louis. Debbie was offered a full time job while finishing her Masters part-time.

Debbie says it is difficult to put into just a paragraph all of the memories she has working at the Commission. "Attending local public hearings in rate cases, working as a member of the Commission's Retail Electric Competition Team to assess legislation, and proudly representing the Missouri PSC at NARUC as the chair of a State Subcommittee for many years are just a few that come to mind. The knowledge gained from my NARUC participation was priceless and helped us implement the present company customer service monitoring we utilize with all of our large companies today."

Debbie has been a leader in many PSC charitable activities while at the Commission and is very proud of "the incredible generosity of PSC employees over the years."

Jim Merciel graduated from college and wanted to work in the construction industry, but a tough economy changed that aspiration. "The types of jobs I wanted were hard to come by," said Merciel. "I did work for a small construction company but was not satisfied with it, and when they largely shut down during the winter when work was light, I went looking and ended up doing water and sewer starting in 1977. I knew a little about the PSC because my aunt, Ethel Schlueter, had just retired from the PSC as an auditor."

It's not often an easy answer when you get asked about your most challenging job where you work. "Undoubtedly," Jim Merciel said, "one of the biggest challenges always has been solving the problems of small systems when there is not enough money to do so. Many times that means the companies don't have enough money, but it also means that the needs are so great that even if the company has financial resources, the customers may not be able to afford rates to support needed improvements."