

My 2000 Strike Story: Jacquette Ward

On June 7, 2000, CRONA Nurses went on strike.

Striking was a new experience for me. The day the strike began, I was with the many other CRONA Nurses by the fountains in front of the hospital, holding signs to show our strength and unity. As we stood together, we showed the hospital and the world what we were fighting for. We cared about Nurses *and* our patients.

I remember feeling hurt, betrayed and even used by the hospital administration. I was worried and stressed because I had a family of four depending on my income alone. But I soon discovered that getting relief nursing jobs was no problem in Silicon Valley. Within the week after the strike began, I had a job interview for the Los Gatos Community Hospital ICU — and I was hired on the spot. I was also hired for a relief nursing job in the San Jose Medical Center's ICU, which meant I had two jobs to support my family. One week during the strike, I worked fifty-two hours.

A few weeks later, CRONA Nurses were still on strike, although many tentative agreements had been reached on important issues regarding mandatory overtime, bereavement leave, staff level criteria, and other the key issues we were fighting for. The main remaining proposals were related to wages, and the hospital administrators would not budge from their offer. Negotiations were moving very slowly, even though a federal mediator was involved.

During the strike, the nurses on my unit communicated frequently, supporting each other and sharing information every day. We stood strong together, until the hospitals agreed to a fair deal. On July 28, 2000, one day after my first grandchild was born, we voted to ratify the new contract. I will never forget this time. I am grateful that CRONA took a stand and did the right thing for the Nurses of SHC and LPCH. We stood together the entire time — and it paid off in the end.

In Unity,

Jacquette Ward, RN, BSN, CCRN