

Historic Victory

Navy Reservist Jim Marr was helping co-workers make condoms at the sprawling Trojan factory outside Richmond, Virginia, when his unit was called to active duty in August, 2004.

Like tens of thousands of other reservists, Jim left his job to serve his country, fully expecting his position to be waiting when his deployment ended.

While his job was still there when he returned from Iraq nine months later, Jim found that Church & Dwight, the makers of Trojan condoms, had zeroed out his vacation, forcing him to accrue vacation time like a new employee.

“It was a bitter pill to swallow,” said the Navy veteran, who wasn’t the only employee at Church & Dwight getting fed up with the company’s heavy-handed management style.

A Single Call

A single phone call to the Machinists local in Richmond was all it took for the workers at Trojan to tap into the IAM’s renewed focus on organizing. “There were more than 500 employees there, and they needed help,” said Local 10 Business Representative Jeff Agee.

One of the oldest local lodges in the IAM, Local 10 quickly convened their organizing committee and scheduled meetings for the

workers at Trojan. “We let them know what their legal rights were and what they could expect from the company during an organizing drive,” said Agee.

Church & Dwight responded with the fiercest anti-union campaign Agee had ever experienced.

“One employee was forced to attend an anti-union meeting at work, then found anti-union literature stuffed in her pay envelope, and then more company literature in her mailbox at home – all on the same day,” said Bob Key, Local 10 retiree and co-chairman of the organizing committee.

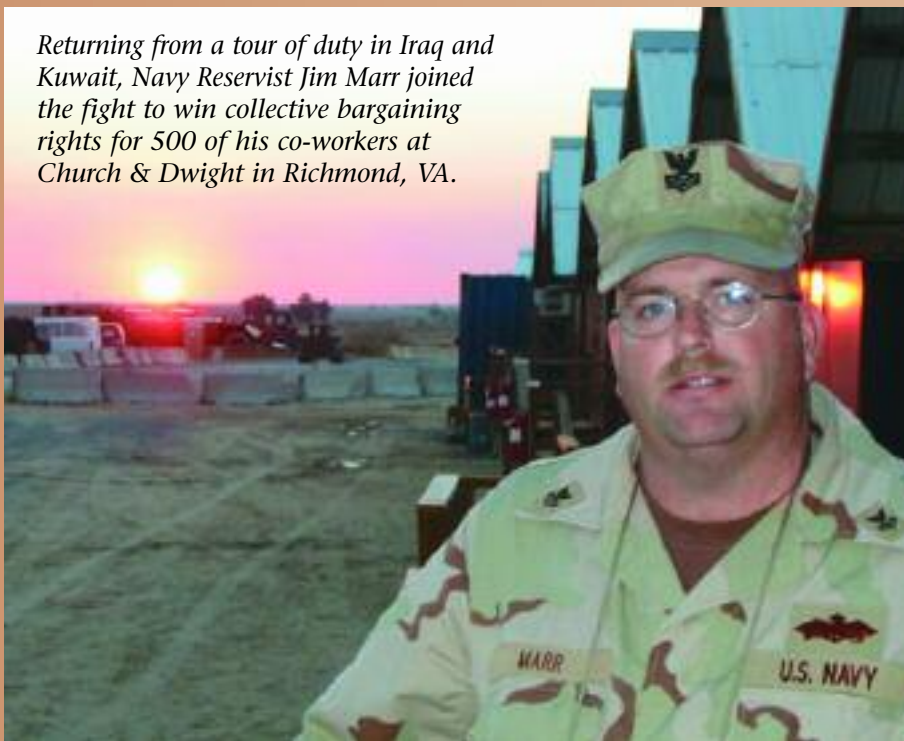
“Once these men and women knew their rights, they weren’t afraid to challenge the company,” said Agee. “When managers said there wasn’t a single unionized Church & Dwight facility anywhere in the country, we located one in Ohio and gave workers their current contract to prove it.”

A Professional Campaign

Local 10 ran a pro-union campaign, using retirees and IAM members from other shops in the Richmond area to explain the benefits of union representation.

“We ran a professional campaign from the beginning, and we stuck to our message of what an IAM

Returning from a tour of duty in Iraq and Kuwait, Navy Reservist Jim Marr joined the fight to win collective bargaining rights for 500 of his co-workers at Church & Dwight in Richmond, VA.



in Virginia



Members of the IAM negotiating committee at Church & Dwight listen as Local 10 Business Representative Jeff Agee, right, explains the steps that will lead to a first contract. Left to right, John Parlow, Faye White, Bob Key (Local 10 Organizer), Jim Marr and Larry Inge.

contract could provide,” said Agee. “The employees at Trojan told us they wanted a positive campaign, and that’s what we delivered.”

A steady flow of information, in Spanish and English, from the Local Organizing Committee kept members informed about the progress of their campaign.

“The workers inside Trojan had a solid understanding of what collective bargaining was all about by the time the election was held,” explained Agee. “They knew there would be no union dues until a first

contract was ratified and they knew they would be electing co-workers to a negotiating committee.”

Big Celebration

Word spread quickly among workers when the IAM won the election following a vote count at the National Labor Relations Board. “The news was celebrated from one end of the IAM to the other,” added IP Tom Buffenbarger, who recalled previous union organizing campaigns at the nation’s largest condom-making facility.

“This campaign is a perfect example of how a single phone call can result in a major organizing victory at a workplace where earlier campaigns fell short,” said Buffenbarger, a former organizer himself.

As for Jim Marr, the Navy Seabee whose raw deal at work helped inspire a dramatic organizing victory, he’ll be representing his fellow workers as an elected member of the first-ever IAM negotiating committee at Trojan.

Vacation rules are sure to be one of his top priorities.