

**Interview With Brenda Berkman**  
**March 1, 1995**

B. ... early ... early comments on her. They revealed all of the first thirteen seconds.

J. This is Jane Latour interviewing Brenda Berkman on March 1st, 1995. Brenda, you were born in Minneapolis, Minnesota?

B. No, actually born in North Carolina, but my parents and I moved to Minneapolis when I was three months old.

J. Um.

B. So that's where I grew up.

J. And do you have brothers and sisters?

B. I have a younger brother,--four years younger.

J. And you were inspired to become a fire fighter early on? You were interested in fire fighting as a child?

B. Well, I don't think fire fighting so much. But I was very interested in an active job. Actually, I think I wanted to be a professional baseball player. But, unfortunately, when I was growing up, they didn't even allow girls to join Little Leagues, so the professional baseball player thing was a little bit unrealistic.

J. Um-hum.

B. And my family,--primarily my father's side,--was very Civil Service and military oriented. And so, I was always interested in, like, joining the military or--you know--having some kind of a ... of a service occupation. But I grew up during the Vietnam War era and I was anti-war and caused a fair amount of interesting discussion around the dinner table, because my father was a ... a decorated in World War II veteran, and one of my aunts was career Navy and,--you know--things along those lines, although I don't think she supported the Vietnam War. So going into the military was sort of out of the question also. At that point, the only way women could rise in the military was if they were nurses.

J. Um-hum.

B. I mean,--that's the only way they could go in as officers, and I really didn't want to go into nursing school ...

J. I've read that you were ... you became a feminist when you were denied entrance into the Little League.

B. Well, I mean, that was really a ... a day in my childhood where I ... I have a very vivid memory of what happened. I mean,--my mother ... I really wanted to play baseball and there were no programs for girls, and my mother had sent in the five dollar registration. And she got a phone call, and I was there, and--you know--the man asked her, "This B. Berkman, is this a boy or a girl?" And she said, "Well, that's my daughter." And he said, "Well, I'm very sorry but we don't allow any girls to play in Little League." And,--you know--this was ... this was crushing to me because I was at least as good as ... as most of the boys in the neighborhood, at that point. And,--I mean,--I .. I carried this through junior high and high school, all through lack of opportunities for girls in athletics,--which I was very interested in doing. And I remember being on the junior high newspaper and feeling such a thrill that I was able to wear a boy's baseball uniform for a picture that we were doing that was sort of like a goof on the article. And,--you know--it was just incredibly frustrating to me that... that girls did not have the same opportunities as boys. And in academics, too. I remember being told by a ... a math teacher, "Well, you know you really shouldn't be in the accelerated program for math because,--you know--you're much better in English" and bla, bla bla. And there's a typical tracking of girls into the humanities and away from the sciences that was going on all ... and continues to go on. And I think I ... I had a very strong sense, as a little kid, that ... that it was a lot more fun being a boy;--that there were a lot more opportunities for boys than there were for girls. And I wasn't particularly interested in the opportunities,--you know,--the stereotypical roles that were presented to me as my future as a--you know--girl and a woman. I really wasn't interested, at that point, in getting married and having a family. I wanted to have a career. And this was the ... the era of--you know--Oh, Father Knows Best and--you know--Ozzie and Harriet and all those--you know--sort of brain washing sit coms that were supposed to convince girls and women that this ... this really was their role model was to be some kind of homemaker,--and that was it.

J. You have a degree,--two degrees, actually,--in history, a B.A. and then an M.A. Did you study about women in history when you were studying, or there ... were there courses at St. Olaf's when you began university?

B. There weren't too many courses in women's history that I remember when I was in school. But what I did was, for my senior thesis I did an oral history, and oral history, at that point, was still a fairly unexplored field. People were just starting to get into the idea that maybe history should look a little deeper than just the surface, great man approach to studying the past. And so what I did was,--my oral history was I interviewed people about Norwegian-American women immigrants. In many cases, I wasn't able to interview the women themselves, because they had ... they had died, but I interviewed their sons and their daughters about--you know--their mothers,--and in one case, an actual woman .. a woman who had actually come over. And I did ... You know,--that was ... that was considered to be fairly oddball. I mean,--here I was looking at just sort of run of the mill people. And then, then when I went to ... There were no women professors in the History Department at ST. Olaf-- .... When I went to Indiana, there were several women professors and ... including--you know--although St. Olaf had women history professors,--very prominent ones,--there were none there when I was there. Then, when I went to Indiana, there were a couple of women professors. And again, I don't recall any kinds of--you know--women's history classes that were being offered. Indiana was sort of oddball because they did have a fairly active feminist movement. And again, I went to ... I did an oral history project. I did an oral history of the women's movement in Bloomington, Indiana. And they ... It had been fairly active, and it had ... by the time I got there,--

-which was '73,--it had pretty much petered out. But, at one point, it was fairly ... They were having meetings and-you know-rallies. And they had a ... they had publications, and they were pushing for--you know--more women's studies classes, and I think they ... they had a Women's Center,--which was pretty much dying out. And so, I interviewed the people who had been active in the movement. And it was very interesting;--another oral history type of thing. So, even though there wasn't any classes, I ... I got interested and I did--you know--my own little project.

J. Now in ... you decided to study law. And were you interested in the law as a tool to sort of remedy some of these inequities, or what drove you ??

B. Yeah, I ... I ... Well, there were two things that really sent me to law school. One was the lack of opportunities in teaching history. At the time that I was in graduate school,--you know--there were very few positions open to new teachers at the college level. And what I saw was, either I was going to be bouncing from junior college to junior college, and ... and hanging out with people who, basically, were in the profession because they didn't see any other alternatives. Most of the really sort of interesting people that were in my ... my graduate program were getting out and going into different things, other than teaching history, because they saw the writing on the wall also. So rather than spend--you know--my entire adult life with a bunch of people that I found rather boring, I decided that I should look for something else. So I was living on the same ... I took some classes, as a graduate student, in ... in the law school,--and I was dating a law student and hanging out with a bunch of law students. Then I worked for a summer in my future father-in-law's firm, and he had sort of an unusual situation. He ... He ran his own shop and he was very much a ... a social change agent. He had been involved with defending blacks in the south that were--you know--accused of crimes against whites, and various kinds of civil rights types of actions. And he had been involved in the very early stages of the Lawyer's Guild,--you know,--some of these sort of Commie pinko types of (laughs) of ... of law organizations. And--I mean,--he got more conservative as he got older, but he was still fairly liberal. And one of the groups he was representing was women police officers who had all been laid off during the fiscal crisis,--and I did some work on that case, and he dragged me around to meetings and stuff, and I met these women cops. And I found this stuff all very interesting. And he ... and he was encouraging me, and my ex-husband was encouraging me to go to law school. So I applied;--I got in to NYU. And one of the reasons I wanted to go to NYU was because they had a good clinical program, and it seemed to me to be a much more liberal environment than other law schools that I had looked at. It had a very high number of,--a high percentage of women in ... in the classes for that time, so I thought, well, this--you know--this could be for me. But little did I know how, really, what a conservative discipline the law is. And so, I went to law school. I hated it, basically, (laughs) all three years. Bla!

J. Now, in 1977, the New York City Fire Department opened up its test to women. Why did it take so long,--from 1964 to 1977,--for that to happen, after the civil rights act was passed?

B. First of all, the civil rights act wasn't immediately applicable to municipalities, and there was an amendment,--I believe in 1972,--that made it applicable, for the first time, to ... to cities. And then, after 1972, New York was in their so-called fiscal crisis, and they had frozen hiring. I had moved to New York in 1975. Well, actually, I'd been here on and off before that, starting in about

1973, but I moved to go to law school in 1975, and at that point, I had been calling down to the Civil Service Commission to find out--you know--when they were going to be giving tests for police and fire. And I really wasn't all that interested in police, because I really couldn't see myself pointing a gun at somebody, even though I found the women cops very interesting. But my fa-- ... my ex-father-in-law also represented the Uniformed Fire Officers Association for thirty years,--and so, I met all these ... these fire officers. And this seemed to me sort of like the perfect opportunity for me to do something really interesting. I mean,--it was active. It was sort of a heroic type of activity,--you know--where you were ... you were helping people at the risk of your own life. Every ... Every day was different when you went to work. You never knew what you were going to encounter. And you were per-- ... You were very ... very much respected by the public. I mean,--the fire service has one of the highest approval ratings of any occupation. Certainly, much higher than lawyers. And ... And the public loves fire fighters, and why shouldn't they? I mean,--after all there's very few people who ... who come to your door and risk their lives;--run into the burning building to save your cat or whatever's in there, ...

J. The wheelchair, last night.

B. B. Your wheelchair. They don't ask ... They don't ask,--you know--what color are you?--how much money do you have?--you know--can you pay your bills? Do you have insurance? They don't ask those things. They just go in and they do their job to the best of their abilities, and then--you know--they ... they leave. And so, there's nobody, really, that's not happy to see a fire fighter. And also,--you know--it's good pension benefits. It has ... At that point, it had a halfway decent starting salary, and it had career opportunities. So I thought, well, this ... this is great! I'm going to apply for this. But they weren't giving the test. So I kept calling and calling, and they kept saying "No, we're not giving the test. We're not giving the test." Then, my next door neighbor in law school knew that I was interested, and one night I hear this knock on the door and the guy ... this guy's at the door and he says, "You know--they're saying that they're taking applications for the Fire Department. There was just an ad on television." This is like at midnight,--"and ... and that the applications close on Monday." And this was something like ... This was like a Friday night or a Saturday night. So Oh Jesus! So I ran down and filed on, like, the last day, and--I don't know,--they might have extended the filing after that. I forget. They were ... They were heavily involved in recruiting African-Americans, at that point, because there had been a whole series of litigations about the Fire Department's failure to hire people of color;--men of color.

J. Um-hum.

B. And so they were ... they were ... They were required, at that point, by law to open up to women, but that really wasn't their orientation.

J. So five hundred women showed up to take the physical.

B. No, to take the written exam.

J. ... the written exam.

B. Five ... About five hundred showed up and the great majority of people passed. I mean,-- they had ... The written exam was very easy and they had something ... a Ninety-eight percent pass rate, or something like that. So then, then they ... The next part would be the physical. Well, they changed the physical agility test from a pass/fail test,--which they had been given...been giving before they allowed women to apply,--to a rank ordered test. And they also changed a ... a whole number of the events that people had to do. And they decided, well, they would give like little orientation sessions for the ... the exam. And so they assigned you one day that you could go to the Fire Academy,--which is in the middle of the East River,--and practice this exam. Well, the day I went out it was about twenty below zero, and I'm not kidding. It was freezing out there. And even the instructors were so cold that they never came out to the various little stations. They just stayed in their little trailer. And occasionally they'd pop their head out, and maybe they'd--you know--shout a comment at you or something. Well, of course, the media was there and everything to look and see how the women were going to be doing, and stuff. And it was really ludicrous because, first of all, they weren't giving people any kind of real guidance as to how to do these events. The only way that people could really find out what to do was if they went to private training sessions, and you had to have the money to do that. And all the sessions that I found out about were like, way out in the boonies and took me, like, hours by subway at night to get out there. And it just wasn't practical for me to do that. And then, beyond that, you had all these people in the Department and the Union and the media saying, Oh my God, this is such a hard test, no woman is ever going to pass it. And they were right. Only about nine ... Because of all the adverse publicity and everything, only about ninety women actually showed up for the physical portion of the test. And of that number, everybody failed, including myself. Now, I thought this was very odd because I had been training very hard for this exam and I was in great shape. Um ... I was a marathon runner. I was a cross country skier. I had gone up into the woods and I was chopping wood, and I was lifting weights, and I was doing pull-up and push-ups and sit-ups, and doing all this stuff to get into shape. I was in tremendous shape, and yet I couldn't pass this exam. And I thought, this is crazy that ... You mean to tell me there's not a single woman in the entire City of New York that is fit to be a fire fighter? So I was in law school at the time, and I came over to ... Somebody said to me, "You know,--you should really talk to Laura Sager. She's with the Women's Rights Clinic and--you know--she'd be able to tell you whether or not something should be done about this." So I went to Laura and I said, "Listen, this is what happened. And--you know--I ... I just can't imagine that the City is going to litigate this if we bring this to their attention, because--you know--they'll want to settle this case. Zero women passing,--you know? And they've done all these things to sort of stick it to the women, from the time they first allowed us even to apply for the job.. So she ... I ... I said, "You know,--I don't think this case is going to take any time at all." And she said, "Well, okay,"--you know. "I think you have a good case here. I'll represent you." And so,--you know--we agreed on that and (laughs) almost twenty years later,--you know--it's like just now sort of winding down. I mean,--she really ... And she got into it. She ... She decided very wisely that she was going to need a lot of support;--that--you know--this was not something the Clinic could handle by itself. So she went out,--after about a year of doing it;--maybe a little less of doing it by herself,--she went out and she found Debevoise & Plimpton, and they ... they agreed to come on as co-counsel, although Plimpton is one of the premier law firms in the country. And they ... They're ... And the amount of resources that they were able to bring to bear on this case just made it doable, whereas before, I think,--you know--with one attorney and--you know--a bunch of goofy law students--you know--it would have been very hard for them to win the case. We ... We tried to settle the case. We met with the head

of the Civil Service,--you know--the head of Personnel and some of his flunkies, and Bella Abzug went along and--you know--made this argument. It was like, just come up with another test and give it to these women and--you know--a test that's job related and doesn't discriminate, and they ... they'll be happy just to take the new test and--you know--drop this whole thing. Well, that was out of the question so--you know--I got my right to ... file my EEOC complaint. I got my right to sue ?? We ended up in Federal court, and we were before Judge Sifton. And Judge Sifton was not originally very sympathetic at all to our case. I ... I think it's really to the credit of my attorneys that through ... very patient, and through a lot of patience and hard work, and just--you know--being right, they turned Judge Sifton around, from being very unsympathetic to the case to eventually ruling in our favor. And so,--you know--the law suit was basically brought about 1978, and in 1982 --you know--after, like, years of delay and court papers and everything else, he ... he ruled in our favor. And he ordered the City to develop a new test,--which they did by taking a group of incumbent fire fighters and having them perform some job simulation type of tasks and seeing--you know--basically what kind of pace was required to perform them at,--and then they gave the same test to us,--the women. And ... And this was always a big bone of contention. Guys who had failed the test wanted to take the new test and ... but they had never been part of the law suit. And so, the Judge ruled, well,--you know--you're not ... you weren't part of the class, and--you know--you don't really have any basis. You ... You brought your complaint too late. So they were barred ... Well, this ?? Then it became the women's test,--you know,--and all ... then, it was always, like, Well, they're lowering standards, 'cause things were changed. Well, the test have been changed throughout the history of hiring, but because it was changed for women, well, now they were lowering standards.

J. Well, it was changed to be job related and non-discriminatory.

B. Right. And it was based on ... on incumbent performance. I mean,--it was based on male incumbent performance. They didn't bring any women fire fighters and say, Look at, this is how women perform the job,--you know.

J. Now, didn't he order a pre-training program?

B. He ordered a pre-training program and we -- a group of us,--not all the women that were ... that were interested in--you know--taking the new test,--but a pretty high percentage of the women went out, on their own time, week ... week nights and weekend days, and we were ... we practiced running through this test. Well, the ... the interesting thing was that as people practiced it, they got to the point where they could pass it. And they did. We passed it in much higher numbers than the Department had anticipated. They thought maybe ten or twelve women were going to pass this test, and then, it turned out like fifty some women passed the test. And they were, like, frantic. I mean,--my God,--you know--the test much be too easy! Look at all these women who passed it! Well, the point was that ... that almost all these kinds of ... of so-called job simulation tests,--like they were giving at that point,--women improved from ... tremendously if they were just given a little opportunity to practice the test. And it's been shown that they improve at a higher rate than men do, because women come to this with less familiarity with how to perform these kinds of all out beat to completion types of things than the men do,--usually by reason of athletic involvement,--stuff

like that. So ... At any event, the women all proved they all had better ... Now ... Now,--you know--they had ... The Judge had ordered the City to set aside forty-five slots. It turned out there were about forty-five women that wanted to go in, so they put us all in this one class. Now, normally, that would be the ... the end of the ... the questioning of whether or not we should be on the Department. With men, traditionally, it's been that once you pass the test,--it doesn't matter what year you pass it,--when you go into the Academy, it's assumed you can be trained to do the job. Well, that wasn't the case with the women. Right from the get go, it was like, Oh, we lowered standards. Well, we have to see if they can, in fact, be trained to do the job. So they developed all these kinds of little additional hurdles for us to do in the Fire Academy. And they really made a concerted effort to get rid of us,--to get us to quit. Things went on out there, where peoples' health and safety were really put into jeopardy. And, as a matter of fact, one woman was severely hurt in a training accident. It was just purely a matter of negligence on the part of the instructors. And--you know--it's amazing nobody was killed. Some of us got very sick. I had the worst carbon monoxide poisoning I've ever had since I've been on the job in the past fifteen years, and--you know--I mean,--it was ... It was like a whole new set of ... of obstacles that ... The men were completely ignored. They might as well not have been there. Every ... Everything was focused on the women. The women were under the microscope. And every day, the rules were changed. When we went in there, it was like, Okay, all you have to do is perform these various tasks and you'll get out of here. Now, all of a sudden, they decide, Well, if the instructor thinks that you're not quite up to snuff, well, he's going to issue you a deficiency slip. But you can get rid of those deficiency slips by repeating the tasks and clearing it up. And then it became, Well, if you have X number of deficiency slips, you're not going to graduate on time. You're going to have to stay over for a additional training period. And then it became, like, These people are going to have to re-- ... repeat the whole training period. And, of course, it was almost all women. The guys ... There were ... They ... They held over a couple of guys to make it look good. They were mainly guys who had missed days due to illness or something, and ... and they graduated,--you know--within a few days of being held over. But some of the women actually had to re-- ... repeat the entire training session. I wasn't one of those people so ... But I ... while I was ... while I was in the Training Academy, naturally there was a lot of attention immediately focused on me because I had been the name class plaintiff. And I was the only person,--the only woman,--for many years that my lawyers knew of who still wanted the job. I mean,--literally, only one other woman in the whole class who contacted the lawyers before it was announced that, Oh, we won, and all these jobs are available. And then, all of sudden, these women, like, went, Oh, you mean if I take another test, I ... I could get this nice \$25000.00 a year to start job,--you know? And, needless to say, a lot of people wanted that. I mean,--it was much better than anything that they were doing at the time. So, um,--when I ... when we went into the Training Academy, a lot of people just started looking to me to be the spokes people,--spokesperson for the women, and so,--you know--it was ... I ... I had no low profile. It was impossible for me to keep a low profile. The inst-- ... Everybody knew my name. I had been getting death threats,--you know. I had to get an unlisted telephone number when we won the litigation. My picture had been in the paper. Everyone knew I was a lawyer, so that made me ... that gave them another reason to dislike me. They thought I was Jewish, so that was another reason that--you know--I was in a--you know--unacceptable group. And I wasn't from New York. I mean,--all these things,--you know,--it was like ... But the women didn't seem to have too much of a problem with those ... that ... all those disadvantages. Instead, they relied on me to, like, deal with the administration. If they had a problem with the Training Academy, then I was expected to go and talk to the--you know--the head

of the Training Academy about what were the problems that you're have, and see if we could resolve them, and stuff. But it was very difficult for me because I was on probation myself. I had no idea what was going on. I had no experience with the Fire Department. Nobody was telling us, Well, this isn't the way that it's usually done. And the Union, on the other hand, was out there every day, looking to see ... not to protect us, but to see if there was some way they could assist in getting rid of us, because when we won the litigation, the Union had come in on the side of the City, and they took an appeal. They were the only party that took an appeal to the Second Circuit, where they lost. But the Union had been fighting us from the get go, and--you know--the President of the Union, Nick Mancuso, was like, "Well, we can't have these people on the job,--you know. And we'll have to see about the Training Academy,--you know. I'm sure a lot of them won't pass that,"--you know,--taking this very negative attitude towards us.

J. Um-hum.

B. So the Union was no good at all. So at some point, based on my experience with the PEA,--the Police Women's Endowment Association,--I decided that we had to have our own organization, so I convinced the other women that we should form a fraternal organization,--you know--like the Emerald Society or the Vulcans,--which was the African-American group, or the Hispanic Society. We should have a women's organization. So they thought that was a good idea. So I went to the PEA, and I got a copy of what they had written up and their Constitution and Bylaws, and I changed a few things around to make it more Fire Department related, and we formed an organization. And,--you know--we took it to the Department and we said, "Listen,--you know--you recognize these other organizations. You have to recognize us." So they hemmed and hawed for a while, but eventually, they recognized us. And we had an election and boom!, there was our organization. I was the President, (laughs) and that was--you know--the deal.

J. And you had other officers?

B. Oh, yeah. We had other officers. We had this woman named Ruth Russell, who was the Vice-President. I forget who else we had as officers.

J. When did you start doing the newsletter?

B. Oh, pretty soon, I think, because what had happened was, when ... when they started letting us out of the Academy, first they graduated ten women, and all the other women had to stay for varying points. Now, I was one of the ones that was graduated, so now, I'm out in the field with my own problems. I ... I have no idea what's going on in the Academy, and I'm getting these, like, reports of these people being tortured. But I ... I really can't ... I can't be out there with them. I don't know what's going on, so I'm trying to do what I can and--you know--working with them to see that they can get out of there and get in the assignment. Well, the Department, in their infinite wisdom, decide ... decided to split the women up entirely on their ... when they sent them to the field. The assigned one women per fire house. In most cases, there was only one woman in a ... in every area, so you never worked with another woman. So now, the women are like, every which way. So I decided,--you know--we ... we got to have a newsletter. And another effect of splitting women up like that was that--you know--you're ... you're working in a ... in a place with maybe fifty



other men,--and anywhere between twenty-five and fifty men. And the pressures on you were, like, to conform to what the men wanted,--not ... not to have anything to do with any of the other women, 'cause the other women, after all, were just a bunch of trouble makers. And what ... what some of the women bought into was the fact that they're being told, "Well, you're okay,"--you know. "You're our woman. You can do the job. But the rest of these women, there ?? can't do anything ." And this was particularly easy for the white women to buy into. For the most part,--you know--the African-American women were not accepted on two different levels, so if they--you know ... But the ... But some of the white women felt that they were part of the Fire Department, and so, in order to not rile the guys up that they worked with, they just had nothing to do with the other women,--zero,--and ... and haven't to this day. I mean,--there's people who--you know--I almost never ... There's women I almost never see, and who,--you know--never paid dues. WE send them the newsletter anyway, but--you know--never paid dues,--never attended a meeting;--nothing at all. And we're there for them, should they ever need the organization, but they have given absolutely nothing to the other women in the Department.

J. So the organization was designed to be a pressure group and a support group? And early on, you had to extend the litigation because women were ...

B. Well, first, what happened in ... What happened at the end of our probationary per-- ... Well, during our probationary period, they kept changing the rules on ... on evaluation. Women started out getting very acceptable, very decent evaluations. They sent us all to the engine, so the Department went, Oh my God, all these women are going to be tenured,--you know. They're all getting good evaluations. Something's wrong here.

J. Maybe we should have you explain the structure of the Fire Department, 'cause I know there's Engine, Ladder, Battalion ... But why don't you explain ...

B. Well, the ... the two fire fighting groups are primarily Engines,--which are the pumpers who put the water on the fire,--and the Ladder Company,--which are, like, the tools, and they do ventilation and forcible entry, search ... They ... They play around with a lot more tools. They have the ... the jaws of life, the--you know--civilians call it. They have the ... the axes, the haligans, (sp. ?) the hooks,--you know. They're doing ... the saws ... They're doing the stuff with the equipment. Well, it's the Engine's primary responsibility is just to get in there and put some water on the fire. Now, the Department looked at our evaluations and they thought, Oh my God, these women can do engine work, but I bet they can't do truck work,--you know;--they can't do Ladder Company work, so we'll have to send them all to the trucks for thirty days and see what kinds of evaluations they get. And in the meantime, the ... the Commissioner called all the Captains,--the Captains of all the fire houses where the women were assigned,--down to his office for a meeting, and said, "Listen,--you know,--if you want to fire these women, I'll back you up."

J. Which Commissioner?

B. This was Joe Spanado. And that's what he told them. And so, this was like a not to subtle signal to the guys that--you know--it's time to turn up the heat on the women;--that the

Commissioner ... If you wanted to get rid of some of the women, the Commissioner would certainly back you up on this. All of a sudden, women started getting cruddy evaluations. And they sent us off to the truck, and of course,--you know--we did stuff that I have never seen done before or since, with brand new employees. Everything was a test. Every single thing that you did was not a learning experience,--like it should be for a beginning fire fighter,--but a test to see if you could already do it,--which was ridiculous. I mean,--you know--to ask any fire fighting, let alone women,--who have almost no experience, as a group, with ... with tools,--to be able to perform these tasks that take men years to learn how to do,--you know--was like, totally unfair. But that's what they did. So we started getting bad evaluations. And then, I ... I raised a complaint about the fact that, all of a sudden, they're sending people off,--because they had to send the men now, too, because they couldn't make it look like it was just the women that they were evaluating,--I says,--you know--"They never did this before. Why, all of a sudden, are they doing this?" Well, then I got into trouble for raising that question, and I got called downtown and yelled at. Who was I, a little probationer in the Fire Fighters. So I'm the President of the organization. We're all probationary fire fighters. Who do you expect to raise the issue? "Well, you have no right. You don't know anything. Bla, bla, bla. So, then I got a bad evaluation on my truck detail. And I go back to the fire house, and I'm trying to work with the women who are getting the bad evaluations to see how we can--you know--improve it, and see what's going to happen when we get to the end of our probationary period. We get to the end of our probationary period, and my Captain recommends that I not be tenured. And also, the Captain who ... of the next most highly visible woman, Zaida Gonzales,--who had had a New York cover ... New York Magazine cover story done about her,--is also recommended for termination. So it's very odd, just the two most vocal women about the harassment and difficulties in the Department are recommended to be canned. And everybody else is either recommended to have their probation extended or to be tenured. Now, Zaida and I were rated consistently, throughout our whole period in the raining Academy, as being two of the most physically fit women in the entire group. And now, they're saying we can't do the job, but the other women can do the job. So I said ... I said ... I went to my lawyers and I said, "This is ... This is ridiculous." And they said, "Well, just see what they're going to .."--you know. "Just go through with this. They're going to send you back to the Training Academy for reevaluation and"--you know--"I'm sure you'll get through that, "--you know. "You'll be tenured." So ... So we went back to the Training Academy, and we were tortured for two weeks,--and I mean tortured! They had the hose pressures up to the point where the rig was jumping off the pavement. And we had a ... We had ... We were ... We were being evaluated with some guys who were back at the Academy for retraining. Now, these were very senior guys,--some of them. And they had been out of the Department for one reason or another,--usually because they had been injured,--and they were coming back--you know--to ... They'd been of the line for a while and they had to be reevaluated. So we had ... We had one guy that actually quit. He said, "I can't take this. They're going to kill me, "--you know. He quit. Other guys were like, "This is wrong, what they're doing to you." Of course, they would never say this to anybody else. And they couldn't wait to get out of there. So,--you know--they left as soon as they could, and in the meantime, they're telling us, "This is wrong, and we know it's wrong." But we come to work, the last day or two of the time we're supposed to be out there, and the guy at the ... as the desk says to us, as we come in the door, "Oh, you know what? You guys have been fired." And we said, "What?" And he said, "Yeah. There's an article in the Daily News today that says the Fire Department's firing you." Well, this is the first we'd heard of it. So now ... Now, we're at work, and they won't tell us if we're fired or not fired. So they torture us for about four hours, and finally, they

call us into a room, and there's the Chief of Uniformed Personnel there and the head of the Fire Department Personnel,--the Fire ?? a civilian,--and they tell us we're canned. And it was, like, the most humiliating way of finding out that you were losing your job,--you know. So I said, "Well,"--you know--"we'll be back." And (laughs) And we ... we called the lawyers,--you know,--and ... and then we had to go before Judge Sifton again and say,--you know--"this is retaliatory." And so the City said, Well, we can't have the trial right away. Our lawyer has to go to China on his vacation. And the Judge said, well,--you know--"then you'll have to find another lawyer. You must have some extra lawyers down there." So actually, they assigned the ... assigned the head of their Litigation Department to do our trial. And we got ... We were fired in September, and we got a fairly early trial. We had our trial in, I think it was October,--October or November. The trial went on for--you know--a very long time, and ...

J. What kinds of evidence ... I mean,--did they have anything that ...

B. They had all ... You know,--they had all these officers that came forward and testified. One of my officers got caught in a ... perjuring himself. He was asked, by my attorneys, did he have any written notes that he kept on me, while he was--you know--while I was working under him. And he said, "No, absolutely not." And then, that night, he told his ... his attorneys,--the City Corp Counsel,--that "Yes. In fact, he'd been keeping a diary on me the whole time I'd been working there. So she had to come in the next day and say to the Judge, "Oh Judge,"--you know--"the officer didn't really understand the question,"--you know. "And here's the diary." Well, the diary was very interesting because, while it ... it criticized the way that I operated at one ... at my first job,--which was a shaft fire, and it was the most screwed up operation,--one of the most screwed up operations I've ever been in;--I had no idea what I was doing, but I'd never been at a fire before,--and he criticized me for the way I operated, as he should have, because I--you know--there was lots of room for improvement there. But then, in subsequent operations, he ... he complimented me on the way I operated. I had another job where I had the nozzle ... a top floor that was just a son of a bitch, and we went in and put the fire out,--you know. It was ... It went ... It went very well, and--you know--it was a really tough job. And so he wrote about how I did a good job at that one. Well, this was--you know--devastating to ... (laughs) Of course, he ... The Department did nothing to him for having lied on the stand or anything. And basically, my lawyers did a very nice job at showing that the City had ... didn't have a leg to stand on, in terms of firing the two of us,--everything ... everyone from the Commissioner on down. I mean,--I ... I distinctly remember Bob King cross examining Spanado. Spanado is a lawyer,--you know. He's not unfamiliar with the courtroom. He had the guy shaking, by the end of his testimony. I mean,--he couldn't--you know ... He was caught in lie after lie, and there was absolutely no basis for our termination. So we ... The Judge took a ... a little while, and he put us back to work right before Christmas. But his order was that we had to go back out to the Fire Academy and be retrained. So we went back out to the Fire Academy. And now, we're being videotaped. And we go back out there, and it's like one of the worst winters imaginable. It's like ice stations ...

Side Two

B. We had some hose line, which weighs--I forget how many pounds per fifty feet,--but

when they're charged with water, they're very difficult to manoeuvre and--you know--it requires a fair amount of technique,--which we were starting to learn. But we were on an ice skating rink,--you know. So we're doing this stuff, and people are falling down and (laughs) it was like, unbelievable! But I decided very early on, I was going to get through this. I didn't care what. And so, we had two evaluators. One was an African-American officer and the other was this Italian Chief that had had a woman fire fighter in his battalion and had really made an effort to see that she really got the proper training. So we felt these two people were fairly impartial and they were as good as anybody. They'd be able to give us a fair shot. So they recommended that I ... I be sent back out into the field and that Zaida be kept for a little bit more training. Now, I think that the only reason that this happened was because, number one, they were comparing the two of us and they--you know--I came off as being better than Zaida,--which was, I think, primarily a matter of the fact that Zaida was more beaten down by the whole process. She was a little more distressed,--you know. She ... She hadn't quite been able to overcome all the mind games that they were playing with her. And I kept telling her,--you know--"Zaida, listen, the way to get through this is to act aggressive. It doesn't really matter what we're doing. (laughs) If you just act like you're an animal, that's what they want to see. And--you know--act like a guy. So ... But over accentuate it,--you know,--just make grunting noises and throw the lines around--you know--and do this--you know. Just act like you're being very strong and ... and aggressive." And this was what I was doing. And--you know--so any time we videotaped something, that's going to come ... Because it's on videotape,--you know--you have to be a little bit larger than life.

J. Um-hum.

B. It's like acting for the movies. And sure enough, for me it worked. And, ultimately, I guess, she started doing it, too, 'cause she got out of there. But they ... the Judge had ordered us to be assigned to a new place. So we go up to our new places and Zaida only lasted a little while there, and then she went into, like, a desk job. She really couldn't take the fire house. And I had, like, a little honeymoon period where the guys were basically behaving themselves;--weren't giving me a real hard time or anything. And then, a Captain who had been there when I first got there got promoted. They put another guy in who wanted to be buddy buddy with the guys, and then it was sort of like business as usual. I mean,--when I was ... when I was a proby in the Seventeen Engine, the men would not ... They put me on the meals. They wouldn't allow me to eat with them,--which meant that I spent a lot of time eating peanut butter and jelly when I was at work. For years, I could not eat peanut butter and jelly. I've gotten to the point where I can eat peanut butter and jelly again, but ...

J. Now, how ... how long are your shifts, as a fire fighter? You work ...

B. Well, I was on either fifteen hours at night, or nine hours, so--you know--you had to have a meal in there somewhere. When I'd ask the guys to pick stuff up for me at the ... at the supermarket,--you know. If we ... If ... My company wasn't responsible for the meals, and I had to ask the truck to get something for me, they brought back all kinds of shit,--you know. It was like a battle ... If I'd ask for a piece of fruit, it was like something that was all beat to shit,--you know. So I stopped doing that, because they weren't getting me anything. The guys would not talk to me. They wouldn't trade shifts with me. It's very common that you need a night off,--you need a day off,--well, you ... you ... you traded shifts. And as a matter of fact, most people in the Fire

Department have what they call mutual partners, where they just automatically trade shifts with the guy. And nobody would trade a shift with me. So ...

J. Now, was this in Brooklyn?

B. No. This was in lower Manhattan. And then, when I ... And then, when they moved me up to upper Manhattan,--to Harlem,--up around Columbia,--initially things were going along pretty well. And then, a few guys got it in their heads that I was,--you know--a trouble maker, because there was some stuff going on involving the new test. They were about to start testing new people for a new list. And I got involved in that, and--you know--was critical of what the Fire Department was doing and stuff. And these guys felt that I had no right to be involved in that,--you know--and I was just trying to stir up more trouble and stuff, and why couldn't I keep my mouth shut, and this and that. And so this gave them a great excuse to, like, retaliate against me. So,--you know--I would come in;--my name would be cross off of the riding list,--you know. My gear would be messed with. I'd have stuff in my ...--you know,--like a dead rat in my pickets of my turn-out coat,--something like that. I would have ... If they thought there was something I didn't like to eat, they'd make sure that they made it--made all the food only with that. You know,--they had like really nasty stuff up. Well, this happened when I first came on the job stuff, too, but--you know--really nasty pictures up, and porn all over the place. And--you know,--I'd walk in the kitchen, they'd turn the porn channel on,--you know? That kind of stuff. So that was about half of the guys that I worked with. Now, the other half were, like, sitting on the fence. They didn't want to be involved. These were all their pals, so ... so if the bad guys were working, the good guys went along with them;--or the neutral guys went along with them. There were a couple of guys that refused to go along with them, but they were a very small group. And--you know--it really ... And as a matter of fact, one of the guys that stuck up for me, he ended up getting harassed. He got flat tires,--you know. His stuff started disappearing. A few of the guys stopped talking to him,--you know. They wouldn't do anything with him any more, and that kind of stuff. They tried to screw him in whatever way they could. So--you know--I put up with that for six years. (laughs)

J. What ... What kind of support were you able to get from the ... the organization ?? UWF, and what ...?

B. When Zaida and I were fired, it was a little tough because I was President of the organization. Now, all of a sudden, the Department refused to recognize me as President of the organization. So rather than standing behind me, the Vice-President of the organization sort of ... sort of said, Oh, I'm President of the organization now, and started like, doing all the conventional type things. And so that bothered me a little bit, because--you know ... And ... And--you know--her argument was, "Well, it's not practical. I mean,--we got to get our"--you know. In the meantime, it really was a case that she was pretty much selling Zaida and I down the river,--you know. She didn't have any real kind of belief that we weren't going to get back on the job, so she was sort of--you know--protecting her own little thing. Well, the irony was, she ended up resigning. She ... She didn't stay on the job. But the organization was really--you know--has always had problems with getting the women to work together as a group, 'cause we have been so isolated, and ... and because I think that--you know--all the psychological warfare that was waged on these women to tell them, every day that they went in to work, that they weren't as good as the men that they worked with, and

they weren't capable of doing the job, and they didn't deserve to be on this job, and bla, bla, bla,--on and on like that,--you know--really had a very telling effect. So ... And then there were divisions between black and white women,--you know. A lot of the black women felt that the white women were racist, and didn't stick up for them. And to some degree, they were correct. And so, there are these little divisions between the ... the different groups. Some ...

J. How ... How many women were Hispanic?

B. Only one. Only Zaida.

J. Um-hum.

B. although one of the women subsequently said she's half Hispanic, but she never ... We always thought she was,--you know--African-American, but she subsequently said she was half Hispanic. But about a third of the women are African-American,--which is a much high percentage that ... than the ... among the men in the Department. There's probably about five percent African-American in the Department now. It's really pathetic. It's dropping every ... and the Hispanics are rising slightly. They're ... I don't know if they're around six, seven ...--something like that.

J. So did ... did the organization try to actively deal with these divisions?

B. Yeah, we did. We had--you know--some outside consultants come in and try and ... One of the other ??, as a matter of fact, got a ... raised a small project grant to try and come in and deal with some of the divisions among the group,--especially the racism issue. That was Stephanie Roth,--and she had a co-trainer,--what was her name?--Robin somebody or another,--who was African-American. (laughs) And they just made no headway whatsoever. I mean,--they couldn't ... they couldn't get past the screaming matches. At one point, the Department brought in a Columbia professor from the School of Social Work,--Beth somebody or another,--and ... to do a so-called training session, to try and get the women to be more cohesive as a group. And so, they had this session out at the Training Academy.

J. Now, this is something that you ... that the organization had lobbied for?

B. Yeah, we had. We had. We had lobbied for this because--you know--we recognized that ... that we only had ourselves to rely on here, and that--you know--the divisions within the group needed to be dealt with. There were a lot of hard feelings that developed from the very early days in the Training Academy. We had some ... because the black women, even then, felt that they were being picked on. They felt they were being held over in disproportionate numbers. You know,--there were some racial incidents between the black and the white women. And there were some resentments between the women who got out early and the women who had to hang--you know--be held over. They didn't ... They never got a proper graduation. They were stigmatized,--you know;--all this other stuff going on,--like any of us were really accepted,--right? And so, all these hard feelings that had been held over from ... and festered since--you know--ten years. At that point, I don't think it was quite ten years, but it was ... a fair amount of time had passed, like more than five. And we had lobbied ... We had said that--you know,--basically, we were all suffering from Critical

Incident Stress Syndrome. And when ... when ... over the years, Sifton had ordered the Department to do various kinds of training programs and stuff, which they did very halfheartedly, and with no kind of follow up or real commitment to the issue of gender integration. And so, one of the things that we lobbied very hard for was some training for the women, and so, this is what they came up with. They came up with this Columbia professor, who--you know--took us out there for one day,-- And we were on paid time. And even though we were being paid, one of the women refused to attend. She said she didn't want to be part of this group. And it was a screaming session,--you know;--people yelling at each other,--and the professor could not believe it. She had no sense of what was going to go on here. And ... And I think Stephanie,--you know--the ?? trainer,--had no concept of the intensity and--you know ... These people are like wounded animals, really,--and it's something that had been with them for--you know--their entire careers. And so, to expect them to be ... have healthy attitudes about this miraculously, overnight, they're like, "Please!"

J. Not to--you know--get into psychology, but was a lot of this displaced? Were they--you know--they couldn't ... not direct it towards the real opposition, and it was just sort of ...

B. Oh yeah,--definitely, because they're like,--you know ... They felt completely powerless with respect to the men in the Department, who were the real sources of their difficulties,--not these other women. I mean,--people have held grudges against me because they felt, somehow, I should have been able to do something for them so we all could have graduated at the same time, and that these unfair rules weren't being put into place when we were at the Fire Academy. Well, first of all, I was brought in and told what was going on. I had no, basically, no input. I ... One day I'd go in and the ... this would be the set of rules that were being applying. And the next day I'd go in, and they'd say, "Well, you have to tell the women this is the set of rules that's going to apply." It wasn't like I was developing the rules. And I was as affected by the rules. And hell,--it was my ass that was on the line that got fired after the probationary period. I'm convinced that, if Zaida and I hadn't won, that they would have fired a lot more women, and they just would have seen that as a green light,--you know,--to go ahead and do what they wanted to do. But in any event,--you know--there were these hard feelings that had gone on, and then they had the session out there,--everybody screams at each other. So, okay, so everybody screams. What's the next step? Well, that's it. That's all ... That's all they did for us,--you know? And ... And that really didn't do anything. All these women came to the job from very different backgrounds,--every ... everything from somebody like me who had a law degree, and we have a couple of people,--other people,--with graduate degrees,--and some people who were teachers;--you know,--two people who were students, or housewives, or secretaries,--you know,--who were basically in the pink collar ... collar ghetto;--and people who had grown up in New York;--people who had not grown up in New York. The great majority of us had never had any experience with a male dominated profession. And we're all just thrown together ... together from these very different backgrounds and expected to be able to just, like, I meld and get along. And there were too many things working against us. I think it's amazing that any of us are still talking to each other. I mean,--some of us have become very close,--you know. People that didn't know each other, we're like family now. Other people don't want anything to do with certain people,--you know. And I was like that for a long time. People would not want to have anything to do with me, even when I was President of the organization. (laughs) It was like, Oh,--you know,--she's a trouble maker. Stay away from her. And yet, a lot of women have also given me a lot of recognition over the years, and a lot of ... You know,--I get thank you notes from people that I've

helped out and ... and--you know--they're very touching. So it's basically ... the group has worked best for the people who have needed it the most.

J. Um-hum.

B. And those who have sort of like gone into a little hidey hole out in the field, well, then, they don't feel any need for the group, and they've sort of made their own way. They made their own accommodations. Now, I ... I look at some of those people and I see that their accommodations involve drug and alcohol abuse,--you know. They involve getting divorced. You know,--they involve taking a desk job and never being in the fire house, and--you know those, to me, are ... are sort of sad ways of coping with all the things that have gone on. But that's what ... that's the ways that they've chosen.

J. One of the things you've lobbied for and been successful in getting is the training for the male officers;--that you had some response from the Fire Department on gender training?

B. Well, they--you know--they were ordered by the Judge to do a certain amount of training, so they brought, like, the companies that the women worked in out there, and they sat them down and the guys screamed at the trainer for a while. I mean,--people resigned from training. (laughs) They would not do the training sessions 'cause they were not used to the abuse. And they had no idea the level of intensity, of emotion that these sessions would generate from the men,--you know. And the men are like cursing and--you know--you know--wanted to beat the shit out of the trainers, and all this other stuff was going on. So, yeah, real ... really highly successful training. And they ... they put--you know--these written drills into our study materials. And they have a schedule that was supposed to cover these things. So I personally,--even though it's been on the schedule for a number of times since I've been promoted,--I've never done one of these drills. I'm afraid to do these drills. (laughs) And if I'm afraid to do these drills,--you know--you can imagine

J. How often they're getting done.

B. what someone who has no commitment at all to the issue wants to do with them,--you know. They just ... I asked one of the guys that I work with,--a very nice guy,--I said,--you know--"Listen, have you ever done one of these drills?" Now, he's been an officer for a while. And he said, "No." I said, "Well, why is that?" And he said, "Well,--you know--I never really felt the need to. We never had any women assigned here." I said, "Yeah. But what about if one of you guys went to a house where there was a woman working that tour? Don't you feel ... He's expected to know how to behave, and everything.

J. Um-hum.

B. Don't you feel ..." "Yeah. Well, that's only one tour. I'm hoping that won't happen." And I'll say, "Okay." I mean,--that' ... that's sort of the attitude. Um ...

J. Is there training for race? Is there any equivalent?



B. Well, they,--you know--they ... they sort of have expanded the little thing into race, religion, sexual orientation ... I mean,--the thing that really just like killed me was that they were trying to put the sexual orientation stuff off in the gender integration stuff,--you know. They didn't want to do a separate thing. They didn't want to ... And they really haven't--you know--dealt with the issue of ... of racism and certainly not with sexual orientation. I mean,--if there were any group at all,--not so much lesbians, I don't think, although--you know--lesbians are ... are very much not appreciated in the Fire Service,--but gay men,--forget about it,--you know. There's ... There are really ... There's really no gay men that are out on this job. There's really none of them. And--you know--unlike the Police that have their own organization,--pretty active, vocal group,--you know,--and where they actively recruit gays. The Fire Department, forget about it. That is one of the most homophobic groups, and yet it's one of the most homoerotic groups. I mean,--you know,--this is a very touchy feely group.

J. Um.

B. And so I think that,--you know,--they're ... they're extremely threatened by the idea that maybe some of that touchy feeliness, somebody might be getting off on it. (laughs) So ... So,--you know--that it's sort of ... I think men as a ... as a group are sort of much less threatened by lesbians, and in fact, a little fascinated by it,--you know. They'd like to get in a little menage a trois going here,--you know--sometime. But ... But gay men OOO! OOO! (laughs) "Oh Jeez! that guy might be like grabbing me in the shower or something. I'd better not bend over to look at the soap." And they're like ... They're ... They're constantly--you know--obsessing on it, so I'm just waiting for ... for that

J. Um-hum.

B. little storm to break over the horizon.

J. As President of UWF, you started networking with other organizations and women in other Fire Services.

B. Yeah. The first group that we really networked with was the ... the African-American group: The Vulcans. The Vulcans were the only men that stood up for us when we first came on the job. I'm not saying every African-American man, but as an organization, they stood up for us. And their President testified on our behalf at the trial. And,--you know,--we had some ... some very striking parallels between our situation and what I had read about the first African-Americans to come on the job. And then, as a matter of fact, the founder of the Vulcan Society,--Wesley Williams,--who ultimately became a Battalion Chief, and was the first African-American to be promoted on the job and everything,--he wrote a story of his career, and--you know--the whole thing about being ostracized ... They actually had Jim Crow beds for them,--you know. He had ... Some of the blacks had to carry their own silverware and stuff around with them, 'cause the guys refused to eat off the same utensils and stuff as them. They were always given the shit assignments, long after their seniority wouldn't have warranted it any more. We had the ... exactly the same kind of situation. So they were very supportive of us. They gave me an award,--you know--early on for the work that I had done for the women, and stuff like that. Then one day, out of the blue, I get this

phone call from this woman in Ohio and she's saying to me,--you know,--"Hi! My name is Terry Florin, and"--you know--"I understand that you've got women in the Fire Department there." I'm like, "Yes." And she says, "Well,--you know--I'm a woman fire fighter in Ohio and we have, like, this little organization going,--national organization going,"--you know. And we started chatting. We wrote a few times. She asked me did I want to be a trustee of this organization that she was founding? Also, she like the idea I was a lawyer,--you know. I could look at all the stuff that she was trying to do for the organizations,--the national organization. So, all of a sudden, I'm a trustee of the national organization, and this becomes Women In The Fire Service, which is now--you know--the organization for women fire fighters. I mean,--it's so much stronger and more sophisticated than any of the local groups. And we ... we have conferences every two years. We have established working relationships with other fire service organizations. We are spreading out internationally. We sit on various important Fire Service committees, as a result of this national organization. So that ... being part of that has been a tremendous boost to me personally, because it gave me hope in my own situation. When things were going really bad in New York, I could look at other parts of the country and see where women had gone through somewhat similar things, or where they'd never gone through it but--you know--things were better for them. And I thought, Well, Gee, there is hope.

J. I ... I have a couple of things about New York I want to ask you about, before we talk about women in other Fire Services. But what about this test? I don't really understand why Judge Sifton,--the second--the new test,--that even though it seems to have disparate impact,--because women haven't made it into the Fire Service,--he still ruled that it was an appropriate ...

B. Well, he ... he gave a mixed ruling, actually. He was not happy with the second test. But we weren't happy with his ruling and neither was the City. He tried to sort of like walk down the middle there and ... and come up with some--you know--accommodations to the City, but at the same time,--you know--made some ... made them make some changes so it wouldn't have such a disparate impact. And nobody ... neither of the parties were happy with that. So we took it ... We both took an appeal to the Second Circuit. Well, unfortunately, even though we had a fairly--quote, unquote,--"liberal" panel on the Second Circuit, this was during a period of time where I felt like the Second Circuit was not focusing on social justice. They were focusing on whether or not they could get appointed to the Supreme Court,--you know. I mean,--there were lots of things going on, and they came out with a very bad decision for us,--which I felt was completely contradictory. It was diametrically opposed and logically inconsistent with what they had first ruled in the earlier case. I couldn't see how they could rule the two things. But they went right back to the stereotypes of, yes, we need the strongest, fastest fire fighters,--and that's what we ... they upheld. Now, we took a ... We took an appeal to the Supreme Court. They denied the Cert, and--you know--that's where it was left. At the same time, the Berkman 1 litigation was being used in other areas of the country, like San Francisco, to get their discriminatory test thrown out. So we're in this very ironical situation where New York was reverting back to a very discriminatory test, but our initial litigation was being used in other places to throw out their discriminatory tests. Now,--you know--it is ... It's very difficult to get judges to focus on a case for--you know--round two,--you know. They ... They're not ... And even Sifton got bored and tired with all this,--you know. I mean,--and who wouldn't. I mean,--he's got other things going on, and these lousy women, they're just, like, a problem. I mean,--they just have so many problems. They're always before him and ... We had a number of

harassment cases that we brought before him, under the ... under the initial protective orders, where he referred them out to a very good hearing officer. But--you know,--after a while,--I mean,--he just ... he just got so frustrated with the City that they ... nothing was happening;--nothing was changing,--you know.

J. Speaking of changes over time, have you seen a lessening of the ... the hard attitudes of the administration or of the Union?

B. Well, the Union has changed somewhat. They're not our best pals. They're not ready to, like, welcome women in with open arms, but they give mouth service to the idea,--you know,--especially in the Officers Union,--you know. "Oh, Rocky Jones and I, we passed the same test as the men,"--you know,--and so we're part of the Union, like all the other officers. Meanwhile,--you know--the Fire Fighters Union, whenever anything comes up,--this is as recently as a couple of years ago,--whenever anything comes up involving a man versus a woman, invariably, they will take the man's side,--you know--and the woman is left to ... to fend for herself with the help of the UWF. I mean,--it's just assumed that--you know--the Union doesn't really have any obligation to her. She has the UWF to look out for her interests,--which is total bullshit, because we pay the dues the same as the guys. So it has improved. They ... They're not running around ... But every time,--you know--a test is changed,--as it still continues to be,--every time something happens that might bring in more women and minorities,--the Union is invariably in there kicking and screaming. And,--you know--it's very discouraging to always have to try and justify your ... your reason for being there, rather than saying,--you know,--I have as much right to be here as anybody else. After all, I've been fighting fires for thirteen years, and (laughs) and you guys just walked in the frigging door,--you know! But because you're a white male, you're, like, part of the gang, whereas, the women fire fighters are never really gone to be a part of the gang.

J. Now, there's one new woman. In twelve years, there's one woman,--Susan Blake,--who just came into the Fire Department,--

B. Um-hum.

J. graduated ... Reading the account in Newsday, it seems that a number of women were there at the graduation?

B. Right. Susan was actually a good person to be hired as the first woman in twelve years, I think, in ... in a lot of ways. I mean,--she's also had some missteps, but she has not played up the fact that she's the woman that ... that passed the test,--all right,--and even though the Department has tried to promote her as such, and sort of,--you know--"Well, I'm ... I'm better than these other women" type of thing,--which is pretty much the attitude that you find with some of the second generation women,--you know. They have no appreciation at all for what went ahead. I mean,--Susan wants more than anything else to be one of the guys right now, and that's understandable. It's ... It hopefully will change as she matures in her career,--you know,--but she, at least, is not running around--you know--bad mouthing all of us constantly.

J. Um-hum.

B. So,--you know--we have ... we have hopes that she'll be able to, like, understand our point of view on this and that ... Because,--you know--we're very anxious to have more women come on this job.

J. Um-hum.

B. We'd hate to retire in five years and not have anybody have the benefit of our experience. We want to be--you know--mentors to the new group.

J. Now, it seems that the last Civil Service test that she had taken, over twenty thousand people showed up to take that test, according to Newsday.

B. Probably over twenty thousand showed up just to take the agility test.

J. the written ... Okay, the agility ...

B. Well,--you know--maybe only ...

J. So it ... it seems ... it's a highly desirable job.

B. Yeah,

J. ... and Civil Service and ...

B. Even though ... even though it's gotten less desirable since we came on there. There are certain things that have happened. They've stretched out the ... the salary rankings and stuff,--you know,--so that it takes ... it takes you longer to get to top salary. And there's other things that ... that are being required to learn in the Academy that are much more demanding than we had to learn, like EMT types of operations and stuff. But still and all, it's a very desirable job, because where else can you, with a high school education, retire as a Deputy Chief or Chief of Department at a hundred thousand dollars a year,--maybe on three quarters tax free? So--you know--there's always that thing to shoot for up there, and--you know--most of the guys know ... know that there's a pot at the end of the rainbow there.

J. Well, how many women participated in ... in the test taking? Do you have any idea?

B. I think about the same as they've always had,--which is around four hundred. And then they have, like, maybe a couple of hundred show up for the agility test. And of that number, only three got within,--including Susan,--got within ...--this last, or previous time,--not this last time;--I don't know what's going on right now exactly,--but

J. This says eighty-eight of them ??

B. Yeah. Three of them ... Susan was one. One of them was a buff, that means,--you know-

-a fire ... somebody who likes to hang out around the Fire Department, and she "" she's a very wealthy woman and really had no reason to want this job, and sure enough, she didn't take it. And then, the one after Susan just turned it down, basically for ... from what I heard,--not having spoken to her personally,--she just didn't want to go through the bullshit.

J. Um-hum.

B. so--you know--it wasn't worth it to her. And that's what's going to happen,--you know. They can have ... If they get ten women on the list, they'll be lucky if they get three to take the job.

J. Um-hum.

B. Women just don't know yet that this is something that's doable for them,--you know. They've seen too many of the problems. They really don't want to deal with it,--a lot of them.

J. Um-hum. Um-hum. So what do you see for the future of women fire fighters in New York City?

B. A pretty small group.

J. A pretty small group.

B. Yeah.

J. Recently, you've been promoted to Lieutenant,

B. Yeah.

J. And how's that been?

B. Good.

J. Yes. (both laugh)

B. Like it.

J. You like it.

B. I have my own little room;--my own bathroom,--you know. I mean,--before I got promoted, I spent almost five years--actually, well, with the Training Academy I had six pretty good years in the Fire Department;--I mean,--not heaven, and there were ... there was one very traumatic incident that happened to me that really, probably affected me as much as anything, and made me want to quit. But I had a much easier time in the fire house than I have ever had, and I developed some friendships. And yet, there was always a feeling that--you know--they'd just as soon not have me there. And so that makes it a little tough, because--you know--you ... you're required to be part of things. You have to chip in and do your part of the work, and all this other stuff, but you really

not part of it,--you know, and--you know--you know that they would rather that you weren't working. (laughs) So--um--it results in a lot of sort of forced friendliness, or forced hanging out type of thing. Well now, as an officer, I go up, I do my officer stuff. I'm in my office. Guys want to talk to me. I go down, I supervise them when I ... when I'm supposed to,--you know. We do our drills and I have my interactions with them, but I'm the officer,--you know,--and I'm not expected to hang out with them. And it's better if I'm not one of the guys,--you know,--because the problems occur when the officers try to hard to be one of the guys. So, all and all, it's a much more comfortable role for me. I ... I call the shots, and so--you know--it's not so much that I'm asserting my authority at every moment;--that just does not happen in the Fire Department. But if I want to hold a drill, I hold a drill,--you know,--and the guys,--however little they may want to do it,--they will generally follow along and do that stuff,--you know. And we're sort of in our honeymoon period right now. I'm not assigned to any particular place, but I'm getting to know the guys in a certain number of fire houses and I think, all in all, that they ... they are still learning about things, because they had never had the opportunity,--as I like to put it,--to work with a woman,--and so now, all of a sudden, they have a woman officer, and they're really not any more prepared for it than they were thirteen years ago. (laughs) So but we're, you know, we're managing. And ... And I'm trying to learn about the officers' role, and I'm hoping everything will work out. And at the very worst, I only have five years left, so (laughs again)

J. Now, is there opportunity for you to be promoted again within ... within five years?

B. Oh, su-- ... Oh, yeah, I'd say so, if I really want to,--you know--torture myself and ... and study like that. This is going to be an incredibly competitive exam for Captain, and it involves a huge commitment of time. And I just ... I haven't made the decision yet. I assume I will. Because one of the things is,--you know--I get bored in my little office, so I end up reading stuff. (laughs)

J. And you'll be reading for the exam.

B. Yeah.

J. The Lieutenant's exam: very competitive also. How long did you have to study for that?

B. Well, I didn't study that long. I studied about ... I studied a solid year, and then, they canceled the exam,--and so, I stopped studying. And I figured, well,--you know--there were all these rumors flying around and stuff, and it was really hard for me to get motivated to study again. There was some really bad things going on, where I was assaulted at work and--you know--some things that I was trying to resolve that the Department was not doing anything to help me with,--and refusing to acknowledge, actually. So that was going on, I really had no motivation to study at all. Then they ... they announced the exam was going to be rescheduled in six months, so I put another six months in,--and I put a good six months in. Now, you have to understand, some of these guys studied straight for five years,--you know,--minimum of four hours a day. And I was studying pretty hard at the end, but I really did not kill myself on this. And then, they changed the format of the exam right before the exam. They canceled the oral part of the exam,--which I think I might have had a fair ... a fairly good shot at, given my verbal skills,--not any of which are evidenced on this tape,-- but (both laugh) ... but--you know--some of these guys can't put two words together. They

just don't have the experience. And then they changed the whole format of the exam, in terms of the scoring. And it was really amazing! It's one of the hardest tests I ... I've ever seen given, next to the Graduate Record Exam,--which had a similar format that you would lose points for incorrect answers. But I think even the Grad Rec exam, you only lost like a quarter of a point,--something like that. Maybe the SAT has that now, too;--I'm not sure. But with ... with our exam, you lost an entire point for every incorrect answer.

J. Now, with the Graduate Record, you don't lose certain points,

B. Oh, you don't?

J. So it's in your interest to answer every question.

B. Oh, there was some test I took, though, in one of my many ... Maybe it was ...

J. It probably was SAT. I think it ... Well ...

B. It might have been the SATs or it might have been the law ...

J. They might have changed the GRE.

B. The LSAT. I don't know. But in any event, ... And they might have changed the GRE. That was, you know, decades ago now. But they ... they changed the format. And so now, all of a sudden, you lost credit for every incorrect answer, which meant that you could literally have a negative score. (laughs) So it was very tough!

J. How long did the test last?

B. Oh, we were there all day.

J. Yeah.

B. We were there from, like, I ... I think they might have finally started at ten in the morning. We were there till four or five in the afternoon.

J. Um-hum. And so, how did they post the scores? How did they notify you that ...

B. They sent you a little card. And they ask ...

J. J. Um-hum. And they said you're on the list for promotion?

B. Yup. Here's your score, and then ... then a list comes out in the paper and everything, and that's basically how you find out,--you know. And I was ... I consider myself lucky to be on the list;--that the list, like, just went through,--you know. Nobody challenged it. It just went in and ... and they made a lot of promotions in the first year. Rocky got promoted in the first six months of

the list. I got promoted in the first ten months of the list.

J. You were ... You were the only two women on the list?

B. No, there's one more, but she's quite a bit further down the line. She maybe has a ... I don't know how much time she has now, but--you know--she's got quite a wait.

J. Um-hum.

B. She's got a wait. But ...

J. So, I want to ask you about the work that you've done, connected with women in other fire departments in ... through Women In Fire--it's called Women In Fire Suppression now?

B. No, it used to be that.

J. No? It's still Women In Fire Services?

B. Now it's Women In The Fire Service, 'cause we wanted to recognize that women have other roles, other than just putting them out.

J. Um-hum.

B. Well, I've spent a lot of time, over the years, working with women in other departments. I mean,--I ... I testified in numerous legal cases,--you know,--hiring and retention cases. I ... I provide a lot of phone consultations and referrals to lawyers and expert witnesses. You know,--I've ... I've testified before Congress on the amended Civil Rights bill.

J. 1991?

B. Right. It passed in '92 for ?? I don't think it was passed in '91. I testified in '91. They had Susan Molinari up there, snapped her gum and talking about how great women in the Fire Service are, and then she voted against the damn bill;--like,--you know--give me a break here. So I've done that, you know. I sit on numerous Fire Service committees where I am the representative for Women In The Fire Service. And,--you know--I ... I've established ... I worked very hard with ... to try to bring the Board around to the point of operating as a Board of a ... a non-profit organization, rather than just sort of like a group of women who have this common interest. I've donated a substantial amount of money to the organization, to establish a fund to improve the Board's functioning. And--you know--we've networked with the women's trades groups. Here in New York, we've tried to work with--you know--some of the women in construction. We haven't really been able to get the women in the other uniformed services to ... to really connect up, but we ... I spent a lot of time with the ... with people from the Department Of Sanitation, before they hired their first women. And I think we gave them some advice that helped them avoid at least some of the problems that we had when we first came on the job, in terms of--you know--privacy and facilities, and--you know--doing some training, and having clear policies in place, and things along



those lines. So, it's been a lot of stuff over the years,--you know. People always ask me--you know--"Well, why aren't you practicing law,"--you know. "You could be making a lot of money on the side practicing law." I don't have time to practice law. And I've probably spent more time in the courtroom as a fire fighter than I ever spent as a lawyer. So--you know,--it's ... it's really become an avocation for me, in addition to a vocation. I think that that happens with a lot of women pioneers,--certainly with the women in the Fire Service,--that they developed this extreme emotional commitment to trying to change what's going on.

## Tape Two

J. ... 1995, Jane Latour interviewing Brenda Berkman. So Brenda, talk a bit about some of the other fire departments where women have made real steps forward?

B. Well,--I mean,--certainly there have been some success stories in terms of numbers and ranks achieved. I'd say San Diego,--where they have better than ten percent of their suppression force women, and they've reached a rank all the way up to Deputy Chief. Some departments have women Fire Chiefs. They tend to be small, but we have ... Atlanta hired a mother/daughter. We have--you know--some mother/son stories. We have Montgomery County, Maryland, I think, has one of the highest percentages of women in the fire ... in the fire department. Bolder, Colorado has a very high percentage of women. And--you know--there are these instances where, even where they started hiring--excuse me--women after New York hired, they have greater numbers,--like Chicago. So,--you know--there's certainly a lot of cases where women are making advances. I think that, for the most part, women are still very isolated in their departments. They have maybe one or two women. And those numbers, basically, don't change, because as a new woman will come on, the old ... one of the older ones will resign, so you have, like, this very unusual drop out. The Fire Service is known for having almost nobody quit, but for women that's not the case. You find that a lot of women reach a burn out point at about five to seven years. In some cases, even more. And the further along you get towards your pension, of course, the more incentive you have to stay, but a lot of people just, like, bag it. A lot of women bag it. And--you ... you know--you still have some cases where women are in the process of,--the first women are in the process of being hired. One of my friends is doing some consulting right now in Louisiana, where they're about to have their first woman, and it seems like these guys feel they have to reinvent the wheel every time. New Orleans just hired one of their first wo--just hired their first woman, not too long ago. St. Paul just hired their first group of women, not too long ago, after a very lengthy and bitter litigation,--which, again, the Union was extremely opposed to women coming on the job,--even though Minneapolis,--right across the river,--has had women fire fighters for going on twenty years now, I'd say, So--you know--and in fairly large numbers, and women officers as well. So they have exactly the same working conditions. You can't say that St. Paul has different working conditions. But, by reason of the political situation,--St. Paul being much more conservative;--a much more entrenched Union,--you have much more resistance to women coming on there. So it's really unbelievable that, in the twentieth century,--almost the twenty-first century,--we still have people arguing that women are physically incapable of doing this job, even though they've been doing it for twenty years;--that there's these inherent differences between men and women that make men so much more aggressive and capable of doing ... One might ask whether aggression is really the ... the most important criteria for doing this kind of job, or whether it's something that gets people killed doing this job.

So--you know,--there's all these debates that are still going on, as if nothing has been going on for fifteen, twenty years now.

J. Have you seen any fire departments that have made more headway in terms of race?

B. Uh ...

J. Atlanta, probably.

B. I really,--you know--it's ... it's impossible to say. I'd say that African-Americans are still fighting the same issues that they were fighting thirty years ago,--you know.

J. Um-hum. Yeah. Women in other countries: I know that you visited England and France?

B. Yeah. They're just starting to get some women. They have had women fire fighters in the UK,--in London,--for probably as long as we've had them in New York,--fifteen years. But they've had very severe problems over there, similar to ours. London was ... The Fire Brigades were originally part of the Army, and a lot of re-- ... a lot of military men went into it, after World War II, and have continued to go into it. It's a very conservative organization, and, of course, the UK has gotten increasingly more politically conservative. So they've had certainly a lot of the struggles over there. They're very similar to ours. We've established contacts with them. I've ... I was invited to visit them a couple of times. I talked ... This was during ... when the Labor Party was in power, and then Thatcher came in. That was the end of all (laughs) all interest in women,--you know--gender integration. But those women have struggled along, and they've just started to form their own national group. It's ... It's really very fun to see. They had a little conference. And they just started hiring women in other parts of the UK,--outside of London,--so there's like, now, one or two or three scattered around,--you know. And that's good. The Netherlands has a few. We haven't been able to contact them. I tried when I was over there last summer, and it was like--you know,--very hard. And then ...

J. France?

B. German has a couple. France ... See,--both Germany and France, their Brigade is still part of the military. So they have volunteers, and there have been women in that,--although not in large numbers,--and they've tried to--you know ... They're ... They're just now trying to establish some. We had .... We attended a ... a International Fire Conference in Germany this year;--I didn't go; the organization went;--and we had ... one of our UK women went, and ... and a French woman

J. Um-hum.

B. ... that we've established a contact with. Now, we're starting to ... We have people in Australia and New Zealand. We have a South African fire fighter that is visiting, and we have what we're calling our International Conference coming up in April in Fairfax. We were just visited by Japan women. Japan has always had civilian positions,--or non-suppression positions, rather--for their women. They're just now considering letting women go into the suppression position. So they

came over, and they were very interested in ... in what the United States had to say about this,--so we have a couple of them coming to our conference in Fairfax. So it's a very interesting time, in terms of what's going on in other parts of the world. But--I mean,--as bad as things are, here in the United States,--other than the UK, maybe Australia and New Zealand,--you know--there's really no other place in ... in the world that has the level of involvement of women in the Fire Service that the United States has. So,--you know--we are ... we are decades ahead here.

J. Now ... Um-hum. Speaking of the United States and being decades ahead, this whole debate over affirmative action has reared its head again.

B. Um-hum.

J. It's like the hot topic now. And there's people like Edwin Meese from the Heritage Foundation,

B. Yeah. He's a great ...

J. Who--you know--are talking about the fact that we have a gender and race blind society and that all is as it should be, and let's go ...

B. Oh, that's total bullshit.

J. And so, they're making the arguments, in a really heated way, and really trying to stir things up to turn back the clock. So what do ... what do you see happening, in terms of this struggle.

B. Well, affirmative action's never helped the Fire Service.

J. Yeah.

B. They've never ... The Fire Service has never had a real commitment to hiring goals. They make these sort of half assed--you know--fake efforts, where they say, "Oh, we're out recruiting in the community" bla, bla bla, but--you know--as ... as long as they continue to make the workplace so inhospitable, and they have these tests that have disparate impact on both women and minorities,--you know,--they're not really making any kind of true strides forward in terms of hiring,--or promoting. I mean,--there's nothing ... There is nothing about the way that the New York City Fire Department promotion system works that will help women or minorities at all. Zero. You get absolutely no credit for like, being bilingual. You get no credit for additional education;--any kind of thing that--you know ... Instead, everything is, like, how you perform on one day on one test, which tends to be very regimented. And ... And the way that people do very well on it is if they have these study groups. Now, again if you're a minority, you may be excluded from the study groups, or you may have to form your own,--which might not have as much access to all the inside information that's helpful, in terms of taking the test.

J. Um.

B. So it's not at all unusual to see chiefs' sons score way high at the top of the list.

J. Um. Um.

B. I ... I just think that affirmative action in the Fire Service has been a total joke. So in terms of, am I upset that affirmative action is under attack? Of course I am, because I would like to see affirmative action in the Fire Service. But it really hasn't had any impact. The only thing that might have, like, a kind of ... of ... of affect where people feel like, Well, not only can we .. can we not have to hire or ... or recruit or ... or promote minorities, but we can make more efforts to get rid of the ones that we have,--

J. Um-hum.

B. Because this is the way that the feeling is in the country;--that--you know--really, white men are the ones who are best capable of doing this job,--

J. Um-hum.

B. And we have to reserve these places for white men. They've always been reserved for white men! The Fire Service is--you know--ninety-eight percent white;--ninety-nine percent male,--you know,--and so, it's not like they don't have a lock on this. That's why it's so hysterical to me that they're threatened by the idea that there might be two or three women coming on the job. Oh my God!--you know--there's only eleven thousand men out there. They're really ... They're really going to have an impact! It's like a drop in the ocean. So why are people so threatened? They're threaten because they ... they know that it's got to change, and it's one of their last little bastions,--you know. It ... It ... It's sort of demoralizing to me to think that I can go through twenty years, and I can do my damndest, and when I get out, they're still going to say that I came on the job the wrong way,--even though there's probably a zillion guys that also came on the job--you know--through this or that. And everything I did in that intervening twenty years ... It's sort of like Lawrence Taylor talking about his football career. Everything I did in that intervening twenty years doesn't really count for anything because of the way that I came on. I don't see any ... They didn't offer me any alternative to that. We tried to come on in a way that would be more in line with the conventional way of coming on, and they set up every obstacle to us to be able to do that. So,--you know-- ... I mean,--we wanted it more than most of these men.

J. Um-hum.

B. You know,--we certainly put up with a lot more than any of these cry babies could take. You hear these guys complain, (in a tiny voice) "I can't get a twenty-four mutual partner." Shit. And--you know--and they're going, "Well, did you do a lot of twenty-fours when you came on the job?" "Pal, I didn't do any twenty-fours for the first seven years I was on the job, because no--" I mean,--they can't put up with three months without a twenty-four. And ... And so, I look at these guys, and you just want to say,--you know--you are such a bunch of cry babies! What affirmative action! What is--you know ... What could possibly happen here that would ... would interrupt your uninterrupted control of the Fire Service. There's nothing that's going to happen. I mean,--not under

Clinton,--not under Dole,--not under whoever the next guy might be,--you know. The only thing that's going to happen is that, eventually, there's going to be enough young women that are going to come up through the athletic programs and through these--you know--and who are going to feel like, Well, shit, why shouldn't I be a fire fighter?

J. A sense of entitlement.

B. Yeah. They can't keep me out of that. I was ... You know,--I was a star hockey player. I was--you know--a star swimmer for my team,--you know. What are they telling me, that I can't do this job. I look at what has happened with women in the military,--you know--if they try and get into combat positions, and ... and every step of the way, they're either sexually assaulted,--like at Tail Hook,--or ... or they're abilities are denigrated,--like this woman who was trying to fly combat planes,--

J. Combat pilot

B. And she crashed, and they blamed it on her, initially. And now they're saying it was--you know--a mechanical malfunction.

J. Right. Engine failure. I saved a lot of the editorials. They were really vicious.

B. What a bunch of bullshit--you know! And that's exactly what's going to happen when the first woman officer,--you know--has some member of her crew die. It's going to be,--you know ... It's not going to be because of something that is a normal part of fire fighting. It's going to be because she didn't have--you know--a pair of balls down there to be able to lead the men correctly, or something. And that ... that hangs over every woman's head, whether she's a fire fighter, an officer, or--you know--whatever,--in a nontraditional occupation;--

J. Um-hum.

B. That everything is attributed to the fact that she's a woman;--not be-- ... not to the forces outside her control. Yeah, and you can't control these ... There's ... There's no way.

J. Um-hum.

B. So ... You know,--it's a terrible pressure to be under all the time. It's scary. It keeps you up at night, and you're lying in bed going "Please!"--you know. You're trying to think about every possible contingency, and you're not allowed to just make a human mistake. Everything's because you just have these inherent flaws.

J. So, as a pioneer in the ... trying to push back the barriers that are ... stand against women and equal opportunity, how do you look now, in terms of where we are today. And what's your ... What are your thoughts about getting to a place where we actually have equal opportunity? What's your RX for the women's movement?

B. Well, I think things are changing slowly;--very slowly;--not as fast as I would like to be ... have them change. I'm very impatient about all this stuff. But ... And ... And sometimes, when I get very depressed about things, I think--you know--that I'm really ... have no right at all to whine, because I look at what women went through,--they were force fed and everything,--with the suffrage movement. On the one hand, I have, like, this very ... My ... My history background has given me a sense that things ... are better ... We are better off than our foremothers were, because we have more opportunities available to us, and everything. On the other hand, they did ... they had a lot of opportunities during World War II, and all of a sudden, they were yanked right out from under them. So I know that nothing is ever like ... ever, like, written in stone, in terms of opportunities for minorities.

J. Um-hum.

B. The least little change in ... in the economics of the situation can just put us right back into--you know--barefoot, pregnant in the kitchen type of things. And,--you know--I see people like Gloria Steinem, and ... and they just have like this never ending source of optimism, it seems like. You know,--I try and draw on that. I try and think that, Jeez,--you know--Gloria has time for ... After all these years, she has time for still reaching out to the little lowlife--you know--fire fighter and helping them out, and--you know--stepping up for us when nobody else will speak on our behalf,--and that kind of thing. So--you know--I ... I take inspiration from some of the ... some of the other people that have gone before me, and are around me. And I really think that ... that--you know,--even though we may not have thirty-five women on the job in five years,--you know--that we have made a difference. Things could revert, but they'll never revert completely back to what they were and ... And ... But I've also seen where it's taken a terrible toll on people who were the first ones. I mean,--if you asked the women who came on this job, would you recommend this job to your daughter? the great majority of them would say, NO. If you asked them, If you had it to do over again, would you do it? I would say that the majority of them would say, NO. And ... And I have days where I would say No. (laughs) And--you know ... And I'm the one who--you know--caused the ruckus in the first place. I ... I really don't thing that women would've come on the job at least for another five or ten years, if I hadn't brought the law suit. I'm not sure there would be any on it now. So,--you know--it's ... Certainly, there wouldn't be thirty-five of us, 'cause I don't think there would have been any incentive at all for New York to change. They ... They were completely against it. They fought it all the way, tooth and nail,--and that has made it much harder on us. I see places where ..., where the litigation was settled early, or there was no litigation, and it seems like--you know--there's less controversy about ... about the women. But then, sometimes, we'll be going along,--everybody'll think it's hunky-dory,--and a woman will get assaulted,--and all of a sudden, it's like--you know--everybody's all hot and bothered about being on the job. So there's no ... There's no guarantee that, even if you have it pretty good to start out with,--it's going to continue that way your whole career.

J. Thank you.