

## Interview With Marty Pottinger

J. Jane Latour and Ann Jochems interviewing Marty Pottinger at NEW on September 27th, 1994. Marty, you're a carpenter, right?

M. Yes.

J. Yes. How long have you been a carpenter?

M. I started in construction in 1972, actually as a ... a mason's apprentice in the Plasters, Lathers and Masons Union in Tampa, Florida. And I worked there for almost a year, and--actually started out as a laborer, and then I was ... I got to be a mason's apprentice. And then, I walked off the job and ... and started being a carpenter down in Florida. Again worked as a carpenter in 1974, and moved up to New York in 1975, so ever since then ... So it's been over twenty ... about twenty-two years I've been in construction, and about twenty of them have been as a carpenter.

J. So how did you get trained to be a carpenter? How did you learn how to be a carpenter?

M. Um, I started out being a carpenter's apprentice in Florida, and so, I had just on the job training. We didn't ... It was a non-Union job. We were ... It was during the oil--you know--crisis

J. Um-hum.

J. in OPEC and everything, so we were driving like two hours every day to work, just to get a job. And so Big Al was just showing me what to do as a ... as an apprentice. And ... And then, when I moved up here, I worked for someone,--a person had a very small company, and a lot of times it was just him and me, and he trained me. And I just would keep my eyes open,--you know--spending my lunch hours going around to see what everybody else was doing, and had no formal training,--and really ended up having to teach most everything to myself.

J. So ...

M. That'll be good on the tape.

J. Lovely! Yeah, sound effects.

M. Yeah.

J. Were there other women on the job in Florida?

M. No, there weren't, except one day,--and this is 1972, so there were like ... this was ... this was fairly radical,--in 197--one day,--right before I left, I think; about a month before I left,--they

said that there was another girl,--people started telling me there was another girl,--who was over on a roof somewhere, working. And I would keep looking for her. It wasn't that big a site, so it was kind of interesting,--we were building condominiums,--that I didn't end up tracking her down. But people who work on those jobs know you hardly ever get a minute to yourself. But I would just remember, if I ever was working high, 'cause I was laying block by then,--like I would be looking around trying to, like, see her with this idea that there was some other girl over there somewhere.

J. Um-hum. Um-hum.

M. And ... And I don't know what she was doing, if she was a carpenter or a ... I know she wasn't a mason or I would have known her, so ... And I was very scared to meet her, too, because I felt that my position was very tenuous. The first two months, the men didn't talk to me, (laughs) and so I felt very ... My position had actually become more secure, but still, I was, like, terrified that some other woman will come and, like, mess things up,--you know. I think when ... I know a lot of other women who felt similarly;--that you just feel like you're the only one, and you're walking such a thin line. It's so scary to think somebody else is going to come and, like, do things you wouldn't do, or--you know ...

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

M. So it was interesting. It wasn't a sense of ... It was a sense of excitement and ... and terror.

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

M. So, when I ... when did I first start seeing other women on the jobs? Really, not until ... until United Tradeswomen. And then, we weren't working together on the construction jobs. We were working together to get women construction jobs.

J. So how would you describe what you do at NEW: Non-Traditional Employment For Women?

M. I teach ... I teach four classes of twenty women a year, and I teach 'em shop, and tools, and we build a wall, and we build a toolbox, and I teach 'em safety, and material identification. These are poor and unemployed women, so most of them have no non-traditional experience whatsoever and have never ... Most of them have never used a hammer. And I teach them blueprint reading, and I teach them counseling,--pier counseling, so that we actually get to build skills to survive on the job and make our lives go the way we want.

J. So, in terms of strategies for survival on the job,--self preservation,--what kinds of things do you teach them? How do you go about doing that?

M. Well, I tell them that they have to want more than the money;--that if they must want the money, that probably won't get them through the hard times;--that we've all learned how to live on very little, so you have to want more than just the money. And I mostly feel like a sense of humor and a sense of the big picture is what gets you through. And one of the little sayings I have is that,--you know--he's an asshole, but he's my asshole.

J. Um-hum.

M. There's a way that the ... sometimes, when the guys do act like assholes, there is a sense of--you know--it's your guys,--you know;--you know them;--it's not so dissimilar than the people in your family, and there really isn't that big a difference that they happen to be--you know;--you just happen to have who you had in your family, and you just happen to have who you have on the job,

J. Um-hum.

M. and you can kind of adopt a similar attitude about it, which is--you know ... I mean,--that's a gesture which doesn't read very well over tape, but (laughs)

J. Yeah.

M. it's best expressed by--you know--yeah, but they're my asshole,--you know.

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

M. And ... and humor. And just saying little jokes to yourself;--just little jokes to them,--and not drawin' a line. If you draw a line, they will cross it. And it's about realizing that your sense of yourself and sense of self-respect, actually isn't about drawing lines. I mean,--you get to decide what you're going to deal with and what you're not, and that's really important. But there's some way, I think, that some people get into, like,--you know--"Don't do that," and, of course, then they do that. And you just got to laugh sometimes. One woman described to me ... She may tell you this story;--you may be interviewing her yourself,--but on a Union job down on one of the buildings in New York City, they painted every elevator door in, like, a twenty story building with a ... as a vagina.

J. Um-hum.

M. And so, when the doors opened,--it was a double opening door,--

J. Yeah.

M. it was like a vagina opening. (laughs) It had, like, labia and, like, ...

J. So, what did she do with those men?

M. She laughed (laughter) and commented about the art work. And, like I say, it's just wild sometimes,

J. Um-hum.

M. so you've just got to ... I mean,--the stories I've heard of ... I, myself, because I worked non-Union, almost all the people who ... I have stories from being in the Union,--you know,--when I was in the Union, but a lot of the people, they knew they were hiring me, when they hired me, so--you know ... You know--you got to keep your sense of self respect and set your limits, and be willing to lose your job if you--you know--actually be clear with yourself that what it's all--you know--what it's all worth to you.

J. The pier counseling: how does that work? Are ... How do you ... What's the premise?

M. The premise is that the ... each of us is the smartest people to figure out our own situations;--that we're the ones in the situations,--

J. Um-hum.

M. and we're ... our minds are the best places to go to decide what next--you know--

J. Um-hum.

M. what our next step is. And that early hurts have just clogged up parts of our brain, and that actually having another person listen to you is actually the key. And that, if someone just listens to you thoughtfully, that, actually, we're kind of built--that human being are built to heal, not only from, like, scrapes and bruises, but from the emotional hurts that clog up our brain. And that, actually, if you just listen to somebody, and learn how to listen well, and if you--you know--use other technical questions ... towards listening well, that actually, people undergo a very deep and profound but natural healing process. And kind of, two heads are better than one. But that the other person isn't there to give you advice or figure out your problem for you, or tell you what their problem,--their similar situation was,--but to actually lend their brain,--their kind of human awareness,--to your ...

J. Um-hum.

M. your thinking through your own problem. And so, the women

learn counseling with each other, and ... and learn how to sharpen their skills as listeners,--and they also get experiences using their time as well, which is kind of the other part of it.

J. Um-hum.

M. And it looks like it's going very well. Women have signed up for an eight week course after they've graduated from here, which was voluntary. And it's going very well, and ...

J. The eight week course is about what?

M. About learning how to ... About learning the ...

J. The peer counseling,--yeah.

M. Yeah. Yeah, about learning peer counseling, and actually doing it. And they have sessions with each other outside of the class

J. Um.

M. every week. And you ... you get a chance to see other people close. Like, there's a lot of isolation that people have to end up carrying around in society, and you actually get a chance to shake that up a little. And it's very encouraging to people,--you know. Like I say, it's very hard not to fall in love when you get to see anybody, like, who they actually are, with their struggles and--you know ...

J. Yeah.

M. Excuse me just a sec. Hello?

J. So tell us about your strategies for breaking down the barriers to learning new things. When we're interviewing tradeswomen, we keep hearing how important it is for the women to really master their craft. And you're teaching these new skills.

M. Yeah.

J. And how do you go about building up the confidence of the woman to really know that she can learn these new things?

M. Well, the first ... The first day I teach,--or the second day,--I actually have us make a list of every job anyone in the room has ever had:

J. Um-hum.

M. from babysitting to mowing lawns, to newspaper routes, to short order cooks, to hair cutting--to hair dressing. And ... and

then, everybody gets to choose one of the occupations they've had: type setting,--you know--telephone marketing,--and ... and teach us one thing about it, when, Oh, how much did they make an hour? What were their hours? And what's one thing you could teach us about it?

J. Um-hum.

M. And so, it becomes very clear that they are a tremendous resource of knowledge that they already know, that they didn't know that they knew.

J. Um-hum.

M. And so, basically, there's a whole process. ?? yeah. That's okay, Lady.

L. I'm looking for ??

J. Okay.

M. And so,--I mean,--they literally just say: I didn't know I knew that,--you know. "God, you know,"--you know,--"you know how to do word pro--" "Oh, it's nothing, word processing. It's so easy." "No, no, no, it's not,"--you know. Who here thinks word processing is easy? Nobody raises their hand. You know what I mean? So then, then the word processor realizes she already has a skill. So that's one thing. I also think that the listening,--the counseling,--listening to each other for even like little five minutes each, actually sets a tone. One of the interesting things about doing it is, with these women, that there's a lot of day to day struggle going on in their lives, and that, actually, I haven't figured out how to achieve a balance where,--as one women put it,--"when we're here, we're trying to forget what's going on in our lives, not"--you know,--"and we're trying to forget it and learn here,--"

J. Um-hum.

M. "learn what we need to know to get a job. You know,--we're trying not to deal with that stuff." And I think that that's a fair ... fair comment. And I haven't quite figured out--you know--how you both bring people here so they actually can learn,

J. Um-hum.

M. and also deal with the fact that there's major, major life and death struggles going on in most of the women's lives, on a regular basis,--you know:--

J. Um-hum.

M. Homelessness, no tokens, emergency room hospital visits,

--you know,--shootings,--you know--just a lot,--you know--is going on. And I encourage the women to get to know each other. I don't know that this is what you want to know, but--you know--I learn their names,

J. It is,--yeah.

M. I learn their names in ten minutes. I learn twenty names. I do a one go ground and I make myself know all their names by the end of it.

J. Um-hum.

M. And my intent is to make it quite clear that I take them very seriously, and that--you know,--that they are people, and they get to have their feelings if I don't get their names right--you know--five times in a row.

J. Um.

M. But I feel like that really sets a tone for what our relationship is going to look like. And speaking of the women I know;--you know--I mean,--I know many women who've been doing this for a long time, and some who've left and some who haven't,--and I know very few women who have done this for ten or fifteen years, who don't feel deeply inadequate about their skill level, and deeply compromised;--even the women ... I mean,--I didn't even get formal training, right,, so I should feel like totally shit. But,--you know--these women got to go to Union schools,--they got to go through a Union apprenticeship program,--

J. Um-hum.

M. but the level of oppression, and the level of what we're reaching to do in going into this field, is so tremendous that it's like,--the way I used to describe it on the job,-- I remember Big Al,--you know--would say,--you know,--"use your ..." You know,--"Let your hammer do the work! Let the hammer do the work, Marty! Let the hammer do the work!)"--you know.

J. Um-hum.

M. And I just couldn't. It was like he was a wave in my ear,--you know. I mean,--I just couldn't ... I was so scared, and I was having to push so far to be there,--to imagine I should be there,--

J. Um-hum.

M. I was having to focus so closely on whatever I was doing that, literally,--and I don't think everyone struggled quite as much as I did,--but I couldn't understand what he was saying,--you

know,--and I just had this image ... And, like, they would come by,--and the men would come by,--and, like, bang my arm in a different way, (laughs) and like, it was just like "water under the bridge"--you know,--

J. Um-hum.

M. 'cause it was like white noise. It was like trying to learn with a radio turned on in your head full blast.

J. Um-hum.

M. And I think that--you know--that is a fairly accurate description of what most of us felt like.

J. Um. Um-hum.

M. And so, now, one woman I know has been running a major city heating and air conditioning installation in one of the major plants in New York City, and is leaving to become a nurse's aide; is earning ... She must earn \$60000.00 a year, at least, and she's, like, going to be supposedly so happy earning twenty, \$22000.00 a year. And I say to her, "Why? Why are you going to do this?" And she's like ... I'll tell you. Don't tell anybody, and I'm not going to say who she is, but she's like, "I just fell like I don't know what I'm doing,"--you know.

J. Um-hum.

M. She said, "I just can't stand the pressure any more." And this is after fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years. And she's in charge of the thing at night, but she's ... she's ... she's ... You know,--I mean,--it's like that, to me, was a perfect example of what a lot of us have gone against. And I did a show,--you know--I do these performances,--

J. Right.

M. I did a show out in Chicago, about five years ago, at the .... at the first National Women's Tradeswomen's Conference, and ... and it was very interesting. I ... I wanted to frame a rafter. We realized that we were going to build a house on stage, during a ... a Maria Callas operetta, that lasted fifteen minutes exactly,

J. Um-hum.

M. from Lucia De L'Amour. And I don't know my opera very well, but I had found this piece,

J. Uh-huh.



M. And it worked for exactly what I wanted and everything, so this was going to play and the women ere going literally frame, plum and wire a house on stage in fifteen minutes, (snaps her fingers) and that was going to be it.

J. Great.

M. And it was going ?? lighting and everything. It was great.

J. I saw it. I saw it. It was great.

M. And it was wonderful. Oh, you did see it? Oh, did you really!

A. Yeah. Yeah.

M. Oh damn, I didn't know that. Yeah. So we had eighty cues in fifteen minutes;--eight cues,--and no director;--no money. I mean,--I was the director,--right?

J. Um-hum.

M. And ... And all volunteer help,--right? All of us were just ... And so, I walked around,--and it was a weekend conference,--and tried to find women to work with me, number one, so they had to deal with stage fright. But also, they were publicly be doing things in front of other women.

J. Um-hum.

M. They were going to be nailing. They were going to be sawing. They were going to be doing things in front of other women, and that was asking a lot. And I realized, the more women who turned me down, the more that I was asking them to do to literally just show up in front of other women, and nail a nail, is not a little thing. I mean,--to do it in front of men is not a little thing. What happened was, when it came time to frame a rafter, and I realized we had to ready make the rafters, and just bring them in to really do it,--you know,--

J. Um-hum.

M. and then tie those in together on stage, but have the rafters finished,--I must have asked like fifteen women who were carpenters,--Union carpenters,--which I wasn't,--right?--and I'd never--you know--had never framed a rafter myself;--we had ready made in Florida that we brought in on a crane;--how do you frame a rafter?--it was fascinating. The women all turned to me with tremendous excitement, and say, "I don't know, but Barbara does. Barbara knows how. Barbara knows everything." From Cleveland they'd say this. From Chicago they'd say this. From Texas they'd say this.

From California ... They're like, "No, Susan knows. Susan knows. Go find Susan. Go find Susan. She's incredible. She's incredible!" I'd go find Susan,--at this conference of eight hundred sixty-three women,--and Susan wouldn't know how to do it either.

J. Um. Um.

M. And then I'd go find Barbara, and Barbara wouldn't know.

J. Yeah.

M. And what happened is, we ended up with Dale McCormick, (laughs) who knew how to frame a rafter. (laughs again) So there was a lot of bitter, wonderful poetry and humor in this, like, saga, as it unfolded. The Dale who wrote: Against The Grain. You know her,--right?

J. Um-hum.

M. She's a Senator from Maine now;--

J. Yeah.

M. A state Senator from Maine. She wrote the first book of women [carpenters] called Against The Grain,

J. Um-hum.

M. and she's like our godmother, whether or not we knew of her,--you know. I ...

J. Yeah.

M. I think I was probably even in construction before her, but--you know--she became our godmother,--you know,--

A. Um-hum.

M. by ... by how she went about it. And Dale, ... So Dale taught us that. But I thought it was fascinating that we all had our heroes;--that all these women had someone that they thought knew everything;--

J. Um-hum.

M. And then that person,--I mean,--either was too shy to say it,--you know--or whatever;--too self conscious to say it;--I think that happened some,--but it was very interesting;--very interesting.

A. Yeah.

M. So, to me, that's a very--you know--

J. Um-hum.

M. Bitter-sweet example of how that all went.

J. Well, one of the things we wanted to ask you about was how you do your stories;--how you choose your ... your performance art--your ... How ... What are the stories that you think are the most significant to tell? And so, maybe you could talk about some of the other ones that you've ...

M. In my performances?

J. Yeah.

M. Well, in that show in Chicago, I thought just seeing each other build was pretty much said it all,--you know. I couldn't think of anything more eloquent than watching us build. And the women made it into a comedy, which was very sweet and funny. I mean,--it became--you know--and ... and they did that once the performance was underway, (laughs) so that was just like how it happened. And that was silent with the music,--right? But they actually started singing to the music, and--you know--they ... they had a good time.

J. Um-hum.

M. And ... And then, for myself, I just wanted to talk about what it felt like to me, the fact that I was probably going to live and die a carpenter, and that ... and that I ... you get,--as a female carpenter,--you get a lot of respect from, maybe, your piers, in some cases, or my piers, that I was one of the first, and a woman, and all that. But then, also, in terms of class, you're actually a carpenter, and--you know--Oh(laughs) You know,--and that's--you know,--that's that,--you know. And so, when I first decided to do construction stories, I was actually struggling;--I think I was thirty-eight then,--and I was struggling with the fact that I'd been a carpenter since I was in my early twenties,--you know--like twenty-one or twenty-two,--and that I probably would be a carpenter the rest of my life;--and that I was spending what seemed to me a very precious lifetime, like, building people's ...--you know,--a garage door for people, or

J. Um-hum.

M. building a dresser. I got to do a lot of different things,--you know: building--redoing a bathroom, which, at some point, is like, yeah, that's great and everything, but--you know--it is just a bathroom,--(laughs) you know. And they,--a lot of the people in New York City are going to move on and sell ... make ... I charge twenty thousand and they add forty thousand to their sale price 'cause

of what I got paid twenty thousand to do.

J. Um-hum.

M. You know what I mean? So there's just a lot of issues in there. And the stories I ended up telling were ... I think the stories that always interest me is: what's the mess we're in, and what are ... what are times that we glimpse out of it,--you know? And so, I did Killer-brook Memorial Wall, which was about, like, six one minute stories, as I built a brick wall on stage, about six people I know died in construction. And that's very powerful, and it's at the end of the show, but it's ... it's not without ... it's not without showing people for who they are;--that ... that Jack Jensen,--who ended up being the one man who showed me,--who broke the silent code on me,--you know,--who broke the silence,--was ... knew he was going to be dead in nine more months, of white lung disease, from cutting block for his whole career as a mason. He'd actually made foreman, and had been a foreman for years,--and he died when he was forty-nine;--and that Jack knew he was going to die, and that he was the one man on the job who,--after two months, mind you,--you know--figured out to talk to me,--

J. Um-hum.

M. and show me how to use a fucking tool,--

J. Um-hum.

M. You know. So that's very ... That just says a lot,--you know--about who can figure out what. And about racism. I think that those are all the things that just profoundly confound us as humans, where we have yet to be able to talk about it that easily,--

J. Um-hum.

M. To even kind of have a very personal discourse. I don't know that the political discourse is that useful. It's certainly useful to address inequities, but I don't know that the--you know--I mean,--what? We don't agree that it's bad,--you know,--or something,--you know. It's like ... So what's hard, it seems, is the personal stuff. So Johnson was a story about a mason tender who, at that point, was seventy-two years old,--who lifted sixty tons of block and mud everyday, on the job, and everyone called him Johnson. And the end of that story is loading sixty tons a day: hoist and stack,--hoist and stack the blocks:--hollow thump as they hit together;--Johnson, a part of the job, mason tender for fifty years. Big fellow;--no smiles;--no chatter;--no attitude;--just Johnson, grandfather to someone. First day on the job, ... Oh, only man on the job with a last name;--only dark man I saw doing construction in Florida. First day on the job, I asked him his first name. Three or four condominiums later, he passed by me, stopped and said,

"Mr."--you know. So that's that story,

J. Yeah. Yeah.

M. and it really kind of shows ... Here's this black man who's seventy-two years old,--the only black guy on the job in Florida,--you know. What is that about?--you know,--

J. Um-hum.

M. Working as the mason tender,--you know,--loading up for him. I ask him his name;--the only guy with a last name,--right?--and ask him his name, and then after a while, ... He waits, like,--you know--three months to answer me, and then says 'Mr.'" (laughs)

J. ??

M. Yeah, it is. So those are the stories that kind of excite me. There's a woman I knew in Madison, Wisconsin,--the first woman I knew who died as a carpenter,--she was partners with another woman, and she fell off the roof at the end of the day. So I, as a female, have a very ... I mean,--I just brought what I,--the pride I have,--and I think that story's like: The sun's final pink gleam on the plywood seams. You know,--the sun's going down, and there's this beautiful plywood roof laid out in front of you, and the pink shining ... The pink in plywood,--you know,--it looks real pretty together. There's a lot of pink in plywood.

J. Um-hum.

M. And he sun's final pink gleam on the plywood seam, so straight, so square, so snug. And that's the end of that story. But it was like, had she just like, brought up the last role of paper,--the last bundle of shingles, 'cause just the sense of her,--you know,--and then, how you just like, (snaps her fingers) lose your balance,--you know. And

J. Um-hum.

M. There's a humor;--I think all the stories have a humor;--I mean,--you can see that in Johnson. But ... And I call her Woman Who Fell From The Roof. Never knew her name, woman who fell from the roof, carpenter's part-- ... contractors, partner s with another woman who didn't fall from the roof,--you know,--and that's the, like, little joke. But it's like, Ooh God!

J. Um.

M. Um ... And then I talk a lot about how much I love construction, actually. I talk a lot about ... In the show, I have a whole section because I love the sounds of construction,--you

know--the ZZ-ZZ that the screw gun,--you know.

J. Yeah.

M. And I talk about ... I love the people in construction, so I do these little, like ,eight seconds vignettes of ... of ...

J. Um-hum.

M. of people that--you know--just kind of talk about class and--um ... We don't get to talk about ... on the job, you don't,--you know--and few people do talk about how much we love what we do, and I think that that really ... At least that's one of the real precious things of doing something like carpentry is that you actually do care about it, and that people do ... you do go back and say, "I built that,"--you know.

J. Um-hum.

M. And ... and so many people work jobs that--you know--that actually isn't a part of what they're able to do at this point. So that's something I very much think that story to get told. And then, that show in Chicago gave me the idea to do construction stories. I think, in the end, I ended up building things. So some of the things I built in construction stories, I just built. And I told stories about jobs that went wrong,--you know,--but, like, just life stories.

J. Um-hum.

M. Like the fact that--you know--maybe plaster debriefed from washing their tools clogged up the drain,--you know. And, like, it's like the arms is like, Oh no,--you know, 'cause it's like, Oh God, and left this huge flood on the job I did, two weeks after I left it,--you know. Or just talk about mistakes. I like to make it clear mistakes are a part of living.

J. Um-hum.

M. There's nothing to be ashamed about mistakes,--that that's a part of doing something,--and carpentry taught me that. You know,--society's really silly about mistakes,--you know. But mistakes were what you do

J. Yeah.

M. on your way to getting somewhere.

J. Have you written down these stories any--

M. Oh, yeah.

J. Yeah.

M. Oh, yeah.

J. Yeah?

M. Oh, yeah. They're all written down. I've been doing the show;--did it in England. I did it in California a couple of times.

J. Um-hum.

M. And yeah,

J. Great.

M. videotaped some of them. Yeah, it's a nice show;--a very human show.

J. Do you ... Do you find that ... You bring your performance art and your experience as an artist to your teaching, and ...

M. We talk about it some,--yeah.

J. it sounds like,--you know--that you are really able to bring the--you know--bring together a lot of things into the classroom,

M. Um-hum.

J. so that you can really transmit a lot of things that you've thought about and experienced to the young women that you're teaching. And do you find ... How satisfying do you find that ... that role?

M. Well, I find that I can speak with much more pride since I did construction stories about being a carpenter. You know,--I just ... I ... I guess the nice thing about making art is you can get clearer from making it,--you know.

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

M. It is a real chance to grow. It's like, one way you can grow, and so I can ... I'm just much more proud of it than I was, and ... and ... in a funny way, I can, at least, at this point, I'm still doing some jobs, but I ... I decided to leave it as my main profession, and that brought a lot of grief. And I had to cry a lot of hours about not remaining a carpenter. It's a very important part of who I am to myself. And I used to have a job as a school bus driver before I was a carpenter, and during this gas--you know--right at the beginning of this oil ... oil thing in '73, and I rode up to a gas station pump once, and everybody has to wait in line but school buses don't,

J. Oh yeah.

M. so I ... I drove up to the pump with the kids in the bus and everything, and I said: "I'm a school bus" to the gas station attendant. And he goes, "No, you're not." (laughs) And I thought, well, that's actually true, isn't it. Well, I was in high school, but I drive a school bus.

J. (both laugh) Yeah.

M. But there was something about where being a carpenter ended up,--you know--

J. Um-hum.

M. like it was who I am.

J. Um-hum.

M. And ... and so, it was a big thing to actually decide to come here and teach. And it was a big thing to decide to put the level of time that I put into being a carpenter into being an artist,--you know. And part of that is class stuff.

J. Um-hum.

M. And it made a big difference when I found out there was all these people in the art world that actually were working class people that I didn't really know yet.

J. Um-hum.

M. So that was nice, just to see ...

J. Yeah.

M. Oh well,--you know,--I guess ... I guess ... I guess we all are everywhere.

J. Yeah. So ... And you ... What ... What do you see as the main things that you can see about the women coming in that are sort of indicators or predictors of success on the job?

M. Um-hum. That's good.

J. What kinds of ...

M. I think, a sense of humor,--a sense of support ... I ask them ... I interrogate women, basically, about their support systems. And ...



Side Two

M. She had learned from ?? as well, how she does it. She does it like this, and goes for work experience, work ethic and ... good relationships at work,--you know,--why'd they leave their last job, and what systems were set up. And if you ... I don't think it makes sense for you to go into a field where you're going to be working with men unless you can tell you like them.

J. Um-hum.

M. And you don't have to like them in any particular way. You've just got to not dislike them,--you know?

J. Yeah.

M. They don't have to be your lovers, or your boy-friends, or your husbands or anything else, but you actually do have to ... I mean,--why? Why would you do that,--you know. I mean,--we all have struggles. You don't do that,--you know. So that's ... that's one thing, actually. If I have a strong sense that--you know,--that women--you know--find men as interesting as I do, even though they're goof balls,--you know--

J. Um-hum.

M. half the time,--you know. And so, then, like I said, the thing about wanting to do it;--that they can envision ... that there's some reason why they want to do it. I ask them, if they're growing up, did they--you know--did they like to fix things? Did they have any experience,--you know? The fact that they've gone to ... up to a woman working construction in the street and asked her, like, how did she get her job, is a big indicator to me that she's willing to break a few barriers. And does she have a sense of herself, actually. I mean,--does she have a sense of herself, which is ... That's pretty amorphous, but yet you can--you know ... What else in her life has she done. What else ... I ask them: What have you done in your life and you really wanted, that you really had to work for?--you know.

J. Um-hum.

M. And some I try to get mad, to see how mad they get,--you know? See if they get too--you know--cranky,--you know--just ... that that's not bad,--you know. And ... It's ... This ... The only thing about this program that's particular is that, if women are trying to fulfill some ... some public assistance requirement to be in a training program,--

J. Um-hum.

M. you know,--

J. Yeah.

M. then we would fit that bill. And yet, what are they doing here? I mean,--there's a lot of public ... You know what I mean?

J. Um-hum.

M. There's a lot of training programs. Why here? I mean,--already that kind of says something. But we actually don't take,--you know--over sixty-five,--you know,--seventy percent of the women who apply--you know.

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

M. And ... And they may all be great, but it's a lot--you know. This training program is a lot. I tell them: You know those doors at home where you got all that string, and rubber bands and batteries,

J. Um-hum.

M. and all that sitting in that drawer,--you know: scissors and everything?

J. Um.

M. I said: Being in a school for ten weeks dumps out, like, a third of that drawer. I said: And then, being on the job will dump out the rest of the drawer. I said: So this is no little joke,--you know. You need three layers of support systems,--you know.

J. Um-hum.

M. You need the system when your mom--you know--and you just had the argument, and your sister's kid has the measles. Then, who's going to take care of your children,--you know,--

J. Um-hum.

M. or then, what are you going to do? See,--you're leaving home at six a.m.

J. So you get them to think about it before the fact,

M. Oh yeah. I tell them I expect them ...

J. and to ... and build it into their ...

M. If we let them in, I expect them to have worked at least three months on a job;--that that's ... I'm not interested if they graduate. I'm not interested if they get a job. I'm only interested

if they worked three months on the job that they've gotten, and that that's the agreement. I said: I'll work my butt off for you, but you better--you know ... I mean,--I'm getting clearer and clearer about it 'cause--you know--I want them to know that's the agreement;--not that you graduate this course.

J. Um-hum.

M. I mean,--really. At some point ... Like, that's very sweet, but that's not why we're getting paid,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

M. I mean,--we have to--you know--fulfill contract requirements and all that, so I fell more ... I have a better understanding of ... of the situation now than I did when I got here. So I'm quite--you know ... I'm kind of tough about it.

J. You worked with other people like Irene Soloway?

M. Um. Um.

J. On setting up United Tradeswomen?

M. Um-hum.

J. And what ... what are the most profound things that you learned about organizing through United Tradeswomen? What ... What are some of your observations about that?

M. Well, I think for almost any of us,--and I think it actually explains why I'm here now,--you know. There were a lot of things I could do;--a lot of places I could go,--I'm sure,--and that is that ... that working class women are the smartest women,--actively smart,--you know. I'm sure everybody's very smart. But in terms of active brains,--you know?--

J. Um-hum.

M. that I'd ever met, and we just did the work. And we got things done, and it was really fun, and we really had a good time doing it.

J. Um-hum.

M. And ... some of us, we're still in touch with each other. That's a little unusual. There were some big--you know--disagreements and controversies and everything, and there's just a way we ... It was like a group of women who got theirs and were very clear that getting theirs wasn't what ... wasn't ... wasn't all they were interested in getting.

J. Um-hum.

M. They were interested in other women getting theirs--you know?

J. Um-hum.

M. And that's like ... That's ... I think every human being feels like that at some point, but I think that some of us have lost track of it. And so, to be that clear about it that it was like, Yeah, I got mine, but now, let's get everybody's--you know?--

J. Um-hum.

M. go get everybody's.

J. Yeah.

M. And some of us have AIDS now. Some of us have left the field. Some of us--you know--have moved,--you know,--but people kind of know where everybody's at,--you know. We kind of ... just was the sense of ... And it's not ... It was similar to ... I was involved in the women's movement in Florida, and I considered that a very great experience because it was St. Petersburg, Florida, which was kind of--you know--for some people stereotyped as, like,--

J. Yeah.

M. you know,--well, it's like, what's that--you know? But we have a brilliant and vibrant women's movement,--you know,--and it was so great to learn about the women's movement down there, because it really helped me from getting confused about both the scale of the women's movement and what it really was;--that it was not middle class--

J. Um-hum.

M. just for the middle-class white women,--you know--and that isn't all we were doing was getting, like, cushy jobs--you know--

J. Um-hum.

M. or ... at all! I mean,--in Florida we were working,--you know,--saving women's lives. I really felt grateful for that. And United Tradeswomen was similar. There was a sense of tremendous possibility and tremendous purpose. And that pulls everybody along. I mean,--that always does. One of my favorite stories about Solidarity in ... in Russia--in Russian Poland--was, about the third or fourth big strike at Gdansk. In the shipyards, the vodka sales in ... in ... in Poland dropped ninety percent during the strike. The strike lasted a very long period of time, and I realized that

these people understood that they actually can't--they can't drink that heavily and think as clearly as they need to think to be successful.

J. Um-hum.

M. So it was clear to me that ...

J. Yeah.

M. everybody's right there,--you know.

J. Um-hum.

M. As foggy as people look;--as--you know what I mean,--as hopeless as it looks, actually, when people have a sense of where we're all going,

J. Um-hum.

M. people (snaps her fingers) pull out of their shit,--you know? And then, you've got to deal with it sometime. It's not like it's just going to drop away, which is where, to me, counseling comes in,--you know. But it was very exciting. And I felt like UT was kind of a different kind of example of that, where it was just so ... We were breaking into the Unions,--you know? Women were trying to form women's committees. I mean,--you know some of this.

J. Um-hum.

M. You know,--women ... Unions were banning,--you know? I mean,--men hadn't all figured out to be allies. I mean,--the women ... Now that I'm teaching going to jobs and at least forty percent of the men are open allies. I mean,--

J. A big change.

M. that was not the case ...

J. Yeah.

M. that was not the case ... And eighty percent of the men are neutral to allies;--in the neutral to ally period,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

M. I mean,--that's really different. And our numbers are not,--you know ... There's been a lot of revolving--you know--a lot of ... We've lost a lot of things. We haven't at all achieved the numbers that we should be achieving, but--you know--still, that's a big difference.

J. Um-hum.

M. So ... And that doesn't--you know ...

J. Do you see changes in the women coming in?

There's recently been all these books,--actually one I'm thinking of in particular,--about females' loss of self confidence in the post pubescent period,

M. Yeah.

J. and that kind of ...

M. ??

J. I mean,--it seems so sort of a universal kind of truth that women are still--females are still dealing with. And do you observe any ...

M. Well, our women ... I mean,--down there, the women you just saw,--I mean,--Terry's nineteen, Glisa's twenty-four, Marilyn's forty-four, and Dana's--I don't know how old Dana is. She wasn't one of my students. She's about twenty-six, probably, twenty-seven, so we have a pretty significant age range. So I don't know about the prepubescent women, but ...

J. I just meant in terms of the carry over from that kind of ...

M. When you ... When you asked that question, what I thought of was that, I think 'cause we offer the women the bigger picture here, they have the bigger picture.

J. Um-hum.

M. And, for a while, knew ... I don't know how many years;--for a while, one of its periods was as a job bank more;--like, women came and they didn't have any school;--they just kind of got channeled towards jobs, or told where they could go to try to get them,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

M. And now, our women are meeting those women, and those women are like ... like thrilled but heart-broken to hear that the women are getting this quality of an experience before they went out. And,--I mean,--women are definitely forming lifetime friendships in the nine weeks they're in class here.

J. Um-hum.

M. There's no doubt about it. All of them say that they've never ... I mean,--these were school drop-outs. These are, like, tru-- ... They're ... They fight for the title truant of the ...--you know--

J. Yeah.

M. truant of the year, and they love it. And they love math, and they love physical fitness, and they love shop,--you know. I mean,--so I don't ... I don't think the lack of self confidence .... I mean,--they leave here with a sense of responsibility,

J. Um-hum.

M. and they know that if they fuck up ... But also, these kind of women know that anyway. I mean,--there is a real sense in the culture that--you know--you screw up, you screw up for your--you know--you're not just screwing up on your own,--you know. You're messing up other people.

J. Um-hum.

M. But ... So, ... And they definitely leave with a sense of pride and ... and--you know--they're as afraid as the other women I was describing, but I think a little less so, since we went twenty years ago,--you know,--before,

J. Um-hum.

M. and now we can come back and tell them the stories. And Irene came and gave a--you know--gave a talk,

J. Yeah.

M. the last guest speakers' night, with some other women who just graduated and who have jobs now. And it was very ... very powerful and very sweet to just realize that she and I and--you know--in ... in our various different paths, we can come back. And it's very different having somebody say, I just did this for twenty years,--you know,--

J. Um-hum.

M. and that you can look at the person and say, they're not ... they're not too much of a nut,--you know?

J. Yeah.

M. You know,--I mean, that's very different,--you know. We

really didn't have--you know--anybody, and--you know--

J. Um-hum.

M. There ... There seemed to be a period where women ... Well, I just heard a lot of stories in New York in the Unions, that the initial women who came in, in part, were a lot from raised middle class backgrounds,--which makes sense. I mean,--

J. And a strong feminist ideology and ... sort of ...

M. Right. Right. Right. And ... and for me, I was definitely raised middle-class and didn't have a strong feminist ideology, 'cause--I don't know--the women's movement in 1972--you know--I had heard that they had burned bras in Atlantic City. Like, that's all I knew about it,--you know?--and I don't even know if I knew ... knew the word feminist. And I didn't know what to think about it. I didn't really think about it that much.

J. Um-hum.

M. I was pretty much dealing with day to day struggles, but I knew I wanted to build. And also, the backlash hadn't happened yet, in '72. They just didn't know what to make of me. But there was no sense that the construction industry was un-- ... going to soon be under--you know--

J. Um-hum.

M. an attack. When did you start? Remember what year it was?

A. Well, I started non-Union, too, and it was a progressed,--you know,--and I was a sanitation worker,

M. Yeah.

A. and I'd worked in a gas station and

M. Uh-huh.

A. was a laborer, and then got into the CETA program,

M. Yeah.

A. in the mid-'70s,--in '78 or something.

M. Yeah. Yeah. So just ... there wasn't an organized backlash against me. They just were, like,--you know--we're not talking to her,--you know.

J. Yeah.



M. But then, it got organized, and the construction industry was against women being in.

J. Um-hum. Right.

M. And so, that's when most of the women I know got in was after the law suits. I mean,--several of my closest friends ended up being the first or second women in the Unions. And I think that it was the confidence,--I mean,--I have to say it must have been,--that they knew me as a carpenter, even though I wasn't Union. I mean,--it had to be. It just can't be an accident that--you know what I mean,--that ... that my closest friends who were like Burger King people, ended up being the first--you know--women masons.

J. Um-hum.

M. So even though I didn't go say, Hey, do you want to ...--you know what I mean?

J. Um-hum.

M. I mean,--that was not my role at all was to encourage them, but I think they looked around and thought, Well, I guess I can, too, or something,--

J. (laughs) Yeah.

M. which is what the men do,--I mean,--you know--

J. Yeah. Right.

M. when they see a woman. I mean,--when you see a woman doing something, everybody thinks they can do it,--you know? (laughs) They say, Well, if she can do it ... But I used to drive a taxi and--you know--I mean--school bus, and all these other kind of non-tried jobs,

J. Yeah. Yeah.

M. and they'd think, I guess that's ....--you know?

J. What about the ... the women's movement, in terms of allies? Do you see anything happening in New York City, outside of NEW, that support poor women in non-traditional jobs? And there's still a lot of outstanding struggles going on. Do you see the women's movement, so to speak, playing a role or ... where are the allies for women in non-traditional jobs?

M. Well, ... I was talking about the women ... backgrounds of the first women in ... That's right. That's where I was with that whole little things about that, like,--you know--

J. Um-hum.

M. raised middle-class, and then there was this kind of ... Well, I think, recently,--I mean,--you probably know about the hearings down at the Human Rights Commission, and ... and I kind of have an angle on that story, being that I know the people at the Human Rights Commission who ended up ... One was my lover for seventeen years,--and they just happened to be there, and she happened to get a CETA job--you know--fifteen years ago with a woman who then was doing this down there. So it's like ... It's just interesting to think of the effects of all of us,--you know. So ... I don't ... I think that had a ... I think that helped that whole thing come to be, is what, I guess, I'm trying to say,--you know:--

J. Um-hum. Um-hum. Uh-huh.

M. that she happened to have been lovers with a carpenter for seventeen years--

J. Um-hum.

M. you know?--and that ... It's like, we're all out there. It's not formal and not aware, although we send ... A woman just called me who was brutally harassed on her job as ... at Pottery Barn,--sexually harassed,--and I ... She wants to be a student here, and I sent her to NOW Legal Defense Fund. So,--I mean,--that's not a--you know--an AUD. I mean,--I assume that,--you know--that's a strong women's movement tie in with--you know.

J. Um-hum. Um-hum.

M. So ... it's like, we're out there. And those hearings really, I think, came to be because women who had been in--you know--active in the women's movement, when it looked the way it used to look,--you know?--

J. Um-hum.

M. now are working these jobs and have a sense of things. And then, the women who are still organizing women in construction,--you know--could demand it,--although I do think the critical issue is the training of leadership,--

J. Um-hum.

M. you know. And I think that's the critical issue for any political movement: for the women's movement,--for the lesbian and gay movement,--

J. Um-hum.

M. for anything. And I think that one of the things I'm actually working on in my counseling,--by teaching counseling here,--??

J. So how are you dealing with it? What ... What's your emphasis?

M. Well, I think, to train leadership, you actually help people get into shape so they can think for themselves;--so they can think, period. Then, they can think for themselves, which is kind of the same thing, but--you know what I mean?

J. Um-hum.

M. And that, once you've got somebody who can think ... think, then they naturally will start thinking about themselves, and then another person. And then, they will start thinking about three or four people, and that ... the way I envision the ... the classes going, they in and of themselves allow people to take on leadership and try stuff out, in the actual teaching of the counseling,

J. Um-hum.

M. and in the running of the support groups, that will train them ... I mean,--to me, a leader is someone who can think about people well, and who also can make it clear that those people need to think about them well, and that they won't brook no attacks and--you know?

J. Um-hum.

M. And ... and that we are all in this together. And so, to me, that's the big key. And so, my plan is that this actually will allow people a chance to try that out. And that, then, you can take that and apply it anywhere,--you know.

J. Um-hum.

M. that you actually don't ... You don't need much more than to be able to figure out what emotional struggles stand in your way of trusting other people, of yourself being trustworthy,--

J. Um-hum.

M. you know,--of being able to listen to other people and ... and offer vision,--and ... and make it clear that we're all peers, and that you're actually not trying to--you know--

J. Um-hum.

M. trying to do odd things,--you know: hide your own problems

or struggles or--you know--build some odd little place for yourself on other peoples' backs. And that, to me, is what's unstoppable. I mean,--that, to me, is what ... If people can think ... And that people are supposed to be able ... And that you expect everyone else there to do the same. You actually expect those people to be able to ... be able to think for themselves

J. Um-hum.

M. and take on leadership.

J. Right. You're not just solving all the problems yourself, but you're ...

M. Yeah;--exactly. Exactly.

J. Yeah. So you're planting seeds.

M. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, and just starting those early relationships with people to see--you know--who would like to--you know--check this out and stuff. And, to me, that's leadership training--you know--in a real nice, very grassroots way. And it has everything to do with relationships. I mean,--to me, it has everything to do with relationships, and that that's where we're the most vulnerable, when we don't actually have the relationships.

J. Um-hum.

M. And it takes a lot of time,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

M. I mean,--it's a ... It takes a lot of time. And that's ...

J. So you talk about it as a process, and as something that takes a lot of patience;--that you cultivate that in terms of the way that women think about themselves on the job?

M. Yeah.

J. Um-hum.

M. Yeah. And I think it's not so dissimilar than being a parent in the ... in the kind of wonderful opportunity being a parent gives you, despite all the oppression and the struggles and everything, it actually allows you to think about somebody,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

M. And the more you can remember that they can think, too, and enlist--you know--their participation, the better it goes. But where

that looks unequal is not a useful metaphor, in terms of what I'm thinking of--you know,--you know,--but that's just stuff that I think we're ??;--had some thought--you know--but it didn't end up remembering about being a parent and something,--but, yeah, that it's a pleasure. I guess that's what I mean, that you get so much. (snaps her fingers) That was it!

J. It's difficult but ...

M. that you get so much ??

J. Yeah.

M. And you get so much,--right,--from building those relationships with people. You get so much back, that it's worth all the time you actually end up putting into ding it.

J. Um-hum.

M. But it's very anti-status quo to build close relationships with people,--right?

J. Um-hum.

M. I mean,--it really is very anti-capitalist;--anti-everything,--you know--

J. Um. Um.

M. to actually say, If you go down, I go down,--you know.

J. Um-hum.

M. I mean,--that's--you know--that is the OOO,--you know.

J. Yeah. Speaking of anti, the Unions haven't all been sort of forthcoming in terms of women. I mean,--they're sort of under the gun. But what ...

M. Um-hum.

J. But what do you see happening here at NEW, in terms of making that a world that's not so foreign for the women, and making them feel part of ... that they ... I mean,--what ... what happens to ... to get them to deal with the idea of a Union, and see themselves as belonging there?

M. Well, they learn Union history, and that's very exciting.

J. Um-hum.

M. The electricians actually get to learn this Union history at Labor College. I don't know how they still do it. But at United Tradeswomen we went to a couple of classes and it was really fun,--you know. It really was fun to know what the hell happened,--you know--

J. Um-hum.

M. for real, and not the bullshit way. So that's thrilling. And we teach that. You know the book, The People's History Of The United States?

J. Howard Zinn?

M. Yeah.

J. Yeah.

M. I mean,--I would love if we could make that a graduation gift,--you know,--here.

J. Um;--yeah.

M. just because I feel that just was, like, I know what you fucking bastards are. I didn't know what it was, but I knew it,--you know,--and I kind of didn't know it,--you know?

J. Yeah.

M. 'Cause you don't.

J. No, you don't.

M. But I felt like I did,--you know?

J. Right.

M. I felt ...

J. Or when you heard it, you connected so much, like, intuitively.

M. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yeah. So I think that right away,--you know--?? And I don't know ... Really, I haven't figured out like--you know--any final way to talk about the corruption and everything,

J. Um-hum.

M. in a way that doesn't actually just add to the cynicism.

J. Discourage,--yeah.

M. Yeah. And I talked about it, and it's like everybody's kind of given up about that;--about what the possibilities are,--and I understand that. And so, it's hard to ... I just feel it needs to be mentioned that, yes, they're corrupt, and yes, they're--you know--they're not for us, and yes, they've done all this stuff very much against their will. But these women know, and I know, it's so much in their interest. And it's just like being,--you know,--it is in our lives anyway. I don't know that it's so different;--

J. Um-hum.

M. that--you know--they just can't tell how much they need you,--you know.

J. Right.

M. And ... And if you can stay clear

J. That's absolutely true.

M. I mean,--the women will come back and say,--you know,--it's like the men say, It's so different since I've been here,--you know,--you know--they talk about interesting things and--you know,--it's really true. So I talk about that, and ... and they talk about it. And there was something ... You were asking about Unions and everything. There was something I thought ... that I thought about it. I talked a little bit about the TDU movement,--

J. Um-hum.

M. You know? I mean,--I don't know very much about it, but I just talked about that ... that people are out there,--just like they are everywhere,--

J. Um-hum.

M. and they're in about the same numbers they are everywhere,--you know;--that we're not the majority, but that most of the people are actually scared to move to the right or to the left,--you know? And, yeah, I think they leave here with a sense that they are connected to,--definitely with a sense they're connected to a historical movement.

J. Um-hum.

M. And I think that goes a long way. But it's hard. I mean,--you know,--I call the women. I keep in much more contact than probably anyone ever has here, and ... and I feel real grateful that the job lets me do that,--you know.

J. Um-hum.

M. But I actually call and talk to the women, and a lot of times, they just cry,--you know,--'cause they can hear my voice.

J. Yeah.

M. And the kids are this, and the aunt's moved back to Puerto Rico, and that--you know--it's just like a lot is going on.

J. Um.

M. And it's ... it's hard for me to envision that they're getting up ... they're getting up a four in the morning,--they're taking their kids somewhere by 5:30 or five a.m.,--

J. Right.

M. and leave for the job at six. They're at the job. They work this incredible job,--you know,--and they love it. They say they love it.

J. Um-hum.

M. And they do. I mean,--it really is nice work,--you know,--and it could be so much better.

J. Yeah.

M. And then they come home, and then they're mothers again,--you know. (laughs) It's incredible.

J. Yeah.

M. But one thing I wanted to say,--and I don't know, Ann, what ... what do you think about all this,--but a lot of the women are leaving the field.

J. Um-hum.

M. And I mentioned that stuff about they're leaving the field and, like, they never quite mastered it,

J. Um-hum.

M. and they never fell like they never really--you know--wee in charge or got over that. And that's all counseling stuff, see, to me.

J. Um-hum.



M. So my point is counseling has a big role to play here,--you know,--

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

M. I mean effective counseling does, because that's just feelings.

J. Right.

M. That's just feelings that are holding them back. That's nothing to do with reality,--right?

J. Um-hum.

M. So that's a pretty big thing to notice.

J. Right. I mean,--I think that's common for women,--

M. Right. Right.

J. you know? It's Women historians feel it. Academics feel it. Women feel it,--you know.

M. Right. Right. Gloria Steinem's book ...

J. Yeah;--right.

M. Right.

J. Yeah.

M. And so, to me, that's like ... When I start questioning,--you know... The women are desperate for hard information, and ... and at times, they rebel, very powerfully and strongly and vocally, against the counseling;--not all of them but--you know--some do--

J. Um-hum.

M. and ... and so, I still have a lot,--you know--there's a lot I need to, like, just kind of figure out how to articulate something there. But it's like, you're not going to lose your job because you don't know how to use a screwdriver,--you know. You're going to lose your job because you started drinking again,--you know. You're going to lose your job because you couldn't figure out,--you know--how to deal with child care,--

J. Um-hum.

M. and understandably!--but that's why you're going to lose

your job,--you know. Like, let's be real here,--

J. Right.

M. you know.

J. Yeah.

M. You don't ... You don't have to read a blueprint to keep a job at this point,--you know. But they want ... And ... And it's also, who doesn't want knowledge,--you know?

J. Um-hum. Right.

M. How thrilling isn't it,--you know?

J. Yeah.

M. They're, like, ecstatic. They're like, to hell with the counseling! Give us the blueprint reading,--you know?

J. Right.

M. We need more blueprint reading,--you know? And I understand that,--you know.

J. Yeah. Uh-huh.

M. And also, it's like, ... It's that yucky-gooky feelings of feeling those old feelings! And it does feel yucky-gooky,--you know.

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

M. I mean,--that is why we don't feel them,--you know,--cause they do feel ...I mean,--the humiliation feels incredibly humiliating,--you know. It's like ... that's the one thing about it,--you know.

J. Yeah. Um-hum.

M. So I kind of say, Yeah, that's true. That's true. I can understand that, but ... And there was one more thing about ... Oh, so the women are discouraged. So ... Did you have a thought about the Unions and everything?

J. No, I just ... I just wondered,--you know--if there was a conscious effort to make them feel that, in the world where it is basically run by men,--another world that's supposed to be friendly to the member but is ... is so often hostile,

M. Um-hum. Um-hum.

J. what was happening to make them feel like they belong. And I... I think that historical approach in making them feel like a part of a movement,, is the most positive thing that ...

M. Um-hum. Um-hum.

J. that can inspire people and make them want to go forward, rather than just feeling falling away and discouraged.

M. And, yeah. And their families are sometimes proud of them, and their families are sometimes very opposed to what they're doing.

J. Yeah. That's ... That's a sad thing that I see in doing these interviews, and ... and having been talking to women doing these non-traditional jobs, since 1990,

M. Yeah.

J. is that I always think: God, your mother must be so proud of you;--

M. Right.

J. and some are and some aren't.

M. Right.

J. Or some say: Yeah, she kind of is, or, At times, or ....

M. Yeah.

J. you know.

M. But, like, no one in my family was--you know--proud of me as a carpenter. I mean,--

J. Yeah.

M. I never even thought about it until now, but--you know--

J. Yeah.

A. The same here;--a middle-class leap downward.

M. Yeah.

A. Yeah.

M. Yeah.

J. Well, it took a long time for my family to have any pride in this ... in the work that I do, in terms of Union.

M. Yeah.

J. Now they're all,--you know,--they all think it's thrilling. But before, it was just sort of like this aberrant thing--

M. Yeah.

J. you know--downward kind of our mobility--you know.

M. Right. Right.

J. How could you be interested in them,--

M. Right.

J. you know--that kind of ...

M. And the women still struggle with that. I have a ... a ... a copy of the speech I can give you ... that the woman did for her ... our graduation just now. Where's her speech? ?? Oh, I'll find it for you, but ...

J. Okay. What was her theme?

M. I was moving my desk. That's why I explained this mess here.

J. Um-hum. Great.

M. But ... So ... So ... the sense of discouragement,--Oh, that women are leaving the field and don't have the sense of having accomplished as much as they did. And I also notice women ... It's very hard for women to encourage other women now to be in the field.

J. Um-hum.

M. It looks like with me.

J. 'Cause it looks so hard and they've experienced so much ??

M. Yeah. Yeah.

J. And so they don't want to ... feel right getting other ...

M. And so, in the last many cycles, we've had no carpenters join ... one carpenter join the Union,--two carpenters ... Now, we had six carpenters join this Union since I've been ...--you know.

J. ??

M. Well, eight since I ... since I started teaching, but just six this last cycle. And one, I feel like, well, do I know what I'm doing,--you know? I mean,--I haven't been a Union carpenter in New York City,--you know--like, so maybe I'm sending them in and I actually don't know what I'm--you know--sending them into. But I actually ... And I met all these women at this festival in Northampton that were former carpenters, and they were so apologetic about having left the field. I went over to a picnic table and sat down. There were two black women talking, two white women talking and I was by myself.

So I sat down in the middle and started making jokes, and we talked for an hour and a half. I get up to go get, like, some more decaf or something, one of the women comes with me, and we've been talking this entire time. At that point, she tells me this very powerful story about having been a counselor for these young kids, and somebody ended up getting shot that she'd really pulled through a hard time,

J. Um-hum.

M. and it really looked like his future was brought, so she needed to talk about that,--right? And then she mentions that she used to be a Union carpenter. And my whole ... When I sat down I said I was a carpenter. You know what I mean? I mean,--I was there to do construction stories or parts of it,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

M. So it was just fascinating. We go back to the table, and I sit down, and these women are still talking, and I say ... I say, Can you believe it? I said: This woman ... All this talk about carpentry. This woman just told me she's a Union carpenter. And one of the other women goes, Oh yeah, I used to be a Union carpenter, too.

A. Um-hum.

M. I'm like, Oh, get out of here! It's like what ... It's just so weird. We've been talking for two hours about construction and everything, and two of you have been Union carpenters and you don't mention it.

A. Um.

M. And it's 'cause they said, Oh. And they feel so bad that they left the field, that it's like

J. Um-hum.

M. I mean ...

J. Yeah. So it's ... it's really a hard thing of ... of women having achieved so much and done so much, and been there, and put themselves through it, and yet not being able to feel, because there are so many negatives,

M. Right.

J. That they get ... It's like a crescendo.