

A. Ronnie Sandler at the Ninth Annual Northern New England Tradeswomen Conference. (Sandler), starting at the beginning,

S. Okay.

A. what motivated you to be a trail blazer, non-traditional worker in the beginning? How'd you learn carpentry?

S. Well, I gue-- ... I guess ... There's a couple of things. One,--and I tell this story all the time,--when I was in junior high, I wanted to take shop.

A. Um-hum.

S. I'm old enough so that, when I went to my guidance counsellor, I was told, "Girls don't take shop. Girls take home ec (economics)." And I said, "But I don't want to take home ec. I want to take shop." And ... And he was, like, well, ... Actually it was a she was a guidance counsellor, and she said, "Well, girls don't take shop. Girls take home ec." And I was so insistent that they sent me to the Assistant Principal, who ... And you know you're in trouble, right, when they send you to the Assistant Principal. And I ... And,--you know,--I went through the same thing. And the Assistant Principal, after many back and forth, finally said to me, "You will take home ec." So I think that that,--you know--that sort of ... I was ... My mother always says I did things just to rebel, and I think that I was partially rebelling against that. The other thing was that I .. that I always liked working with my hands. I always liked doing stuff with my hands. But like most of the women my ... who are my age, I went to college, and I had choices of being a teacher or a nurse or a secretary. But I went to college, so--you know--that was not a choice. And then, I graduated from college with two hundred thousand unemployed teachers, 'cause all of a sudden, they didn't need teachers any more, 'cause we had all listened to them. So here I was living in northern New England, trying to figure out what am I going to do. And I actually ... The first job I ever got in the trades was working on highway construction. And it was back in the days where there was no such thing as a flagger, but it was labor, so you were hired as a laborer, and then,--you know--different people flagged or did different things. And I got that job through total persistence of--you know ... The superintendent would say, "Come back in two weeks," and I'd be back in two weeks. "Come back next week," and I'd be back. And I think they finally hired me to get rid of me. And I worked two summers as--you know,--I didn't think of it as being a trail blazer. But--you know--I was kind of ... I was a tomboy growing up.

A. Um-hum.

S. It was like, I had tried all these other things. And I worked two summers as ... as ... on highway construction in northern New Hampshire. And I had a good friend,--this was back in hippy days,--I had a good friend who was a master carpenter, and he had just gotten a fairly large renovation job on a fire damaged house in Frankonia, New Hampshire. And it was right at the end

of the summer and I was about to get laid off from highway construction, and I said to him, "You know, if you need other people, I would be very interested in ... in working with you." Actually, let me back up a second. About two years before that, I had taken an adult education course on carpentry,--on how to build your own house, because I had bought land in Vermont, and I was going to build my own house. And so, I thought, Oh, before I build my house, I should learn something about it. So I took this adult ed course. I was, of course, the only woman.

A. Um-hum.

S. I never completed it because it was forty miles from where I lived, and it was the middle of the winter, so I only got to about half the classes. But I learned terms, and I learned jargon, and I learned tools. And this friend of mine was very impressed that I knew, at least to some extent, what he was talking about. I now ... I still didn't understand why two by sixes on the ground were two by sixes, but when you put them up in the wall they were studs, and when you laid them across they were joists, and when you put them another way, they were rafters. So I was very confused about some of the terms,--you know. It was like, why isn't this just the same thing wherever you put it? But I worked for him for about a year, and by the end of the year, I had a crew of two guys working with me,--under me. And he was ... He was a wonderful teacher. He was the kind of person who ... We were doing tongue and groove paneling. And we'd go into a room, and ... and the blank wall he'd say, "Okay, you do that blank wall,"--you know,--and I'd go along. And when he'd get to a window, he'd go, "Okay. Now come and watch how I cut around and what I do to trim out this window." So he really ... I ... I was very lucky, and he really taught me to do that. But I never really thought of it as trail blazing, at that point. After I stopped ... And you should st-- ... Like I said to you before, I'll talk forever on things, but ... so you should stop me if I'm ... After that, actually, I was still working ... living in northern New England, and I ... I knew two other women who had built houses and were doing carpentry. And so, we started the Tigress/Euphrates Carpentry Company.

A. Um.

S. And it was the three of us, and we did ... we did a bunch of renovation work. And it was fascinating, 'cause ... because it ... it was just like,--you know,--women,--you know--how women think. We'd come to a problem, and we'd be doing this renovation work, which is, as you know, very different than new construction.

A. Um-hum.

S. It's a lot more figuring out how to make something work. And ... And we'd get to something, and ... and I would, like, look at something and say, Well, we could do it this way,--and I'd have, like, seven steps. And then, Margaret would get to say, Well, we could do it this way,--and it would be three steps. And Martha,--who we always jokingly said was from Venus,--would look at it and say, Well, we could do ... and she'd have like twenty steps of how you could do it. So we ... we did a lot of teaching each other and figuring out, and back and forth. When I became a trail blazer,--when I really became aware of ... of that's what I was doing, and not just sort of doing my own thing,--was getting in, in 1976, into The United Brotherhood of Carpenters And Joiners of

America, in Michigan. And I was the first woman to be in any of the Trades Unions in the state of Michigan. And ... And that was a very interesting story, because I had thought about moving to Michigan for a love interest, and I was in Detroit, and I called up the District Council,

A. Um-hum.

S. and I said to them, "Hi. I'm a carpenter from New Hampshire, and I'd be interested in getting into the Union. What do I do?" And they said, "Oh, well, all you have to do is go down to a job site and get a letter of intent to hire, and bring it to the Union Hall." Well, even though I was from New Hampshire, where there were not many Unions, I knew that the first thing they would ask me on a job site was "Where's your card?" before I could get a letter of intent to hire. I mean,--even I knew that.

A. Um.

S. So I sort of gave that up. And I was in Michigan for about four months, at the time, and I was working on the NOW National Conference,--which happened to be in Detroit that year,--and I was working, making long distance phone calls around the country from the office of a woman by the name of Edie VanHorn from--who's fairly high up in the UAW. And in the '70s, the UAW controlled Michigan. I mean,--it was much more powerful than it ... than Unions are today. And Edie was an amazing woman. She had worked on the line in ... during the War, and had moved through the ranks, and she was everybody's idol. I mean,--she was just this wonderful older woman, who was just very politically involved in the women's issues, and ... and pretty much single handedly moved UAW to back the ERA and to do a lot of things that was ... were very forward thinking for the Unions. And when I first met her, she said to me,--and I told her I was a carpenter,--she said to me, "You're my idol."

A. Um-hum.

S. And I was like, "Oh honey, you're everybody in Detroit's idol. What do you mean, I'm your idol?" And she said to me, "We have been trying to get a woman into the Trades Unions. We've been trying to break a woman into the Trades Unions movement. Would you be interested?" And I thought about it. And I went home for the summer and ... and decided that, yes indeed, I would;--that it was really an opportunity. And I ... I went back in the fall, and I called Edie up, and I said okay. And she said, "Okay. What you need to do is call the District Council and tell them that"--and I can't think of the guy's name,--the name of the guy who was the Secretary/Treasurer of the Building Trades in the state of Michigan. So I called the District Council, and I said, "Hi! I'm a carpenter from New Hampshire, and I'm trying to get into the Union." And they said, "Well, all you have to do ..." And I said, "And so and so suggested I call ..." And they said, "Come right down. Pay your initiation fee. We'll give you a card. We'll get you a job." And I was just, like ... And it was amazing. And ... And it was a \$200.00 initiation fee, and I didn't have the money. And ... And my girl friend was out of town for the weekend, and I was ... happened to be having lunch with Edie that day, and I went by and I said, "Wow. You know, they said I could come down, but I've got to wait until after the weekend so I can get some money." And ... And we had lunch. And Edie,--I'll

never forget this,--she pulled out her wallet and counted out \$200.00. And I said, "I can't take this." And she looked at me and she said to me, "If you can't give it to your sisters, who can you give it to?"

A. Oh!

S. And it was just, like, the most incredible thing, I think, that's ever happened to me. I ... It was just amazing. So I went down to the District Council and got my card and ... and got into the Union, and that was the point at which I realized this ... I'm doing this not just for myself. I'm doing this for my sisters. I'm doing this for women who come behind me.

A. Um.

S. And let me tell you, it was the most difficult thing I've ever done in my life.

A. Um.

S. It ruined my relationship. It made me totally crazy. And,--I mean,--I ...

A. Yeah.

S. Yeah. You know! You know! I mean,--it was 1976. It was before the Rainy (??) regulations. I was on a job of two hundred. I was the only woman. I knew the guys in my crew, but I didn't know anybody else. There were times that I was scared,--physically scared.

A. Um.

S. It was the days when they didn't have tops on porta-johns,--you know,--so,--you know--it was like ... It was ... And these guys were, like, off the wall in some of the things they would say to me.

A. Um.

S. But luckily, I drove a '54 Chevy pick-up, so I had some respect because of my truck. And it was ...

A. ??

S. Yeah. People really liked Lou Ella, my truck, and it was ... and that's ... that was sort of the only in piece that I had. So it was ... it was pretty amazing. So that's a ... a long answer to your question.

(Third Voice) Good morning, Jane.

A. Yeah. So then you went to California and got your Civil Service job. How did you do

that and how was it?

S. Oh, that was many years later, actually. After Michigan Actually, what happened in Michigan, it was really ... 'cause I worked ... I worked in the Union for about a year and a half. And ... And during that time, I was involved with a group called the Michigan ... the State ... The Michigan Statewide Task Force On Sexual Harassment. And remember, this was in '77, I think it was, so it was right at the start of when women were talking about sexual harassment issues.

A. Yeah!

S. And I was involved, again, because my girl friend was involved in ... in the whole women's movement there. And ... And it was very amazing! And I met some women who were from the Michigan Department of Labor, Office of Women And Work. They had an Office of Women and Work in the Michigan Department of Labor. And one night, Sandy,--who was one of the women from that,--called me up and said to me, "If you were going to train women to get into the trades, what would you do?" And so, I just said,--you know,--I said, "What I'd do is I'd ... I'd take all of the excuses I've ever heard of why women can't do it,--starting with: they don't want to; they're not strong enough; they don't know anything,--and I would answer each of those questions, one by one. I'd do physical conditioning. I'd ... I'd tea--you know,--I'd teach them how to be assertive, because you need to do that on the job, and I'd teach them some skills." And we talked for about two and a half hours. And I ... And I just thought, Wow, this was fun,--you know,--and I got off the phone, and I went, Cool. And about two months later, Sandy called me up, and she said, "Remember that night that I asked you about this?" And I said, "Yeah." She said, "Well, I wrote up a proposal and got it funded through CETA. Would you be interested in ... in running the program?" And it was very funny, 'cause it was being run in Lansing, at the Community College which did all the apprenticeship programs, at the time. And the Office of Women and Work had said to them ... Well, the requirement for the position of Director was a journey level card and some background in adult ed. And the Office of Women and Work said to them, "You'd hire a woman, wouldn't you?" And ... And they said, "Oh yeah, of course," thinking, well, there are no women with journeyman cards.

A. Um.

S. And so, they handed them my resume. So I did that. That was the start of the Step Up program.

A. That's great.

S. And I did that for a year, and couldn't stand Michigan any more. It was too flat. I needed mountains and moved back to New Hampshire, and actually worked as ... had my own contracting company: Sappho's Builders,--

A. Wow!

S. which was very funny, 'cause people would say, "Sappho's Builders?" Are you Italian?"

A. (laughs)

S. And I'd go, "No, no, no. Sappho was a woman from Ancient Greece who would teach women things that no one else would teach them."

A. Um.

S. And they would go, "Oh! Well, that's a good name for a women's carpentry company." It was very funny. So I did that, and I did some HUD work, and I had a couple of ... I had other women working with me. And then, two years after that, I... I went to California.

A. Um.

S. And actually, it was very funny, 'cause I worked in San Francisco for a year just building decks and and,--you know--word of mouth kinds of stuff. Also, in Nebraska for six months on my way out. And then, I moved down to Monterey, and I ... what I had been doing was advertising in the local women's paper, because one of the things I had found was that women love to hire other women,--you know,--so it was really great. And this was '82, I guess. And I put an ad in the women's ... the local women's newspaper in Monterey, and about three days after the ad comes out, I get a call from the guy who was the Director of Public Works at the Naval Post Graduate School who had seen my ad. And I was like, "Why? Why did you see my ad?"--who had seen my ad and called me me and said,--you know--"We'd like to hire women. This is affirmative action and,--you know--we'd like to hire women. Would you come down and interview?" And I went down and interviewed, and ... and they hired me and offered me a job. And it was just, like, this is great!--you know? It was like ... It was ... It was just, like, full-time work all of a sudden,--you know,--and ... and it was kind of neat.

A. Yeah.

S. And .. and it was really fun! It ... It was ...

A. Um.

S. So I got into Civil Service Carpentry, and I was the highest rank ... the highest grade ... What was it? It wasn't GS. It was ... What are you with Civil Service? Oh, you're not ...

A. WG.

S. WG. Yeah, wage grade. Right, WG. I was the highest WG woman in ... in the Public Works Section.

A. Um.

S. And that was real ... I had ... I had a great time.

A. There were other women, or ...

S. There was a wo-- ... There were two women painters and a woman who was learning lock smithing.

A. Um.

S. So there were ... There were three other women, but they were all ... they wre all kind of laborer level, and I was journey level. And ... And, of course,--you know--that had ... It definitely had its ups and downs. It was, all of a sudden, working with a crew of men again,

A. Um.

S. some of whom were wonderful!--some of them who were totally supportive, and some of them who were total assholes. I ... There was this one young guy who nobody wanted to work with and so they stuck him with me, and he refused ... And he was an apprentice, and he refused to listen to the things I told him to do. So, at one point, we were,--I will never forget this,--we were doing a job, and he refused to do something the way I said to do it. I said, "Get in the truck and sit there until I'm done." And I drove back to the shop, and I went into the foreman, And I said, "I will not work with him. Get him out of my truck. I'm not working with him." And about three days later, I heard from a couple of ... of the guys who I was friends with, that he had been bad mouthing me and talking about how,--you know--all I just needed was a good fuck. And these two guys, who were both six foot tall,--this guy was about five-eight,--these two guys who were both six foot tall took him aside and said, "If you ever do anything like this again, you are going to have to deal with us."

A. Wow!

S. I mean,--it was just amazing. So ... So I had a lot of support. And Civil Service ... This was the Military Industrial Complex.

A. Um.

S. We never carried a ladder that ... to the second floor. We had a cherry picker. You want ... I mean,--this shop ... I had never seen a shop like this. There were three shapers. I mean,--ever conceivable tool you would ever want. If you needed something, you'd just go into the tool room, "Oh, we don't have it?" "We'll order it for you. No problem." I was ... I never ... You know,--it was a wonderful experience. And I worked with some guys who were getting ready to retire, and they just showed me tricks that ...

A. Wow.

S. that were wonderful. So I really enjoyed it ... that. And, as I mentioned to you yesterday,-

-you know--you said, "Well, how could you leave that kind of thing?" I was ... It was the mil-- ... It was a naval base.

A. Um.

S. It was the Naval Post Graduate School. Nobody wore uniforms, but it was a naval base. And there was a War Room that was five stories down in .. in ... encased in, like, a--you know--four foot thick cement and steel wall that you were escorted to by an armed naval person in uniform. If you were working with a partner, and one of you had to go to get ... to the truck to get something, they'd have to call another escort to take ... to escort you out. So all of that stuff was weird. And it was great! I mean,--it was ... You know,--I ... I got to take sailing lessons on ... on these twenty-four foot slopes for, like, \$10.00,--you know. I mean,--it was just ... It was all of that ... those wonderful perks, and it was also fun because it was maintenance carpentry,--

A. Um.

S. which is less heavy;--which is ...

A. Right.

S. You know,--every day, you'd go in and they'd have--you know,--like, three or four chits, and you'd go out and they'd say,--you know ... Some days they'd have, like, one, and they'd say, "Well, I don't want to see you back here until four o'clock," so we'd go down and hang out by the water, by the--you know--the marine labs, and like ...

A. Um-hum.

S. So parts of it were really, really fun! I really enjoyed it. I really learned a lot. But about eleven months after I started working there, the Commandant,--we had a new Commandant on the ... the Post Graduate School,--and he put an article in the civilian newspaper that said: "I really want to thank those people at Public Works who have made it possible for the military mind to do their job." And I couldn't do it any more. I ... That was it. It was just, like, I ... I fooled myself for, like, eleven months, and I ...

A. Oh.

S. and I just said, I can't I can't do this work any more.

A. Um.

S. So I moved back to New Hampshire, and did carpentry for a while. And then, actually, got a call from Vermont. I had applied for some jobs in Vermont and New Hampshire and ... and wanted to really bring Step Up back to ... to New England.

A. um-hum.

S. And I got a call from the Vermont Department of Education that somebody had put together some funding, and was I interested in interviewing for the position of ... of doing some kind of pre-apprenticeship, non-traditional job training. And the interview,--literally, when I went in for the interview--there were, like, six people, and the question was: "We have X amount of dollars. What kind of training program could you do?" 'cause they ... these people had absolutely no idea of what they were talking about.

A. Um.

S. And I just laid Step Up down to them and they hired me. So that's another ... That's kind of the ...

A. Progression ??

S. Progression ... Yeah, and of my life.

A. Yeah. It seemed like you were you were plugged into the growing tradeswomen movement, like, from the very beginning,--like all the way from the Women In Skilled Trades in Michigan, and the sexual harassment thing,--before anybody knew what that was,--and Network Construction Compliance Task Force,--there's the compliance word early on, and ...

S. Yeah. (coughs several times) Part of that was ... Part of that was the people in Michigan that I was involved with,--that I knew. My friends were mostly ... Many of my friends were ... were counsellors at ... at community colleges or did adult ed kind of work,

A. Um.

S. so that kind of hooked me into that kind of movement. The other thing that was very clear to me--what ...--and I totally ?? to tell you about this,--but one of the things that happened when I got into the Union was, I realized ... I would come home from these horrible days, and the work was ... I mean,--the work was ... it was interesting work, 'cause I was ... I was a trim carpenter, and we would literally trim out a two bedroom apartment. You had four-and-a-half hours to ... to do all the baseboard molding, all the window molding, hang eight shelves and two byfold doors. And then, boom, you're on to the next one. I mean,--that was ...

A. Wow.

S. It was production work. I learned a lot of stuff. I learned very good stuff. I mean,--it made me a lot faster. You do that kind of stuff and, boom, you're ... you're knocking it out. So I ... the work wasn't bad, but just the the emotional toll.

A. Um-hum.

S. And I would come home and I would talk to my friends, who were guidance counselors, and they would go--or therapists,--even worse,--and they would go, "Oh yes! We understand. That must be just ..." But they had no idea what I was talking about. And I realized that what I needed to talk to other women who had ... who had the same experience that I had.

A. Um.

S. And I spent four months in ... in Detroit, Michigan, trying to find one other woman who worked in the trades. And it took me four months. And I finally uncovered a woman who worked for GM in one of their shops as a tradesperson. And that was the ... that was literally the start of Women In Skilled Trades in Detroit, 'cause we ... And then, because of my connections in the adult ed community and in the community college community, we--you know,--people ... we ... we figured out, who can we mail out to and try and have a few little meetings. So that was how it started with ...

A. Um-hum.

S. It ... It wasn't ... It didn't start from an activist point of view. It started from a ...

A. Need.

S. from need,--a real need for me to be able to say to somebody else, and have them really get...,

A. Um-hum.

S. and not be a therapist and tell me, "Oh yes, yes, I understand," but really get ... "Oh yeah, absolutely. Those fuckers! Can you believe they'd ... You know what happened to me?"--you know. I mean,--that kind of thing.

A. Yeah.

S. That kind of ... of ... of empowerment. And that ... So that's where that really came from.

A. um.

S. And I ... But And I ... I come from an activist kind of background,--you know. I grew up Jewish in New York, so that you've got that kind of--you know--that's what you do with your life. That's important.

A. Um. So your parents were activists?

S. My grandparents. My grandmother ...

A. um-hum.

S. My grandmother worked with Margaret Sanger, doing early birth control stuff.

A. That's great.

S. And so, that always sort of--you know ... She, much more. It skipped my mom's generation,--you know,--but

A. Yeah. Yeah.

S. that ... that was kind of neat. So ... So I had that kind of ... of just desire to do that. And I'd gone to hippy colleges where,--you know--we did all that kind of stuff. So ...

A. Um-hum. Um-hum.

S. And,--you know,--it ... that was the '60s. I had gone to college in the '60s. It was the ... You know,--everybody was an activist. That was part of what you did. So

A. Yeah.

S. Cool t-shirt!

(Third Voice) Isn't that great?

S. That's great. So ...

A. Well, Step Up has been really successful. You started in Michigan and Vermont, and now you're going into the University Of New Hampshire?

S. Um-hum.

A. That's great.

S. Yeah.

A. How many women do you think you've put into the non-traditional jobs?

S. What had we figured out? We had figured out, in nine years,--and now, this is their tenth year; they finish up ten years now,--that we had served probably over eight hundred women.

A. Uh-huh. That's wonderful.

S. Yeah. Yeah, it's really exciting. And in the state of Vermont,--which is a state of four hundred thousand,--so eight hundred women,--I mean,--you're getting up there, and you're--you know

... I mean,--in New York that may not be a lot. But in Vermont, you're talking a lot of the pop(ulation)--you know?

A. Um.

S. And I'll never forget,--when we first started Step Up,--when we tried to get ... expand the funding;--the first year was a demonstration program; we had--you know--enough money for one ... one site,--and I'll never forget,--the Department of Employment and Training,--who was our major funder, through JTBA, said to me, "Well, don't you think you'll flood the market?" with ... with--you know--with twenty-five women? And I was like, "I don't think so." But I'll never forget them saying that. "Don't you think you'll flood the market?" It's like, "No."

A. What do you think some predictors of success are of these women in the program? Like, probably all of them don't ??

S. Some of us ... Some of them have fooled us over the years. I mean,--just like,--you know--everything else. I think what,--you know,--for me, what I really decided was the major predictor was ... was motivation, more than anything else. And I had ... I had many arguments with DET,--Department of Employment and Training,--about ... They wanted to do A GATBY test,--you know. They wanted to do all these aptitude tests, and I have a ... I ... And I would always say to them, "I have this friend, who's one of the best carpenters I know today,--builds beautiful stuff,--builds beautiful houses,--builds wonderful stairs,--

A. Um.

S. and many years ago, she tried to get into a CETA Carpentry Training Program. She took a Gatsby Test and they said to her, "You do not have the math skills to be a carpenter. We will not put you in this program."

A. Um.

S. And she basically said, Fuck you. I'm going to learn to be a carpenter. And she ... And it's true. She has the worst math skills in the world. I cannot figure out how she lays out stairs, because she doesn't do it--you know--with formulas, the way everybody else does it,--or rafters, for that matter. You know,--she does it. But she lays out complicated stairs.

A. Yeah.

S. And ... And I've seen her build wooden spiral staircases, and she has no math skills.

A. Yeah.

S. But she had the motivation and the determination to do it. So it was always my argument that ... that aptitude ... And ... And the other thing that we learned in the Step Up program in Michigan ... It was very much a pre-apprenticeship training program. We worked with the Unions.

And ... And back then,--as I think they still do today,--Gatby was one of the ... the major things to get into a apprenticeship program. You had to get ... take a Gatby test and score--you know--high in five of the areas. And we found that we could train women and improve their aptitude scores,--which, to me, said these are not aptitude scores. And the ... the one that we did the most was spatial relations.

A. Um.

S. And I don't know if you remember the Gatby test, but what they do for spatial relations is they show you a diagram of, basically, a cut out with dotted lines of where it would be folded, and they said what ... if you folded this up, what would it turn out to be?

A. Yeah.

S. We taught origami,--which is exactly the same thing. You take flat paper. You fold it in certain places,

A. Um-hum.

S. and you come out with different shapes.

A. Um.

S. We taught origami. And in ... in ten weeks, we raised women's spatial relations aptitude scores by fifty percent.

A. um. ??

S. And it was just, like, you can't tell me this is aptitude, if we can train people to do this!

A. Um.

S. And the same thing with ... with there was another thing that was a lot of tool recognition, where they'd have a hammer with--you know--part of it colored in, and then they'd have four other hammers and ... and say, which is the most alike? And if you recognized this is a hammer, and your brain knew that, it was easier to see the differences, than if you had no idea what this thing was and were trying to figure it out.

A. um.

S. So we ... So ... So I really think that aptitude--you know---is bullshit, when you're talking about this kind of thing;--that it's really motivation.

A. Yeah.

S. And I think, for me, that was ... that was the prime thing that I would look for was

motivation, and ... and ... and that the person had given this thought;--that they didn't come and apply to the program and say, "Well, I really want to be a hair dresser, but this was a program that was available that my worker sent me to." You know,--that was the kind of person that was, like, "Well, I don't know,"--you know. But over the years, we were definitely fooled. I mean,--you know--there were people who we brought ... who we accepted into the program and we thought, this person is the best, and they would, like, totally screw up.

A. Hmm.

S. Or there would be,--and I'll never forget this,--that there was a woman we brought into the program and we ... we said,--and I'll never forget this conversation amongst the people who had interviewed her,--we said, "This woman will never get a job in the trades. But the program will help her in her life."

A. Um-hum.

S. She was the first ... the first graduate to get a job in the trades,

A. Um.

S. and she stuck with it. And she's still working in the trades, and this must be eight years later. And it was just--you know--it's that kind of thing that ... that you do get fooled. But it's ... So it's motivation.

A. Yeah.

S. That's the ... the indicator. I mean,--and then there's other little ...--you know,--like people who had four .. who grew up with four brothers, they'll probably make it,--you know.

A. Um.

S. So there's other kinds of things. One of the things that ... that I've seen,--we ... we started doing that as,--I don't know,--on some kind of ... some kind of thing, where there were a bunch of tradeswomen and a bunch of women who weren't tradeswomen, and--you know--we've ... I've always tried to figure, Okay, what do we all have in common as tradeswomen?

A. Um.

S. And the one thing that we came up with, that we ... that ... 'cause we said to these women, "Who in this group of tradeswomen were tomboys growing up?"

A. Um.

S. And every one of us raised our hands.

A. Um-hum.

S. And I've been ... I've been doing sort of a ... a non-scientific study of that since then,

A. Um-hum.

S. and I find that that's the one common denominator that I think most of us had;--that we were ... we were tomboys growing up.

A. Hmm. That's interesting.

S. So a-- ... check that out for ourselves,

A. Yeah.

S. as you go around. See if that's true of the tradeswomen you know, 'cause it's ... it's my sort of my thesis study.

A. Yeah. It does seem to make sense.

S. That's definitely so.

A. So I know for me, periods in my life when I was isolated, Tradeswomen Inc.--just the magazine itself,--kept me going. And I noticed that ... that you were involved with them. So ??

S. I was involved with them when I moved to California.

A. Oh.

S. I had been a member of Tradeswomen Inc. And when I was moving to California, I thought, Oh cool! Here is ... Here is a ... Here is a support group already there. And ... And ... And it was very interesting, 'cause when I moved to California, I moved in,--I stayed with some friends in San Francisco,--one of whom worked with Equal Rights Advocates, who, as far as I'm concerned, is really the public interest law firm that ... that represents tradeswomen, more than any-- ... anybody else in the country. And this friend of mine, Courtney, worked for Equal Rights Advocates. And Molly Martin

A. Um.

S. was on the Board of ERA and was also founder and on the Board of Tradeswomen Inc. So I met Molly very early on, when I moved to California at an ERA thing, and we became very good friends. And Tradeswomen ... That was around the time that Tradeswomen was organizing the first national conference in Oakland.

A. Were you ... Did you go to that, and you were in with that?

S. Yes, absolutely, and that was an amazing experience.

A. Um!

S. That was an incredible experience to ... to be there.

A. Um-hum.

S. That was the first time that I'd really been amongst a group of women ... I had met one other tradeswoman who was a journey level carpenter. But at ... at the conference ... It was also,--I don't know. Did you go to that conference?

A. No, I didn't. Too poor.

S. It was an ama-- ... It was ... It also really pointed out how different tradeswomen are, and how it was very difficult for us to all get along.

A. Hmm.

S. I mean,--it was very clear. There was a lot of very difficult stuff that happened at that conference. I don't know if you ever heard that.

A. No, I never ... No.

S. But people got trashed because they invited the wrong person or,--you know. I mean,--there ... And there was a plenary session that was taken over by a group of radical women, Trotskyites, from Seattle. I mean,--it was just kind of ... It was a crazy kind of thing. But it was also ... it was also wonderful.

A. Um-hum.

S. Then, when I moved to Monterey, I said, "Okay, who do you have on your mailing list from the Monterey area?" And they gave me the name of a woman who was a cabinet maker, who ...

Side Two

S. ... Oh God. Well, let's see ... I got involved ... Let's see,--that was '89. I think I got involved with the National Conference Planning Committee in '87. And--you know,--I don't really want to give you all the dirt, if ... if ... I don't know what you,--you know--what you picked up at that conference. But the National Conference Planning Committee ... It was a very difficult way to plan a conference. We had no money.

A. Um-hum.

S. We were fifteen or seventeen women from all across the country,

A. Um-hum.

S. trying to plan a national conference together without money. And so, people were literally, spending their own money to try and get together to meet. And it ... it was ... It was some ... It was some of the most disfunctional work I've ever done. I mean,--we had .. we had meetings, at one point, where we had two people who were literally standing in opposite corners of the ballroom because they were so angry at each other. We'd sent them to corners so they wouldn't attack each other, literally.

A. Um. Um.

S. We ... I ... I was involved in writing a grant to the Women's Bureau for funding for that, and we ... we got a \$50,000.00 grant from them. It was great. But ... But then, this issue came up around the word lesbian,

A. Um.

S. and ... and that was an issue at the conference. And it was very interesting, because the issue came up because we had put in the grant that the Conference Planning Committee would be made up of journey level, rural, Union, non-Union, straight, gay ... and we had put straight in there because most of the women involved were lesbians, and we wanted to make sure that there were straight women involved in the planning! I mean,--we thought that was important.

A. Right.

S. So that's why we'd even put that in there. And the Women's Bureau people ... Now, remember who this was under. This was,--you know,--this was in ... in 1989,--you know,--so it was--you know--the Reagan/Bush era, and the Women's Bureau was under attack,--as they are today,--and they ... they called and said, "We can't ... We know lesbianism is important. Understand that. What we ask you is not to put the word in things you mail out with our name on it, because it's ... it'll red flag it." And so ... Now, you have to understand, this ... the National Planning Conference Committee was, I would say, seventy-five percent lesbians, and--you know--who were out;--who were very politically active. And we had a long meeting about what ... Do we say to the Women's Bureau, "Take your \$50,000.00 and we won't have a conference,"

A. Um.

S. or do we say to the Women's Bureau, "Okay. We won't use the word lesbian." We had lesbian plenaries. We had How To Deal With Homophobia. We had that stuff at the conference.

A. Yeah. Right.

S. They never said we couldn't do that. They just said, "Please don't put it in the Conference brochure when you mail it out."

A. Right.

S. And we decided that we wanted to have the conference. We needed their \$50,000.00 to do it. It was the only way we were going to do the conference, and so, yeah, we would ... we would abide by their rules. And I know I got trashed at the meeting,--at ... at the conference because of that. I got called into the ... to the Lesbian Caucus and--you know--pulled over the coals about how dare we, and--you know--all of this kind of stuff. And Roberta McKay,--who was ... who was a real ... is still, to this day, a very big ally of tradeswomen at the Women's Bureau, got publicly trashed at ... at the closing session;--

A. Um.

S. publicly trashed about it. And it was very ... It was very difficult. And out of that Conference, as you know, came the National Tradeswomen's Network,--

A. Um-hum.

S. which was the second most dysfunctional organization I was ever involved in. (laughs)

A. They ... They ... You said that like it You said that like it's past tense.

S. Well, it ... it ... The NTN actually is past tense.

A. Oh no!

S. And ... And what ha-- ... and it was ... I think a lot of it was the same issues. Women from around the country ... We had some money ... Now we had, at least, had money to ... to get together. But we would come together and we would have ... we would have such pressing issues to work on that we never spent the time to really build consensus. Was this an organization of organizations,--which is how I saw ... saw it? Was it a grassroots organization,--which is how other women saw it?

A. Um.

S. Who was a tradeswoman?

A. Um.

S. Was I a tradeswoman because I no longer was working with my tools, even though I had been a tradeswoman since the early '70s? And ... And what I kept saying was, "if the issues had

changed then I would say I don't know the issues. But they're the same issues. They haven't changed, so I do know them."

A. um.

S. So there was a lot of animosity about who is a tradeswoman. As you may or may not know, the tradeswomen movement has a history of animosity between tradeswomen's ... tradeswomen and advocates,

A. Um-hum.

S. and who really runs their--you know,--who really runs the movement.

A. Um-hum.

S. But when I was told that I was not a tradeswomen, and Loren Sugarman,--who was an elevator constructor for many years,--was told that she was not a tradeswoman, and Linda Butler,--who was an operating engineer,--was told she was not a tradeswoman,--because we're not currently working with our tools, I got pissed, quite honestly. I mean,--you know,--there was a lot of hostility and just a lot of shit that went on. And it was very dysfunctional. And ... And ... And,--you know,--people ... people would go to these meetings and we'd get trashed. And ... and I ... The last meeting that I re-- ... We had a facilitated meeting in ... in .. in Miami, and it wa horrible. Again, I hate doing ... dishing all this stuff, but it was ... it was very difficult.

A. Um.

S. And I think there was a ... What happened after that meeting ... And even the facilitator was, like, Holy shit. I don't know what to do with this group,--you know,--'cause people were just like all over the place. And what we would do was very typical of groups. We would start at Point A,

A. Um.

S. try to move to Point B,--someone would bring in Point E. We would jump to Point E, never completing A or B,--never finish E, because someone would bring in C, and never accom--you know,--never accomplish anything. What ... We would finally make decisions, and at the next meeting, people would want to bring them up again,--you know. It was just, like, things that would make me totally crazy. And people just sort of stopped really working on it. And ... And I think what happened was that many of us ... It was at a time where a lot of our funding was very kind of ... We were worried ...

A. Um.

S. You know,--my own program. Am I going to get my own program funded? I don't have

time to be working on a network.

A. Um-hum.

S. And so, it just kind of disintegrated.

A. um.

S. And I know, at the ... the Tradeswomen's Summit that the Women's Bureau put on,

A. Um-hum.

S. we were trying to pull it together to be very actively involved in that,--that there were a group of grassroots tradeswomen who were going to move forward.

A. And they did a survey ...

S. And they did a survey. And that was kind of the last that I really heard of them. We, in New England, have been meeting for the past two and a half years, with a group called Murphy's Women In Transportation. And it's very different from the NTN in that it's an invitation only group.

A. Um-hum.

S. It is not incorporated. It is just ... We ... It ... It started out being the coup or actually, overthrowing the government with the Janes, and ... and it was Jane Gilbert and her boss, Jane Lincoln. So my ... my original files say, "overthrowing the government with the Janes." And through MDOT,--Maine Department of Transportation,--they funded us to get together. And we have been doing some national things. We, a month and a half ago, pulled together women from across the country to come and talk about strat-- ... doing a national strategy.

A. Um-hum.

S. So I think that,--you know--although the NTN, as itself, does not formally exist, I think that there's a lot of ... there's a lot of work nationally that ... that we'll doing.

A. Yeah.

S. And that we do have a network that is,--you know,--a network, basically, of how do we get information out to everybody.

A. Um-hum.

S. And it was great, 'cause Maine DOT has said they ... "You get us the information. We will mail it to everybody on ... on this mailing list."

A. Um.

S. And ... And it's more of the feeling that people need to be dealing with their organizations locally, who then will deal--you know,--a representative of that organization will then,--you know--is the person that we contact and get out an alert, or get out whatever. And then, it's up to them to get it to their members. So I ... And that ... that sort of was always my idea of the NTN, I think.

A. Um-hum.

S. But I know people have very different,--you know--different ... different desires and ... and-you know--focus of what they wanted that organization to be. I mean,--that was one of the issues we never really dealt with,

A. Um.

S. 'cause we were dealing with crises. So ..

A. Yeah. Now, the Northern New England Tradeswomen, you ... you started that.

S. Yes.

A. And the ... And the conference is wonderful. It's the nicest ...

S. Yeah. It's the longest running annual tradeswomen's conference in the world!

A. That's excellent.

S. It is, and it's so exciting! I mean,--I love that!--you know. It is.

A. Now, is Step Up part of that ,or is that something ...

S. No. It's really interesting. Step Up ... The way ... The way NETW happened was that Step Up was funded as a program of Vermont Department of Education Adult Education.

A. Um-hum.

S. And for the first three years, that's how our funding was. And as we wanted to expand, one of the things we found out is, if you are a part of a State Agency in Vermont and you bring in other moneys, you don't get to keep that money. That money goes into the General Fund.

A. Um-hum.

S. And as we began to try and bring in other money in ... in to fund Step Up, we found that

we couldn't do it. So we realized we had to have a non-profit organization in order to do that. And that's why Northern New England Tradeswomen was started. I always looked at ... I always looked ...--I mean. And ... And I think it's true. One of the things we found, if you look at ... at tradeswomen's organizations around the country, having a training program funded gave us the oppor-- ... the opportunity to have paid staff,

A. Um.

S. who could do ... I mean,--I always saw my job, not as running Step Up specifically, but as being as advocate for tradeswomen in the state of Vermont.

A. Um-hum.

S. And I put that into my grant. There was always a line that said: "The Executive Director will act as an advocate for tradeswomen in the state of Vermont," which then gave me the leeway to do what I wanted to do.

A. That's wonderful.

R. And so, Step Up really was ... was the vehicle out of which Northern New England Tradeswomen came.

A. Um-hum.

R. But I think the first annual conference that we did, we were still part of Department Of Education. So ...

A. Um. Oh, so the Sexual Harassment Prevention Training For Non-traditional Coworkers,

R. Um.

A. you developed a program for that then.

R. Yes.

A. That's a ...

R. That was the ... That was actually some of the hardest After being in the Union, that was some of the hardest work I ... I did. We were working ... I was harassing Vermont Agency of Transportation about their lack of women workers and their lack of enforcement of Executive Order 11246 for their contractors. And although .. And ... And it was at a time when there was a state hiring freeze. It was,--you know--and so, they weren't hiring anybody. But I ... I think I'd harassed them enough to ... to get to the point of saying, well, we need to do something for when we do hire women.

A. Um-hum.

R. So they decided that ... And ... And it was ... it was around,--you know--when states were really starting to take notice;-- People were really starting to take notice of sexual harassment. So they decided what they were going to do was they were going to do sexual harassment training for all of their maintenance workers,--or as they called them, maintenance workers.

A. (laughs)

R. They're the maintenance workers. And so, they hired me on a consulting basis, through N ... NETW, to design the program, and to then go to thirty-four garages,--literally; I mean,--I was standing in the grease,--to do sexual harassment training with the individual crews.

A. That's great.

R. It was great, and it was very difficult. I mean,--I got harassed,--you know--as the trainer, and ... and I ... It was ... It was really very interesting. And it was fascinating. And it was interesting, 'cause one of the first things I did in the session, was I gave the guys the opportunity to vent

A. Um. Um.

R. about ... and ... and through a questionnaire: What ... Why do you ... Why would you feel uncomfortable working with a woman? Why would a woman feel uncomfortable working on a crew of men?--you know--and gave them the opportunity to, like, rant and rave about what women could and couldn't do. And then, after they got that opportunity, I went through a whole thing about,--you know--that ... that literally, sexual harassment is violence against women,--;you know,--and just sort of slammed them, but gave them the opportunity to at least get out what they ...--you know,--women are dangerous;--they can't do it;--I can't talk to them;--my wife'll ... The biggest concern of theirs was that their wives would be jealous.

A. Um.

R. I was amazed at that. I hadn't heard that excuse yet. That was a new excuse. I've heard it a lot since then. But when I first heard it from those guys,

A. Um!

R. it was the new excuse. So ... So that ... It was ... It was fun to do, and it was ... it was very, very taxing to do it;--really .. And I would do two train--two sessions. I'd do a morning session and then an afternoon session with different ... with a different crew.

A. So that piece has ended, or there's materials ?? Are you going ..

R. Yes. No, that was ... I have ... Yes, I have all the materials. I actually just was asked by a construction company in Maine ... They're ... They ... They're doing some training in, I think, April, and they asked me if I would be interested in doing sexual harassment training for their workers. Since that time, I ... I ... I have mixed feelings about sexual harassment training.

A. Um.

R. As ... As Jane says, over and over again, the boys know that it's wrong. They know it's wrong, but they're perpetrators,--you know? I believe that sexual harassment training ... that they're ... that fifty percent of the men who sexually harass do it just 'cause they don't know how to deal with women. And those fifty percent get something out of sexual harassment training. I think that twenty-five percent who are perpetrators, the only thing you can do with them is fire them.

A. Um.

R. And my feeling now is that I will not do sexual harassment training with a company unless they have a very strong policy that you get caught doing sexual harassment, you're sent home for a day, a week,

A. Um.

R. but you lose money.

A. Um.

R. You get caught a second time, you're gone.

A. Um.

R. And that's my feeling, at this point. And again, because I think just by doing training, it's bullshit.

A. Um-hum.

R. You know? Men know that it's wrong.

A. Yeah. Right.

R. They know. We don't have to train them not to do it.

A. Yeah.

R. So ... So my ... how I ... how I look at sexual harassment training has changed.

A. Yeah, beyond education into compliance.

R. Absolutely. That's what it is.

A. Right. Okay. So I got that brochure about this thing that's coming up in the fall that looks really wonderful: the WIRE Opportunities For Women Net Project?

R. Oh yeah! Right!

A. And you have the money to do that and that you're on the faculty? That's sort of like a wonderful model?

R. It does, and you know as much about it as I do, because I got the same thing. Literally, what happened with that is I got a call from, I think, from Christine Watkins, who said, "We're doing ... We're ... This is what we're doing ... we're going to be doing,--you know,--an institute for people, and we'd like you to be on the faculty.

A. Great!

R. Are you interested?" "Yes." "Well, we're doing a train-- ... We're going to have all the faculty come together in Washington in ... at the end of May."

A. Yeah.

R. And then, I got the same brochure. So that's all I know about it. So I can't tell you anything about that.

A. Yeah.

R. I think it'll be exciting.

A. Yeah. Yeah.

R. I think it'll be fun. I hope that there's still affirmative action by then.

A. Right. Yeah. Now, affirmative action ... I mean,--your keynote yesterday was great. Could you talk about--you know--Compliance U.S.A. and the Bridge Project and affirmative action. Just ...

R. Well, I ... I left Step Up a year ago,--well, not quite a year ago,--and started Compliance U.S.A." a consulting firm,--a for profit consulting firm. It's really fun to be in the for profit world,--let me tell you,--with Linda Butler from Tradeswomen ... They're not Tradeswomen of Purpose, but

A. Yeah.

R. Top Win,--yeah. And right now, most of our--all of our contracts right now are with the Maine Department Of Transportation. And I do several things for MDOT. One is I do their ... They do six to eight annual contract compliance reviews of different projects in Maine during the construction season. So for the past two years, I've done their compliance reviews.

A. Um.

R. The other contract,--major contract,--we have with them right now is on the Cortland Bridge Project, which is a four-and-a-half year, a hundred and fifty-four million dollar bridge project. I know, in the cities a hundred and fifty-four million dollars doesn't seem like a lot of money, but it's probably three years worth of funding for Maine DOT on a ... if it was a regular basis.

A. Ah.

R. So this is a really big thing for them. And they have two other bridges that are going to be ... being built in the next couple of years, that they're also going to do on-site compliance. It is the first time that a ... that a highway or bridge project, or any project, has had an on-site compliance officer representing the enforcement agency.

A. Um.

R. Maine DOT has also done a lot of work to make ... to make the project woman friendly. There's near-site child care that is available to ... to anybody who works on the site,--men and women,--that operates the same hours as the project is working: nights, early mornings, late ... whatever you need. There's the on-site compliance. Maine DOT has ... has helped to fund several different training programs to ... to make sure that women and minorities have the basic skills to move into ... into the jobs that are available, including Women Unlimited, which is based ... is modeled, basically, on the Step Up program. It's a little bit different, but that ... they're ... they're running the program in Portland, and other ... other agencies that do some training. It's really exciting! We're running, right now, ten percent of hours worked are worked by women.

A. Um.

R. Six percent of those are skilled. I .. I don't have all my notes with the all the figures,

A. Right.

R. but I think it was twelve percent carpenters, fourteen percent truck drivers ...

A. Um.

R. I mean,--we're doing really well.

A. Yeah.

R. It's not perfect, by any stretch of the imagination.

A. But better than anyone's ever been.

R. But it's much better, I think, than it's been. I think what we've done is, we've shown that, if people really believe and really want to do this, it can be done.

A. Um.

R. The other exciting piece about it is that the ... my compliance component of it and child care is being funded ... Child care in part;--my ... my consulting piece in full--is being funded by construction dollars,

A. Um.

R. okay? It's not other moneys, like ice tea money or money specifically for women or minorities.

A. Um-hum.

R. This is construction money that is funding child care and ... and compliance, and it's the first time that I think that's happened,

A. Um.

R. so that's also very exciting.

A. Um-hum.

R. So we ... as far as Compliance U.S.A., we named it Compliance U.S.A. 'cause we really would like to do work in other areas around the country. With the whole feel what's happening in Washington since November

A. Um.

R. around the attacks on affirmative action, we're--you know--kind of like, well, let's hold off a second before we do a big marketing campaign, so we haven't really done a whole lot of ... of marketing. But I ... I'll tell you, I love the for profit world.

A. Um-hum.

R. I love doing compliance. There's ... There's a power in compliance that you don't have as an advocate,

A. Um.

R. and that's pretty amazing. As somebody from the advocates' community, who, for years, as I said in ... in the keynote,--who, for years, begged contractors to give me information, I now can say to a contractor, "I want this information by five o'clock on Tuesday." And their response it, "Would you like it faxed or Fed Exed?"

A. How about that.

R. And ... And I love it.

A. Yeah.

R. I absolutely love it. And ... and it's been wonderful. And I've been able to ... to--you know--if there's a problem on the site,--again that Porto John issue where--you know--one of the women complained that she'd been walked in on in the Porto John,--I called the Superin-- ... the Project Manager for the ... the prime on that site, I said "This is what happened. I want it fixed by tomorrow. You either get a new lock or you get a new Porto John that's for women only."

A. Um.

R. The next morning, there was a new Porto John that was for women. And ... and that's really amazing, to be able to do that;--to be able to .. to advocate for women who are having a problem: having a problem around pay or have questions about the training they're receiving, or whatever,--to be able to go in ...--to go into the safety officer and say, "Here's Workables For Women's--you know--catalogue. You should be able to get safety equipment to fit women. Here's a place to get it," and to have them seriously look at it and start ordering.

A. Um. It's great.

R. It's really neat to be able to be in that position;--to be able to really make some changes.

A. Um-hum.

R. So I like ... I love it.

A. That's wonderful.

R. I really love it. And it put ... The other thing that's really great is it puts me back in jeans and work boots and a hard hat every day from being more of an administrator, and I really like that piece, too.

A. Um.

R. I ... I--you know--That really is who I am,--you know.

A. Um-hum.

R. Being an administrator ... Being a supervisor was never ... And ... And by the time I left Northern New England Tradeswomen, I had nine ... nine staff people.

A. Um.

R. And what I found myself doing was supervising instead of doing the actual hands on kind of stuff. So I'm ... I'm much happier doing this.

A. Um.

R. It was ... It was the right move for me at the time.

A. That's great.

R. And the other cool thing about for profit is that when you write up a budget, at the end of direct costs and indirect costs, profit is a line item. And it's really cool,--you know!

A. Yeah.

R. I mean,--it's like ... Coming from the non-profit sector, it's like wow! You mean I can put profit in if I ... ten percent. It's like, yeah.

A. That's great.

R. So the--you know--it's kind of funny.

A. So ... So your successes in org-- ... in organizational work have been more locally and regionally, you feel, and nationally, there were some problems. Like, so do you have any opinion about Beijing, and what tradeswomen could ... could do in Beijing or ...

R. I think,--you know,--I think that tradeswomen are ... we're a hard group to ... to work with. I mean,--that's ... that's really my feeling. We're very independent. One of the things that I have realized is that tradeswomen will rarely say thank you. It's really interesting. It was really interesting, 'cause when I was ... I was interviewing some women who were finishing a training program at the Bridge, were finishing up their training program, and I think there were six six women, and one Latino man. And at the end of the interview I said, "Is there anything else you want me to know?" And everybody was going ... And the Latino man said to me, "I want you to know that your being on this site, I know changed how I was treated on the site. And I want to thank you for that."

A. Um.

R. Not one of the tradeswomen ever said that to me. And ... And it's something ... And ... And,--you know--I'm not knocking tradeswomen. What I'm saying is that we're very independent. We're tough. We ... We have to be tough. We have to learn to take care of ourselves. And so, we ... we're less likely to, like, say thank you;--to ... to,like,--you know--know how to ... to compromise, because we can't compromise on the job. I mean,--I think that that kind of ... that the situation that we're put in at work on a day to day basis, makes us be hard to survive.

A. Um.

R. And I think it's very difficult for us, both in our personal lives and in our organizational lives, to ... to let go of that, and to come home and ... and be easier.

A. Um-hum.

R. When I was in California, I ... there was a ... there was a therapist who ... who ... one of her specialties was working with tradeswomen on how to work through issues in their relationships and be--you know,--after being so--you know,--so tough at work, kind of how to be tough at work and softer at home.

A. Yeah.

R. because that was really an issue for many women. And I think it is an issue in organizing. I think we have had a lot ... Don't get me wrong. I think we have had a lot of successes nationally.

A. Um-hum.

R. I think the conferences have been wonderful.

A. Um-hum.

R. I think that we have a network of, certain of organizations;--of a way to pass information along.

A. Um-hum.

R. I think that the ... the working session that we had in Portland a month ago, we really did come up with some strategies to work on nationally. I think it was very empowering. So ... So don't get me wrong. I think that we have had successes nationally, and I think it's not an easy thing to do. I ... I'm hoping that the whole ... that the attack on affirmative action is going to make us realize that we have ... clearly have more in common than we have differences, and ... and that's what we ... And not put aside our differences, 'cause our differences are our strengths.

A. Um-hum.

R. And I think that's true. But I think there are issues ... I think there are issues around ... around race that ... that are very clear that ... that we need to deal with. I think there are issues around gay/straight that we need to deal with in order to make the movement really work. And I think we need to put those issues ... We need to acknowledge those issues and then put them aside, and be able to work on what are our issues, 'cause I think we do have issues. And that's,--you know,--that's sort of my hope is how do we ...--you know. And we can't have expectations that we'll be perfect around race issues, or that we'll be perfect around homophobia issues,'cause we're just people like everyone else, but we need to be aware of them. We need to acknowledge they exist, and then we need to move beyond them.

A. Um-hum.

R. And I think with Beijing, I think all of those things. I think, our bottom line ... And one of the things we learned through NEWT: Northeast Women In Transportation is--that really works is, if you have a lot of people saying the same thing in the same way, it is really powerful.

A. Um.

R. And a couple of the things that we decided that we would all say,--and now, we've heard other people saying them back,--is that we're not talking ... What we're talking about with women in the trades is economic equity. The bottom line, we're talking economic equity for women,--number one. And when we're talking to bureaucrats who are ... who have jobs to do, and they go, What ... What am I supposed to do?"--you know. "I ... I ..." Our response is "All we are asking you to do is to do your job."

Q. Hmm.

R. And--you know,--we all say that now. And I think we really learned that if we can have a few ...--you know,--and as much as I hate it, it's that--you know--what--you know--those thirty second sound bites.

A. Um.

R. If we all have, like, the same thirty second sound bits, and we're all saying them all across the country, that all of a sudden, pe-- ... you're going to start hearing it back from the bureaucrats, and you're going to hear it back ... I mean,--The Commissioner of Maine DOT, I've heard him talking about how what we're talking about here is economic equity for women. It was like, wow! this works! So I think that ... that that's one of the things that we ... that we've learned in the northeast is we need to have the same,--you know,--everybody calls them bullets now;--the same little ... little clips that we're all saying at the same time.

A. Um.

R. And I think that ... that that's what ... that works,--you know. Affirmative action: we need it. It's ... This is how it's worked for me. This is how I've seen my life change. This is why we need it. It's a woman thing. It's a ... It's a black thing. It's--you know,--ninety percent isn't enough for white males. I mean,--it's--you know--all of those kinds of things. We need to be saying the same thing.

A. Um.

R. So that's ... I mean,--that's,--you know,--that's what I ... I ... I hope to see.

A. Um. Well, thanks a lot, Ronnie. You want to add anything? Do you have anything else to add?

R. This was fun.

A. Yeah, it was great for me. Okay, so ...

R. Now what's happening with this? Tell me?

... was ... and I think she's from NYU. There was ... There ... Back in,--Jeeze, when was it?--1985, '86, '87,--somewhere right around there,--NYU Law School

A. Um-hum.

R. pulled together a working conference for ... for women,--for tradeswomen from around the country, to come--and ... and it was a working conference,--to come and talk about our issues and ... and strategies. And it ... it was the first time that I met many of the women who are active in the tradeswomen's movement today:

A. Um.

R. Priscilla Golding from Boston, Dale McCormick from Maine, myself, Lisa Deale from West Virginia, I think Loren Sugarman. I mean,--it was ... and Molly Martin. It was the first time that we were all pulled together. It did not work out as well as we all hoped it would, because one of the things that ... that happened was that black,--a group of black civil rights people who had worked to get blacks into the trades, were there to give us some i-- ... some help. And I think what happened was there was a whole race thing that ... that sort of happened.

A. Um.

R. But I think that NYU conference,--although, again, it was a difficult experience for many of us; I ... I was lambasted for being racist by some of the men,--

A. Yeah.

R. was ... was a really important piece in ... in tradeswomen's history;--

A. Um-hum.

R. that it really was one of the first times that ... that many of the women who were isolated in our own areas got ... we brought together to talk about tradeswomen's issues. And ... And Sylvia Law, I think, was the woman who organized that.

A. Um.

R. And so, I think that ... that any history of tradeswomen and of the movement

A. Um-hum. Um-hum.

R. needs to have at least a mention of that NYU conference, although I don't look at it with fond memories, quite honestly, but it was one of the first times that we got brought together.

The other thing that you asked about, early on, was the ... the Construction Compliance Task Force Network.

A. Oh yeah!

R. And that came about ... Wider Opportunities For Women actually pulled that together. Back in '79 and '80, right after Executive Order 11246 and the Apprenticeship regs were passed in '78,--which I actually wrote testimony for. That's how long I've been doing this.

A. Ah.

R. Right after that, WOW realized, being in Washington, that ...

Tape Two

R. ... WOW realized that OFCCP probably was not doing the job that we hoped they would be doing,--I think, 'cause ... 'cause Reagan had just gotten elected, actually, so maybe it was '80--and so, they called together some women from around the country,--mostly from the D.C. area, but there were other women from around the country,--to come together to ... to be able to share our experiences with enforcement of this regulation. And at that meeting, I met the first other journey level woman carpenter I had ever met in my life,--a woman by the name of Mary Garin,--who Iran into ...

A. From here.

R. Yep, she was from New York, yep,--and I ran into a friend of hers at another conference last year, who said, "Mary Garvin saw your name on the agenda and said to just say hello." I haven't ... I haven't seen her probably in fifteen ... probably since that meeting or soon thereafter.

A. Um.

R. But it was ... that was one of the most exciting things for me. I'll never forget meeting another woman who was journey level in the ... in the Carpenters Union.

A. Yeah, 'cause you might be the first two for ... from our generation.

R. Well, we ... we may have been. Dale McCormick was also the first woman who ... who went through ... a registered apprenticeship program,

A. Yeah.

R. through the Carpenters. And if you're really going to do a history, you really need to talk to Dale about her experiences getting into the apprenticeship program, 'cause she got in 'cause her first name is Dale,

A. Yeah.

R. because it was a man's name and they thought it was for a man. And when she showed up, actually ... And she had a male friend who returned the application for her. And so, when they accepted her and she showed up, they were like, "Who are you?"

A. Yeah, not Dale.

R. Right. And they said, "No, you're not. We met Dale." And she was, like, "Oh no," and she pulled out her license, "I'm Dale McCormick. You accepted me. I'm here,"--you know? So, I don't think any tradeswomen's history would be complete without that little story, too.

A. Yeah. I'd love to talk to her. Yeah.

R. Yeah. That was a good story, so ...

A. That's great.

R. So I think those are the two ... the two other pieces of tradeswomen's history that we need to ... to have in there. So ...

A. Well, thanks a lot. Thanks again.

R. Cool. Yeah.