

7/29, 1996Interview With Lois Ross

J. Lois, I'd like you to tell me about your background: your family and growing up. Where were you born? And tell me about your family.

L. L. I was born in Bloomfield, New Jersey in 1954, and my father is ... was an aerospace machinist. Worked in a plane factory making actuation ... parts for the actuation of the plane. And he worked in a factory all his life for about forty years.

J. What factory?

L. Curtis Right Corporation.

J. Oh. Where was that located?

L. In Fairfield, New Jersey. He'd moved around a few times during the War and then after the War. So he was ... graduated from tech school and was someone who could fix a lot of things.

J. Oh yeah.

L. And I remember when I was a kid, I would see him ... He'd have ... The vacuum cleaner was broken and he'd have it sitting on the table. And he'd do some magic on it and--you know--ten minutes later, the thing would work.

J. Um-hum.

L. I used to ... thought he was magic. You know.

J. Yeah.

L. So that was my father. My mother was ... worked in a factory also most of her life, in Westinghouse. And then she stayed home for about maybe ten years when we were ... my sister and I were born, and then soon went back to work, and worked cleaning peoples' houses.

J. Now, was she in the United Electrical Workers or the International Union Of Electrical Workers? Do you know?

L. No. I don't know what Union she was in. My father was in the Machinists' Union.

J. Okay. And were either of them active in a Union.

L. Not ... I wouldn't say very active, but they were both very vocal Union supporters.

J. Um-hum.

(1)

L. They always told me Unions are essential to working peoples' lives, and--you know,--without Unions, people would be no--you know,--working people would be nowhere.

J. Um-hum.

L. So I grew up within a very strong Union family. My father still ... He's retired. He still gets his little Union magazines, gives it to me every month, says, "Here, Lois." So ...

J. Oh yeah. What about siblings?

L. I have a sister, Jean, who is a nurse.

J. Okay. And ... So you went to public school?

L. I went to public school,--

J. Um-hum.

L. Bloomfield High School.

J. And did you take any shop courses or anything like that?

L. No. I wasn't interested in the slightest bit. (both laugh) I thought I was going to be a lawyer.

J. Okay. Those were your aspirations.

L. A great lawyer. So I took an academic course and went on to college right after high school.

J. Where did you go to college?

L. Rutgers College. I was the first class of women at Rutgers.

J. Oh! What year was that?

L. It was 1972.

J. Um-hum.

L. There were five hundred women, and about seven or eight thousand men.

J. And you went to New Brunswick?

L. I went to New Brunswick, right.

J. And you majored in economics.

L. Right.

J. What drew you to the study of the dismal science?

L. (laughs) I didn't even know what economics was,--you know,--when I went to Rutgers.

J. Um-hum.

L. you know,--I mean,--you don't learn that really in ...

J. Yeah.

L. I didn't even know what it was.

J. Yeah.

L. I just said, "Oh, that sounds interesting. Let me take it."

J. Um-hum.

L. And I ended up getting some fairly radical professors who just happened to be at Rutgers and taught political economy.

J. Uh-huh.

L. They didn't teach just plain old economics.

J. Um-hum.

L. And they taught about power, and how power is held, and how power is related to wealth.

J. Um-hum.

L. And it crystal--. I had some sort of intuitive understanding of that. But when I actually started really studying it, it really fascinated me.

J. Um-hum.

L. So I decided to major in it after ... My very first course in economics was

J. Uh-huh.

L. with a radical economist so it kind of got me started.

J. So you studied classical economics as well as ... like Adam Smith and all?

L. Sure. I studied cla-- ... all different ...

J. Um-hum.

3

L. I studied ... Actually, I majored in development economics. I sort of had a certificate in Latin American studies

J. Oh yeah?

L. and particularly developing economies.

J. That was very popular then.

L. Yeah.

J. People were really paying attention to Third World countries. It was common.

L. Yes. It was ... The really big hot issues of the day was development. Also, just as I was leaving school, sort of ... sort of towards the end, labor ... I took some labor economics courses.

J. Um-hum.

L. And Women And The Economy and Occupational Segregation

J. Oh yeah.

L. By Sex And Race was also a pretty hot topic.

J. Um-hum.

L. So I did some research with that.

J. Uh-huh. And did you do some papers that stand out in your mind on research in those ... in that area?

L. I did ... I did some papers on women and the economy,

J. Yeah.

L. and looking at why women made so much less than men and what was going on for women in ... economically. And there again, the big factor that stood out above everything was occupational segregation,

J. Um-hum.

L. you know,--women confined to certain jobs and excluded from others. So I got ... I was really very, very interested in that and I wanted ... I actually got an offer,--several offers--to get my Ph.D. for free in ec-- ... in economics.

J. Um-hum. Um-hum.

L. But I really decided that I didn't want to stay in academia. I wanted to do something very practical. I wanted to be an activist.

J. Um-hum.

L. I wanted to--you know--make a difference and not just hide out in academia.

J. Now , were you active with any women's group on campus or were you part of any networking, grass works--I mean--grassroots organizations at the time?

L. Yes. Let's see. We had a women's consciousness raising group on campus 'cause we were the first class of women

J. Yeah.

L. and we had ... You know,--there were a lot ... some problems dealing with that. So women got together in my dorm and we had a weekly meeting,--you know--just a regular sort of regular CR group.

J. Um-hum.

L. We also ... There was a group called CARASA,

J. Oh yeah, abortion rights.

L. abortion rights group, and my roommate and I ended up starting a New Brunswick chapter of CARASA and did a lot of work around that issue for a couple of years,

J. Um-hum.

L. marched on Washington and did stuff like that.

J. And that was educational.

L. Um-hum. Um-hum. ??

J. So you graduated in what year?

L. I graduated in '77, actually, January of '77. I stayed an extra semester and I taught ... Actually, I taught ... I got a grant to teach an economics course which sort of--a political economics course,

J. uh-huh. ^{2.}

L. to compare all the different economists, from Adam Smith to--you know--Bevlin and Marx. And we sort of looked at what different economists were saying and ...

J. Um-hum.

L. and what their assumptions were, and their values, and things like that. So that was fun.

(5)

J. Uh-huh.

L. Then, I actually Do you want me to go ahead?

J. Go ahead.

L. My first job out of college, I had sent out resumes, actually to the United Way

J. Oh!

L. for a Community Organizer and this group called ^{Somerset} ~~Summerset~~ Community Action Program ended up hiring me as a Community Organizer. It was mostly ... mostly a black, African-American group and they worked with ... supposedly worked with poor people in ~~Summerset~~ Somerset County.

^{Somerset}

J. um-hum.

L. What it turned out to be was basically a poverty pimp agency.

J. um-hum. um-hum.

L. These people siphoned off money. And I saw this happen right before my eyes and started raising questions about it.

J. Um-hum.

L. You know. The Director was doing his family's ...--you know,--taking money to take care ... build his .. fix his family's houses, instead of people--you know--in the community who had applied for the grants.

J. um-hum.

L. So it was ... it was a real interesting experience

J. um-hum.

L. seeing what was going on with ... with that poverty money coming through. And it kind of disillusioned me a little bit, 'cause they were also started that group called ... First, it was the Poor And Working Peoples' Party. Do you remember that?

J. I ...

L. And they turned into the ...

J. And I ... I won't remember the name, but I know what you're talking about.

L. Yeah. Yeah.

6

J. Right. Right. Right.

L. The New Alliance Party.

J. Yeah. Yeah.

L. that's who they were. And I didn't know any of this when I went into there. And they tried to force you into their program.

J. Um-hum.

L. which I didn't want to ... I was ... Actually, I did start participating for a while, and then I saw what was going on, it just seemed like a big lie. They lie-- ... I saw them lying to our constituency, and I just ... They threatened me! They were just very bizarre people, and I got out out of there

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

L. after about nine months. And ...

J. So you said that your ... In our first interview, you mentioned a friend named Cindy who was working with labor and told you about Mary Garvin.

J. Right.

J. Before you even spoke to her about that, you were thinking about the issue of women getting into non-traditional jobs, and thinking of working in some way, in that.

L. Well, ...

J. So how did that come about?

L. Right. I had actually started writing a proposal to get women into non-traditional jobs. And I started writing it,--I was maybe a quarter of the way through it--

J. Um-hum.

L. I started looking for ... I was going to apply to the New Jersey Department Of Education, which was doing some work around that area.

J. Um-hum.

L. And then Cindy sent me this thing in the mail saying saying--you know--Mary Garvin was starting this program in New York. And it was exactly what I was doing ...

J. uh-huh.

L. trying to do in New Jersey. So I went to talk ... talk

with her, and she hired me, and I ended up being one of the original staff people with three other people.

J. Women In Apprenticeship Program.

L. Women In Apprenticeship Programs.

J. Was ... Was it Women And Apprenticeship Agency Program or or ...

L. No. It was the Women In Apprenticeship Project,

J. Okay.

L. and it was a project of the Communities ... State Communities Aid Association.

J. um-hum. And so, your job there was counseling and job development, or what were you doing?

L. Right. My job was recruitment, counselling and job development. Our first job was just to get the word out that we were there.

J. Um-hum.

L. So we did a lot of--you know--radio. I think some Tv ...

J. Did you go on the radio and talk about it?

L. I didn't. Mary Garvin did.

J. Oh, she did all that?

L. She was the spokesperson.

J. Yeah. Um-hum.

L. And phone calls just started pouring in. I'll never *
forget the first time she went on the radio, the phone rang off the
hook the entire day.

J. What radio show? Do you remember what station it was?

L. No. I don't remember.

J. Yeah.

L. I don't remember that.

J. And so, you did ...

L. But we didn't know if--you know--twenty people would call;
nobody would call.

J. Yeah. Right. Uh-huh.

8

L. We had no idea. The phone rang off the hook. We ... I think, by the first week, we had like a hundred people signed up.

J. Wow! So you weren't doing training then.

L. There was no training.

J. You were recruiting them, putting them

L. We were ...

J. How was it working?

L. Right. We were orienting women, trying to give them a sense of what the jobs were like, what kind of skills were needed for the jobs, what they would be up against in terms of discrimination and hostility, help them to fill out applications like for the Electricians Union, the Plumbers Union, 'cause you have to go through that whole process--you know--with the Apprenticeship Program.

J. Um-hum.

L. We had to sleep on line for a week to get ... just to even hand in our applications for the Electricians' Union. So there was a lot of prep work that had to be done with the women. We talked ... I don't know. We talked probably to maybe hundreds and hundreds, maybe a thousand ... thousands even of women, initially.

J. Um-hum. You had a screening process, when they came in, that ... Was that ... Well, everything was very defined, in terms of age and qualifications, and so that was one part of the process of screening people out. But what were some of the other things that--you know--were part of the process of doing the screening?

L. That we looked for? Just, I think, an understanding that this was going to be tough; that they ... they had to be willing to really stick this out,

J. Um-hum.

L. and they had to really want to do this kind of work.

J. um-hum.

L. Any experience they had at all with tools,

J. um-hum.

L. with exposure to any kind of--you know--construction work; anything they had done in their own home,--built a cabinet in their house,--you know,--any kind of

J. Um-hum.

L. sort of informal type work, we really looked at very closely. One woman had done painting ... She was an artist, and we got her a job painting boats in the boat yard. They wanted someone who could paint.

J. Yeah. Yeah.

L. So she ended up doing that for a long time.

J. At significantly better money.

L. At significantly ... Right. Actually, she ended up going to medical school; ?? medical school.

J. Oh!

L. So that kind of thing, informal skills as well as formal. But very few of the women had any kind of formal skills at all. We also did refer women to the few training programs that there were. There were some Adult Education programs that the Board Of Ed gave.

J. um-hum.

L. We just filed women into those, just to get some kind of experience with tools,--you know? And there were several CETA training programs at that time, and we got our hands on--you know,--the lists of what was there and we just sent women out.

J. Um-hum.

L. We did send a lot of women to training. At least half of the women I ... we referred, we referred to training.

J. What about the City Technical College? Did that exist then? There was ...

L. Yes. Later on, it did. A little later, it did. And there was a program for women in Building Maintenance, and we referred quite a number of women to that program. And it seems ... We did refer some women to the Technical,--you know,--for the two year degree.

J. um-hum.

L. But most women were just more interested in getting into the Apprenticeship Program and getting a job. They really wanted to work,

J. Um-hum.

L. and get paid while they were working,--you know,--learning.

J. Okay. Yeah. So, what were some of the other ways that

you recruited women? you went on the radio, fliers and ...

L. We ... Through the WIN Program, I guess that's the women ... women who were receiving Welfare

J. uh-huh.

L. were notified of our program, so we received a lot of women from, I believe it was called WIN at that time.

J. um-hum.

L. We went out and spoke at different women's groups. We went anywhere where we were requested to go,--you know?--

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

l. AND SPOKE EVERYWHERE.

j. and SO YOU WERE DOING COUNSELLING?, ALSO, AT THAT TIME?

l. right. women WOULD COME IN AND WE'D HAVE AN INTERVIEW PROCESS. THEY'D HAVE TO FILL OUT LOTS OF PAPERWORK. and WE WOULD JUST TALK TO THEM AND ASK THEM ABOUT THEIR BACK--. first, THEY WOULD GO THROUGH AN ORIENTATION, MAYBE A FORTY-FIVE MINUTE ORIENTATION WHERE WE EXPLAINED THE HISTORY OF WOMEN IN THE TRADES,--YOU KNOW,--GAVE THEM A SENSE OF WHERE THEY WERE COMING FROM; THAT THEY'RE NOT THE FIRST WOMEN TO DO THIS. this IS A LONG HISTORY OF WOMEN DOING NON-TRADITIONAL WORK.

j. UM-HUM.

l. explained ABOUT world war ii, HOW WOMEN WERE... WHAT THEY DID IN world war ii. you KNOW,--WE HAD A SENSE OF HISTORY.

j. UH-HUH.

l. then, THE REALITY OF WHAT THEY WOULD HAVE TO GO THROUGH NOW. and WE TRIED TO REALLY JUST PRESENT THE PICTURE EXACT--YOU KNOW,--AS REAL AS WE COULD,

j. UM-HUM.

l. SO THAT WE WOULDN'T GET PEOPLE BEING DISCOURAGED AND DROPPING OUT.

j. was mary garvin TRYING TO CONNECT WITH THE UNIONS, AT THAT POINT, AND THE CITY AND STATE AGENCIES?

l. oh, YES.

j. WHILE SHE WAS DOING THIS?

l. definitely. yes. she WAS MEETING WITH ALL ... And I

(11)

think we all ... I ... I met with some of the Union people, too. We had the State ... Jim MacNamara helped us out.

J. um-hum.

L. (pause) Yeah. We ... We met with everybody who would meet with us,--

J. Right.

L. all the apprenticeship programs, I think, we sent letters to, had meetings with. Any pull, kind of connections we had, we would use to ... to get an in.

J. And what about companies, ?? or Con Edison or the telephone work-- ... telephone company?

L. Right.

J. Were any of them being forthcoming and ... or was that still like pulling teeth?

L. It was really difficult. I remember, I met with Con Ed and AT&T,--

J. uh-huh.

L. and you know that wasn't AT&T,--New York ... New York Tel, at that point, Brooklyn Union Gas, and we met with all the big

J. Uh-huh.

L. employers who might have Federal contracts. We were especially focusing on people with Federal or State contracts,

J. Um. um-hum.

L. because they were more likely to be responsive to us.

J. um-hum.

L. And usually you'd really have to follow up for maybe a year before you even got a promise of a job. And they would give you like one or two jobs here and there.

J. Yeah.

L. It was like, Okay. Now we've got our token women. Now, don't bother us anymore.

J. Um-hum.

L. And that ... It wasn't that difficult to get the first few jobs, but to get a steady stream of jobs after that was very

(17)

difficult, once they got their token women.

J. Um-hum. So then, you started thinking about forming a group,--a support group--for women.

L. Right. Yeah. We had some success,--you know--early on in getting women into the apprenticeship programs and on jobs, and it just seemed very clear that the women needed more support than we could give them. We were just strung out,--you know,--

J. Um-hum. um-hum.

L. just trying to get them the jobs and get them prepared. So what I started doing was I realized we needed a grassroots group. I wanted to, somehow, get a group of women together who would run their own group and not be part of a bureaucracy. UT

J. Um-hum.

L. So I started identifying women who might be interested, and just calling meetings,--you know--

J. Um-hum.

L. at night, after work. And ...

J. Now, when you talked ... In your first interview, you talked about identifying women at leaders. What kinds of things were you looking for in ... in these women? What kinds of characteristics, would you say, would mark them as somebody who could carry the ball?

L. One, that they had a strong interest in seeing ... in helping other women in the trades: themselves

J. um-hum.

L. and other women. Two, that they had some ... either some previous experience,--you know--or ... or some larger pic--; that they could see a larger picture of what was going on.

J. Um-hum.

L. And just that they were--you know--very sharp. Now, actually, initially, what we did was ... I just ... the women who were coming in,

J. Um-hum.

L. bas-- ... I just started inviting them to meetings. Everybody was invited.

J. Um-hum.

(13)

L. And it was a self selecting group, in the beginning. I just thought, whoever comes, comes.

J. um-hum Right.

L. And we ... Out of the first few groups, we didn't ... there ... there ... a leadership did not jell out of those,

J. um-hum.

L. maybe, first eight meetings,--something like ... I don't know ... I don't remember how many there were.

J. Yeah.

L. There were women who were interested, but they weren't really ready to take leadership.

J. Um-hum.

L. And slowly, one woman would come in,--I think, like Cynthia Long came in,--Irene started coming in,--Evan ... Evan was a little later, I think,--Chrisa Gibson ... Slowly, a group came together,

J. Um-hum.

L. and it just ... It almost seemed to happen like mag--. I mean,--I remember ... It seems like magic now, but I remember that we had all these meetings,

J. um-hum.

L. struggling to get the group together in the beginning. It wasn't so easy. But once we had a corps of, like, six ... five or six people,

J. Um-hum.

L. it just kind of took off 'cause everyone had great ideas. People had skills. They had a vision for where they wanted Tradeswomen to go.

J. Um-hum.

L. It wasn't just,--you know--I want to keep my job. It was really a larger--you know--caring about women as a whole. And so ...

J. So what were some of the ... It seems, looking through the papers of United Tradeswomen, that you kept expanding what ... the kinds of things that you were doing. Like you started with this connecting with other organizations and doing advocacy work, like writing letters on behalf of women, or following through on

particular problems, like with the Carpen--women in the Carpenters, or trying to follow through to make them--you know--adhere to some commitments, or So how did ... how did that happen that you just kept taking more ... As you ran into a problem, you started to try to find some way to ... What was the process?

L. ~~I~~ I'm trying to remember now.

J. I mean, there ... Well, the ... the whole thing like with, for example ... One example would be the demonstrations. I mean,--you got to a point where you felt strong enough and

L. Right.

J. together enough, and you had a specific target,--

L. Right.

J. the Convention Center,--that you felt like you could actually demonstrate for that.

L. Right. Right.

J. So how did that happen?

L. Yeah. I think, initially, we ... we came together to give * each other emotional support

J. um-hum.

L. and information that we needed to survive on the job. Then we started ... As problems starting coming up,--sexual harassment was a major one,--problems with the Union, dealing with your Union,--you know,--we started identifying issue areas *

J. Yeah. Uh-huh.

L. that were critical to women. That's really what happened. And we started, first, just doing workshops addressing those particular issues. *

J. Uh-huh.

L. So it was more workshop oriented. I was in a unique position because I was working for WAP. I was doing the job development. I was very intimately involved in opening those jobs up, at the same time as I knew all the women personally.

J. Um-hum.

L. So I was in a unique position to sort of see a larger picture and understand what the key issues were.

J. Right.

15

L. Like when the Convention Center came up and there was--you know--one woman hired out of I forget how many thousand jobs, that was like, just a natural thing *

J. Um-hum.

L. that we would do something about that because it was ... it was one of our only chances to really get a lot of women

J. Um-hum.

L. to work. So ... And at that point, we did have a good corps. Actually, the Convention Center was about ... We had gotten, I think, three women on the job. Two were fired within a few weeks, and we thought unfairly fired.

J. um-hum.

L. so we fought to get their jobs back. That's actually what that was. They were coming to our meetings.

J. Uh-huh.

L. We said, Okay, we're going to fight for you to get your jobs back. And we did. And they were both reinstated

J. um-hum.

L. because of that demonstration. That was, I believe, the first demonstration of women in the country, although there might have been one in Washington

J. Um-hum.

L. before that. I'm not sure, though. I think it might have been the first one. So we,--you know,--as we saw issues, we would just decide what we wanted to do about that.

J. Um-hum.

L. You know, we were very action oriented. So we were doing educational work,--you know--in terms of the workshops. And also, we wanted to do actions. We ... One woman was being harassed on the job very badly. There pic--you know,--racist things being said about her and,--you know,--obscene pictures being put up on the walls. And she was extremely upset about this, and so we said, well, what can we do? And we went over to the site,--a bunch of us,--and said, "Look, we're gonna ... we're gonna paint this stuff over. we're gonna ... We're gonna do something here, big, *

J. Um-hum.

L. if you guys don't get rid of this. And the next day, it was painted over. And all it took was a visit from a group of

(16)

women

J. Yeah.

L. to the foreman.

J. Um-hum.

L. saying, Look, something's going to happen here if you don't get this stuff out of here. So we were trying, as much as possible, to be action oriented

J. Um-hum.

L. because it was really necessary,--you know. It's one thing to ... We needed emotional support. We needed information. We needed action,

J. Um-hum.

L. because, at that point, there was no ... We were ... WAP was really kind of a bureaucracy,

J. Um-hum.

L. and their hands were tied partly by--you know--being State funded, whereas, the United Tradeswomen was totally grassroots funded. We had no strings attached to anything we did, and we were there to ... We could ... We were very free to do a lot of things.

J. Um-hum.

L. And so, that's ... that's what we did. I'm trying to think of another action that we did. We wrote letters on behalf of women.

J. Um-hum.

L. We had a second demonstration, actually, which ~~NU~~ also participated in

J. Um-hum.

L. at the Trump Tower to get women jobs there,--the ^{POTS}fopts and pans demonstration,--where we were ...

J. Oh yeah. And was that ... Was that successful?

L. Moderately so.

J. Um-hum.

L. Moderately so. It wasn't ... There were a few more women

(17)

Q
*

NEW

POTS

hired. It wasn't overwhelmingly successful.

J. Yeah. Um-hum.

L. It ... It got more and more difficult to get women jobs. ★
It really did, after the initial burst,--

J. Um-hum.

L. you know,--the first couple of years.

J. Yeah.

L. And then, that's when ^{NEW} ~~NU~~ I think, started. I ... I left
the organization,--I mean ^{NEW} ~~NU~~ but they started focusing on
training. And United Trades-- ... Do you want me to keep talking
about United Tradeswomen?

J. Yeah.

L. Actually, after a while, in United Tradeswomen, we were
trying to figure out what did we want to do? What do we want to
become?

J. Um-hum.

L. And as ... Again, I remember at the meeting--the other
meeting we had,--we talked about it, that some of the problems were
so intense ...

J. Difficulty in finding direction.

L. Right.

J. And also, the problems of the internal ...

L. And the intensity of the problems.

J. Yeah. Yeah.

L. I mean,--the problems were so large because of the maffia
connections.

J. Um-hum.

L. people were frightened. And we couldn't decide what we
could be. Some of us were ... were trying to be a Union/democracy
organization,

J. Um-hum.

L. a support group, and action group. I mean,--there were so
many issues to deal with that we really kind of lost our way for a
while and weren't sure what we were ...

(18)

J. Um-hum.

L. what we should do next to really be effective. So ... And I think it was at that point, when we were really struggling to ... identify what we needed to do most,

J. Um-huh.

L. that some people came into the organization who were very disruptive, for whatever reason,--

J. Um-hum.

L. probably for just their own personal craziness.

J. Um-hum.

L. I don't even remember if there were really specific issues around that, like--you know--that you could really discuss issues.

J. Yeah.

L. It was ... To me, it just seemed more like disruption for disruption's sake, or just because it was a bad pattern these women had gotten into.

J. um-hum.

L. And what happened is, the organization got bogged down in this disruptive ... addressing, basically, two individuals

J. Responding to that.

L. and trying to accommodate ... and trying to understand what was going on. And I remember, we really struggled! And some of us were, like ... I mean,--I ... we really didn't know how to handle it

J. Um-hum.

L. because we had never really had serious ... serious dissent in the group,--you know?

J. um-hum.

L. We might have different ideas, and we would throw ideas around and not be sure what we were doing, but there were no personal attacks. That was one thing. It was a very, very nice group,

J. Um-hum.

L. in the sense that people were supportive of one another; respectful of one another. And, somehow, that changed. I don't

know whether it was under the stress that everyone was under, our own lack of understanding of leadership and how to support leadership? Also, we did not have a staff person. I was functioning, basically, as a defacto staff person..

J. Um-hum.

L. And, later on, Irene. And we really could not continue that. We needed someone there to do our work,--you know,--to do a lot of that ground work and for us to give direction.

J. Now, was that ever clearly spelled out, that--you know,--the group was at a crossroads and you really had to make a decision, in terms of how it was going to grow and change? Were there ...

L. Yes.

J. Um-hum.

L. As far as I remember, yes. And we had actually decided that ... What happened?I can't even remember the exact sequence. I know there was this period of great disruption when we actually had meetings just to deal with this disruption. And they were agonizing meetings.

J. Um-hum. How so?

L. Because it was not even really clear ... It wasn't like there was even an issue on the table.

J. um-hum.

L. It's like ... One of the issues was a lea-- ... We had put out a flier, 'cause we used to do fund-raising parties,--and one of the women had done a flier. And these other two women felt that the flier was sexist,

J. Oh yeah.

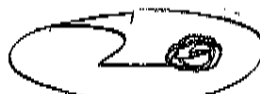
L. because it had a woman naked ... with naked legs on it, or something. I mean,--it was this kind of thing,

J. Yeah.

L. not about substantive issues but about ... I don't even know what about. I feel like,--you know,--now that I look back on it,--it was just a lot of disfunctionality,

J. Um-hum.

L. people projecting their own fear of leadership, maybe, onto us,--us being under stress,--not having a clear vision, unsure where to go next.



J. Um-hum.

L. And being really exhausted from that struggle. I can't emphasize enough how disruptive that was to us, emotionally,

J. Yeah. Um-hum.

L. to the leadership. I mean,--you know,--I was personally attacked,--personally,--

J. Um-hum.

L. not ... not for issues,--you know ??

J. I ... I know that it was pretty intense for people because, years later, when I was talking to people about that,--when you were organizing your reunion conference,--

L. Right.

J. people still spoke about it with so much emotion and so much feeling.

L. Yes.

J. So much hurt.

L. Exactly.

J. Yeah.

L. And ...

Side Two

L. Apparently ... I read a book a few years ... a few years ago called Between Women and it described how this was apparently happening all across the country in a lot of different women's groups. As the groups were ... was getting more successful and--you know--accomplishing things, *

J. um-hum.

L. and certain people ... How am I going to say ... I mean,--I always tried to keep a lower profile, but I was a definitely leader and had been for a long time. And what happened was, leadership was apparently being attacked in many places around the country.

J. Um-hum.

L. And these women speculated that women were fearful of other women's power.

J. Um-hum.

L. And there was a self limiting type of thing. I know, we were concerned about--you know--consensus, and being together and being one, but the ...

J. um-hum. But also, competition kind of ...

L. But ... Right. Right. There was competition, maybe jealousy or envy about women. I know I felt it myself, sometimes,

J. Um-hum.

L. toward women, say, who had become very vocal and really be able to speak,--become spokespeople.

J. uh-huh.

L. And I think it what happened is, like, we would say, Oh, she's--you know--becoming more popular than the rest of us. You know,--she's not one of us anymore, or something. Instead of respecting that and saying, Wow! Here's a woman who's strong, who can speak; who can help advance our movement.

J. Um-hum.

L. we were threaten^{ed} by that, on some level and, I think, torn between ... Not having a clear understanding of leadership.

J. um-hum.

L. and that it's okay for women to take leadership, to be powerful, to speak strongly, to be challenged for their ... but for their ... for issues, not for personal ...--I mean,--not being attacked personally.

J. um-hum.

L. I think that was what drew the line for me. It was ... You know,--I ... I can have someone disagree with me,--say, "I don't like where you're taking this organization,"--you know.

J. Um-hum.

L. "We think it should go this way." When ... When the attack degenerated into a personal attack,

J. Um-hum.

L. I think that's what really hurt,--you know. You can deal with dissent.

J. Um-hum.

(22)

L. It's hard, but you can deal with dissent.

J. Yeah.

L. Dealing with personal attacks is a lot harder, and I think that's what ...

J. Um-hum. Yeah, questioning your motives.

L. Right.

J. When you feel like your motives are very--you know,--

L. Very pure and honest,--right,--there's a lot of integrity.

J. Yeah.

L. And when ... when people question your integrity, for me, that was

J. Um-hum. Uh-huh.

L. you know,--just a real difficult thing. And when ...

J. So ...

L. So what ... what happened was we decided ... We did pull ourselves together

J. Um-hum.

L. after the disruption. That kind of ... The women kind of ... The two women who were disruptive kind of left, and we did keep going with the group, actually. And we came up ... We wrote a proposal to get money for a staff person. We decided we needed that. There was also--you know--this issue about being afraid that the staff person would take over,--you know? Again, this fear of power,--fear of women's power,--

J. um-hum.

L. which,--you know--I don't completely ... Now, I don't feel anything like that. But back then, I ... I ...--you know,--it was very strong.

J. um-hum.

L. We all stay at the same level,--you know.

J. Yeah.

L. No one should rise above .

J. Um-hum.

L. a certain level. So that was a big fear about getting a staff person. I feel like, if we had gotten a staff person little earlier

J. Um-hum.

L. and dealt with those fears directly and said, look, let's just try it out;--let's see ... Let's see what happens ... We never got there, because I know, I burned out. I was carrying the ball a lot. Irene was carrying the ball. And we just burned out. And there was no one to pick up the ball at that point.

J. Um-hum.

L. I think people felt very discouraged, which was very sad. Because if someone, at that point, had picked up the ball and said Okay, guys, her's our proposal. Let's go get a staff person and let's run with it ...

J. Yeah.

L. There was no one left to run. It had ... That ... That disruptive period chased so many people away.

J. Yeah. Because they were having a very large impact, in terms of--you know--programs attracting lots of people and reaching a lot of people.

L. Right. Yeah, we were. We were having ... We had hundreds of women at different times and ... Or different women would come and go and ... But when the corps group, which had been so close and ... and .. when that started to fall apart ... And I think people also had individual problems that they were dealing with.

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

L. You know,--there was a lot of stress ...

J. um-hum.

L. a lot of stress for women. So I think,--you know--a lot of us didn't quite know how to handle all that.

J. um-hum.

L. and how to make the organization work for us, at that period,--you know? Maybe if we had had a counsellor come in, or somebody who was an organizational specialist

J. um-hum.

L. who could've said: Oh,--you know,--yeah, this is happening everywhere. Let me tell you ... But we didn't have that,

J. um-hum.

L. which was very unfortunate,--you know,--because it was really an incredible group. And it never quite came together again,--you know?

J. What about allies, in terms of the women's movement? Did you reach out to NOW, New York City, or Coalition of Labor Women, or ...

L. ??

J. What kind of support did you get? Considering that these are the pioneers that you represented in this group, that you represented the frontiers.

L. Let's see. We did. We reached out to NOW, I remember. That was one of our major groups. They had a Women In NonTraditional group meeting. Women In The Trades was still meeting for a while. They were more of an entrepenurial--you know--group.

J. Um-hum.

L. CLU: We met with CLU. We went to several of their meetings. WREE: Women For Racial And Economic Equality. We had a pretty good relationship with them. Those were the major groups. I can't think of any other ... I'm sure there were more,

J. um-hum.

L. 'cause I know we had a big list of organizations that we had ... that were on our mailing list.

J. Um-hum. Was there any effort to get people together to brainstorm about: Now we've got so many women and we've got these--you know--quotas or--you know,--the six point mine

L. Um-hum.

J. guideline. You know,--they're falling far short of this. Any kind of way to talk about how to advance your movement, or support the women who were there, given ... Was any of that going on?

L. There ... There was a City wide group: The Committee For Women In Nontraditional ...--DODS, I think, it was called,--and it was ... there were some City representatives there from the Bureau Of Labor. I think NOW was there. We were there. It degr-- ... It never really went very far, and nothing really very strong came out of that. I remember, we did some work around cable TV. that was really more of a City organized thing, I ..., to kind of bring women leaders together and talk about it. But I know we did some work around women in cable TV. But that's about all I remember

75

coming out of that.

J. Um-hum.

L. I talked at some hearing. I spoke at hearings. That's about it. We ... Actually, we got more support from from the men's groups: the ... Jim Houton's group, Uptown Fight Back. *

J. Um-hum. *Haughton*

L. He was very helpful to us. He gave us information. He supported us at our demonstrations. He ... He was actually probably one ... the most helpful person and his group, in terms of giving us concrete support. *

J. Um-hum. And you mentioned, in your other interview, other Puerto Rican black and Puerto Rican caucuses, and Jose Rivera, and ...

L. Jose Rivera, also. Right. We ... We didn't do that much direct work with him.

J. Um-hum.

L. He did come out, though, and bring some people out to our demonstration also. So we did ... we did try very hard to hook up with some of the men's groups that were out there. *

J. Experiencing their own problems.

L. And they were having their own problems. That's right. And they gave us the idea to shape up, in fact. We used to go,-- you know,--on the ~~sights~~ *sites* at six o'clock in the morning and shape up. *

J. Um-hum.

L. And they told us,--you know,--if you don't ... If you women ...--you know,--if you just expect to go through the nicey-nicey thing,--you know,--you're not going to get anywhere.

J. Um-hum.

L. You've got to go shape. So we started that, and that was very successful, actually. And that was a real--you know--tip from them. So that was ... *

J. um-hum. So what year did ... did it sort of fall apart? Well, when did you leave ~~NU?~~ *NEW*

L. I ... I left for a year and a half. Then I went back and worked at ~~NU~~ *NEW* again,

J. Um-hum.

L. under a different leadership. And that was a much better experience there.

J. You left when ... Now, did you work under Mary Ellen Boyd at all?

L. Yes. Yes, I did. I left, actually, under her, because ...

J. Uh-huh.

L. partly because she had fired someone who I thought was a very excellent job developer, counsellor,--a very grassroots person

J. Um-hum.

L. with a great perspective. And she fired her. And I went in and said, I'm leaving also.

J. Uh-huh. Who was that person?

L. Chris I can't remember the last name. I just saw her, too, a few weeks ago.

J. Uh-huh.

L. Hadn't seen her for ten years.

J. ?? Yeah.

L. It might ... might come back to me. Chris Vavone. Chris Vavone.

J. Okay. Okay.

L. So I left. And then, I did go back later, under Rosemary Golford and worked with her.

J. Um-hum.

L. ?? No, I take that back. No. First, I worked under Mary Garvin.

J. Uh-huh.

L. Then I left because of the extreme disfunctionality of ... It was very interesting. I mean, women's groups were very disfunctional on a personal level,--

J. Um-hum.

L. you know,--very abusive to us as workers. We were working so hard and it ... it was really sad,--you know,--to ... till I think back on that now.

J. Um-hum.

L. And then I--right,--I left under Mary Garvin, and I came back under Rosemary Goldport, and then Mary Ellen Boyd. And then I left, under her.

J. Um-hum. Now, one of the comments in the first interview was that Mary Ellen Boyd was very connected to people in the Sate Department Of Labor.

L. Right.

J. And what ... what were her connections. I mean, how ... What was her background. Do you know?

L. No. I never really totally understood her background,

J. Um-hum. Yeah. um-hum.

L. but she was extremely well connected

J. Um-hum.

L. to the State,--very well connected,--

J. But it seemed that ...

L. and she was able to keep the funding coming

J. Yeah. Okay.

L. through her connections. Also, it was a very good program,--you know.

J. Um-hum. Um-hum.

L. We were doing really good work.

J. Yeah.

L. But ... And she was particularly ... She was good for the program in that she really kept the money flowing,--you know. And she ...

J. And they had expanded into training, at that point?

L. She expanded into training, which was good,

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

L. because then it was very specific training for women,

J. Um-hum.

L. Instead of just throwing us into the other programs. It

78

was ... It was ... I think it was very good,--a very good move to make. But the organization, again, had changed from ... It became more and more bureaucratic and less grassroots, less acti-- ... less activist oriented;--more into like a social work type of group, which I didn't feel very comfortable in. So ...

J. Um-hum. So about how many women were working there when you left, or people working there?

L. No, I don't remember. It was probably like four counsellors, maybe,

J. Um-hum.

L. and a supervisor. Something like that.

J. So where did you go, when you left NEW,--WAP/NEW?

L. Well, when I left NEW, I decided to go to electronics school. X

J. oh, you did. Now, what was the motivation for that?

L. I had placed a number of women in electronics jobs, and they seemed to really enjoy it. It looked like and interesting ... And they were getting paid very well. And I'd always like math and physics,

J. Uh-huh.

L. and I said ... I said: let me just try this out!

J. Um-hum.

L. So I took an electrical wiring course,--you know--?? for free at Brooklyn Tech, X

J. Uh-huh. uh-huh.

L. and I loved it. I did very well at it, before I went,--you know. And I said, well, this is something maybe I could do. And then I enrolled in New York City Tech. And ...

J. Now, what did you love about it, because it's hard for me to think ...
You're going from working with people and working with concepts like--

L. Right.

J. you know,--social policy and economics,

L. Yes.

J. and then, you'd have this job where you have this piece of machinery that you're wiring. What is it that ... that grabbed you?

L. Well, to be perfectly honest, I was totally burnt out

J. Working with people?

L. working with people! I was! It was just emotionally draining, at that point.

J. Yeah.

L. I wanted to do something that did not involve

J. ??

L. taking care of people. Right! And so, actually, it was a very deliberate decision to move away from a caretaking type of thing which See, initially, I didn't see myself as ... I'm not a social worker. I am really an organizer. And when the job moved more and more, from organizing to social working type of thing, it just became less and less suitable for me. And I was too burnt out to keep organizing, at that point. So I said: Let me go back to school and do something that I can make a little money, too. So I really liked it. I just found that I had an aptitude for it. We started a group at school called Technicians For Social Responsibility, and we talked about--you know--technology and critiques of technology, and ways that technology was being used that were not so hot. So it was really fun. *

J. So what school were you at?

L. I was at New York City Technical College.

J. Okay.

L. And in fact, one of the women who I had placed on a truck driving job at PanAm, was laid off from PanAm, when they dissolved, and she came to school with me also. And we were building computers instead. And we both really had a nice time together, when she was in that group. So it was a nice continuing sort of a connection. And there ...

J. Um-hum. Yeah. um-hum. How long did that program take?

L. For me it took a year and a half.

J. Uh-huh.

L. That was another thing, 'cause I could get in and out pretty quickly.

J. um-hum.

L. What else?

J. How many women were in the program? +

L. There were four women,

J. Out of?

L. out of, like, hundreds of guys. There ... My experience in my profession, now, there are less women than there are women in construction. *
#

J. Now, this was a job where you don't have to be physically strong. You don't have to lift big cement flags. I mean ...

L. Right. I have to lift that monitor, which is about eighty pounds. But ...

J. Oh, yeah. Well, UPS, you have to lift a seventy pound box. So ...

L. Right. Right. So it's it's on-- Usually, it's not a real big part of the job.

J. Uh-huh. Yeah.

L. It's more being able to trouble shoot; being able to figure things out.

J. Using your mind and your training.

L. using your mind to just figure out problems.

J. ?? Yeah. So are the schools doing ... recruiting, as far as you can tell for ... to getting women,--I mean--from-you know--vocational high schools and ... This is not happening?

L. As far as I'm aware, there is no ... Except at New York City Tech, they did have a program,--a women's outreach program,--
but they mostly channeled women into building maintenance,--a special program they had, which was okay because it was good for a lot of women who maybe couldn't have gotten through a two year,--you know--engineering program. *

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

L. you know. And it was pretty successful, I think.

J. Um-hum.

L. In terms of women in engineering, there's still four percent women--approximately four percent women in engineering and in technician ... I'm a technician. I'm not an engineer. Just very, very few women. #

J. Last night on the news, they ... Well, it wasn't the news. It was the History Channel, and they were doing a program on the sand hogs.

L. Oh, they did. huh?

L. And then, they switched to the water tunnel,

L. Oh yeah?

J. and they had a woman engineer,--a female engineer--describing the water tunnel project. So that was ...

L. Yeah, excellent!

J. It was quite nice to see;--

L. Good! Yeah.

J. different.

L. It's unusual. Right?

J. Yeah.

L. Yeah.

J. And she had her hard hat and her degree, and was speaking with great authority about all these technical things.

L. Great. ??

J. Yeah.

L. Yeah. There's still a long way to go. It would be nice if there was a women in technical program. One of the things we always had in United Tradeswomen was it was heavily geared toward construction. And there were several women technicians involved, but it wasn't a real strong ...

*

J. Um-hum.

L. The construction needs took over very strongly.

J. Right. Well, it seems to me that this is an area that--I mean,--you know--that ... that women could actually make a difference, in terms of doing some kind of just even education, like speaking, or watching what these programs are doing in terms of recruitment and outreach,--you know?

)
#

L. Yes, absolutely,--absolutely. I mean,--on my job--you know--again, I was able to help get two women hired, which is like, phenomenal. There's three women on my job, which is almost unheard of. Most departments in the City have no women. And that was my

*

(2 >)

own, really, pushing very hard for that.

J. Yeah. Uh-huh.

L. And,--you know--I felt good about that. I was able to do that and give them a lot of support on the job. And we support each other. It's real nice. X

J. Yeah. So, okay. So then your first job, when you got out ... when you graduated with ... what did you do?

L. I got a job even before I graduated, part time, as a bio-medical tech. As soon as ... It's interesting ... My co-worker now, was the person I heard speak at New York City Tech about bio-medical engineering.

J. Who was that?

L. Nick, whom you met.

J. Okay.

L. And he was so eloquent, really. And ... And as soon as I heard him speak, I knew that was what I wanted to do, immediately.

J. And how did he cast the job,--the field? What ... What interested you? What ...

L. He cast it as a very responsible job for someone who cared about people,--you know,--

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

L. so it was sort of relate to people. The work you were doing was directly related to saving peoples' lives. It required a lot of ... a sense of responsibility because the ... the job that you did could really hurt ... I mean,--you could hurt someone if you didn't do a good job on the equipment. So I guess that's what I liked.

J. So, how did he come to speak at your school?

L. And it wasn't nuclear war, and it wasn't ... it wasn't military. So ...

J. What program was he part of, that he got to speak there?

L. I don't know, actually. I have to ask him.

J. Yeah.

L. He just kind of showed up at this, like, career day one day,

J. Um-hum. Um-hum.

L. and I listened to him and said: That's it! That's where I'm going.

J. I know New ... New York Technical College used to have a career day every year and ...

L. Right.

J. I don't know exactly what it involved, but ... but they have it.

L. Right. That's ... This was just a departmental career day. It was a departmental thing.

J. ??

L. But he had graduated from there,--see,--so they had called him back as ... as someone ... And if you're going to be in electronics, it's a great place to be because it is a very human ...--you know,--you're very aware of the human consequences of what you do. ??

J. It's a lot of responsibility.

L. Yeah.

J. Um-hum. So your first job ... you got into this field, where ... where did you work?

L. Jersey City and Hoboken. I worked at two different hospitals at the same time. And I learned a lot because there were just two of us on the job and I had to learn everything fast! So I learned a tremendous amount about ... And also, on my job, I have to know a lot about physiology and clinical practice, and how the equipment is used,--you know--in ... in surgery.

J. Um-hum.

L. I have to know not just the equipment, but the whole procedure and how .. what's going on. So it's very interesting. I get to know a lot.

J. And do you take courses ... Like, do you have in service or continuing education courses that you are able to afford and you can take and ...

L. Yes. In fact ... In fact, I organize most of them. We just did a video course ... We did a course on pacemakers,--external pacemakers. We were able to ... Instead of implanting wires in the body, they can--you know--pace someone from the surface of the body. And that's a very different kind of technology, so you have to learn about that. So as new technologies develop ... Laser technology now is ...

J. Um-hum.

L. is--you know--increasing in use, and I have to learn about lasers, which I've been doing. I'm in charge of the whole laser program here now. So things,--you know--as things move along ...

J. Yeah. So it's always ...

L. kind of an interesting ...

J. Yeah.

L. not always interesting, but it's often interesting.
(laughs)

J. Okay. So, now, you have a strong interest in education and teaching. you've been doing some teaching.

L. Right. I taught ... Actually, I taught a⁺ New York City Tech. I was an Assistant Teacher there for the electronics lab. And my favorite thing was I taught a pre-engineering course for Metro North workers. And we had a great time learning about what engineering is; sort of critiques of engineering: what are the different aspects of engineering; safety issues; ethical issues; math; computers ...

J. Now why was Metro North running this?

L. They want to upgrade their staff;--have their people become more technically proficient. And they're trying to encourage people to go to engineering school.

J. As the technology changes?

L. Yes.

J. Uh-huh.

L. Their technology is changing very rapidly, and people are going to be out of work if they don't update their skills.

J. Um-hum.

L. So this was to get people ready to go to school so they could update their skills.

J. So you had to, not only explain the technology, but you had to make them see that it was something that was accessible to them, that they weren't frightened by or ...

L. Right.

J. Was that a component of that class? What did you like about it?

(35)

L. I ... Yeah, in terms of giving people a sense of how broad engineering is, and changes that were happening, and giving them a sense of self esteem, too, that they could go back to school.

J. Um-hum.

L. They ... They would be able to survive school and learn, and move on. And I think people came out of that with a great sense of self esteem,--you know? And ??

J. Yeah. And have you tried any courses at NEW?

L. No, I haven't. I've seriously considered it. In fact, I was thinking recently of calling Marta over there and ... 'cause ... 'cause it would be really a lot of fun to teach electronics to women.

J. Yeah.

L. And there's a lot of jobs out there in the papers for technicians. ...

J. Yeah.

L. So I think I will do that.

J. It seems ... The ... The New York City Board Of Ed, back in '89-'90, had a program where they were trying to get women who did nontraditional jobs to go into the high schools and speak to young girls.

L. Oh yeah?

J. And I don't know what became of that.

L. Hmm! I didn't know about that.

But that's when I was at AUD, so that's how I know about it. And it seems to me, a great idea. But I don't know if they've continued that.

L. I don't know. But maybe I should call New York City Tech or something and volunteer to be in on career day or something,--you know?

J. Yeah. So now, what ... What are the obstacles for you, in terms of this job? Is there a glass ceiling or ... You're a supervisor, aren't you? Haven't you been a supervisor for around three years?

L. Yeah, about three ... almost four years.

J. Um-hum. And how did that take place?

L. Well, we were actually building two new hospitals, and we were going to get completely new equipment in,--brand new equipment,--for the ... for the entire hospitals,--both hospitals. And they needed someone to supervise that whole process and make sure the installations went well, and the equipment was checked out properly, and installed. And we hired seven new people to do that, and we needed someone to run the team.

J. Um-hum.

L. And I was the logical person because I know the equipment really well and I'm rated to work well with the staff. So ...

J. So now I just want to ask you a question which probably sounds like, out of the ball park. But did you have any sort of fears or feelings that--you know,--you ... you felt confident that you could do it.

L. Yes. That job ... I feel ... I feel very confident on this job.

J. Um-hum.

L. I really do. That was not always the case. I think it took me about five years

J. Um-hum.

L. to feel ... I used to be afraid, sometimes, if I got a new piece of equipment in,--you know--and I didn't know it, I was like, Oh my gosh! How am I going to know how to repair this?

J. Yeah.

L. Now, I'm just like: Give me anything,--you know. After about five years, I felt very, very confident. And I just feel like I can pretty much do anything. It's sort of like learning music,--you know?

J. Yeah.

L. Once you've learned the music, and you've kind of gotten over the hurdle of being able to read music and ... you can pretty ... People can give you almost anything and you can play. you might fumble along for a while, but ...

J. Well, I have a brother-in-law who's a mechanic. And I watch the way that he looks at a problem,--you know--any machine. Like, he's also ... Give him anything and he'll fix it. And he just sort of--you know--works through these problems and lays things out and ... I feel like,--you know--it is similar to music. It's like a brilliant musician who can just play any score,--you know?

L. Um-hum. Right.

J. But it's wonderful to watch 'cause he's so calm and methodical.

L. Right. (laughs) That's how you have to be.

J. So, what about glass ceilings? Or is this not a problem?

L. No, In this field, actually, it is a problem, at least in the lar-- ... The field is changing;--it's had ... 'cause medical care is changing, as you know, and the whole health care reimbursement system. This is a very new field. It's only about twenty years old. Now, I got into it,--you know--ten years ago, so it was a very new field. And what happened was, you got large departments in big hospitals,--you know--with fifteen people, maybe, at a hospital this size. What's happening now, with the down sizing and everything, is they're outsourcing a lot of this work,--you know,--just like in regular ...

J. Yeah.

L. And what's happening is, a lot of--not so much here in the city but in other places, especially in small hospitals,--they're closing down bio-medical departments and outsourcing it to ... just outside contractors who come in with half the staff,

J. Um-hum.

L. pay them a lot less. They're non-Union, of course. And it's ... it's a real problem.

J. It would seem that ...

L. L. And ... And there's a lot of fear in this profession about that happening. So, in some ways, it creates openings because they need new managers and supervisors to go out and do that work,--you know--on ... for the contractors. So the jobs now are with the contractors,

J. Yeah.

L. not with the hospitals. So ... Here, there's a glass ceiling. No one ever leaves hardly, once you get into a management position because there are not that many positions.

J. Um-hum.

L. So there is a glass ceiling. It's ... It's not so much because I'm a woman, I think. It's just because ... It's more because just no one leaves. I mean,--the people who've been here, have been here about fifteen years. *

J. They're going to retire ...

L. And they'll retire here, probably,--most probably,--if they don't ... if the department doesn't dissolve first.

J. Um-hum. It seems to me, just watching my sisters work with hospital administration, that they ... they do a lot of outreach, in terms of the ... the community. And ... Does this hospital do any kind of PR or any kind of recruitment, in terms of the ... the skills that are needed to work here? Or they just leave that all to the educational institutions? They don't try to do recruitment, in terms of ... or,--you know--like,...

L. You mean training? you mean training people here?

J. You know,--information about the fields that are available, and trying to do some kind of ... and publicizing?

L. You mean, like jobs?

J. Yeah.

L. As far as I know, they don't.

J. Um-hum.

L. I mean,--one thing about our department is that--and this whole field--is that you studied in the electronics generally. And then, you actually really are trained on the job, because no one can know what a pacemaker is like ... I mean,--where are you going to work on a pacemaker except in a hospital,

J. Yeah.

L. or laser,--you know? So it really is on the job training here, in that sense.

J. Yeah. you mentioned that the contractors are non-Union. Are ... Do you have a Union here for the people in this field?

L. no. Unfortunately, we don't. Many other hospitals around the City in my field are organized:

J. Um-hum.

L. Mount Sinai, Columbia Presbyterian ...

J. With 1199?

L. with 1199. This hospital, apparently ... And 1199 is very aware of us. They know that we're here. I've personally spoken to them,

J. Um-hum.

L. and no one has come to organize us. And so, I think the

hospital has some kind of a arrangement to keep us non-Union.

J. um-hum. Well, that's another subject.

L. (laughs) That's all I can say on this subject.

J. Yeah. So in terms of your personal goals, where do you feel that you're sort of at a plat-- ... You're happy, but you've reached a plateau. You have some future goals that loom for you;-- things that you'd like to achieve?

L. Yes. In terms of this job, I feel like--you know,-- there's always new things to learn here.

J. Um-hum.

L. I'm learning a lot more about video now. I'm becoming more of a video expert and laser expert. So there's

Tape Two

L. It's a typical case of ^a used. It's not the technology that's bad. It's the way the ... the way the technology is being used,--you know? It's not used properly. So it's interesting.

J. Um-hum. So, like, if you put too much set up on the ...

L. Yeah, or not enough, or you ... or you don't have the placement correct, you'll get a very low signal from the person. And it looks like the technology isn't working, but it is,--you know? So you need to ... So, that's how you need to know,--you know ...

J. Um-hum.

L. So you do work with people, in a certain sense;--with the hospital staff.

J. And you come across people who are resistant to new technology and sort of have a fear of technology?

L. That ... That's interesting. That was one of our biggest ... When we installed the whole new hospital with all new equipment,--you know,--people ... Nobody knew any of this equipment.

J. Yeah.

L. And that was one of our biggest jobs was to help people;-- to be on hand so people could learn from us,--you know?

J. Yeah.

L. And we would train people, and stand by,--you know--the

first few days,--yeah,--to make sure that they're okay with it.

J. Uh-huh. um-hum.

L. So ... So that was good.

J. So you were saying, about your personal goals?

L. I find ... It's interesting. ON this job, I also do a lot of teaching. I've trained most of the technicians here, and I've written a lot of our procedures for training. I've organized a lot of seminars,--technical seminars. And I ... I do ... My passion, really, is teaching. I realize that, even on this job. I'm in my glory when I'm teaching,--you know?

J. Uh-huh.

L. So my goal, really, is to find a place for me to make a difference in peoples' lives through teaching technology in some way, or

J. Um-hum.

L. and/or critiques of technology, because I think it's real important for people to understand the limits of technology and the dangers, and to really look at that seriously. So I would like to find a place to do that. I'm not sure where that's going to be yet. It might be in a number of different places, part time. Working at NEW to teach women so they can get good jobs.

J. Um-hum.

L. Working at a high school, maybe for ... a Vo Tech high school; working in a place like Metro North. I want to use my skill ... I want to move back towards the people realm a little bit more,--you know?,--and still keep the technology. So I think technology education would be a good way to go. So I'm just starting to look into that now and explore that, and see if that's possible.

J. In terms of your ... In terms of organizing,--the part of you that's an organizer,--do you have some goals or dreams, or thing that you're thinking of that you'd like to see happen?

L. One of my dreams, actually, is ... is to go to Third World countries and ... who have, like--such as in Nicaragua, Brazil ... where they have we'd say very old equipment, and they need someone to help them use it or repair it,--put it back together--so it can be used to help people. That's one possibility. in terms of organizing, I've done organizing at home,--you know--in my community,

J. Uh-huh.

L. in terms of environmental things. I haven't actually done

any women's organizing in quite a while

J. Um-hum.

L. around women's issues. And I've thought ... I've been doing a lot of reading about women and technology and possibly get-
- ... I'm not aware that there's a forum except for Women In ...
There's a group called Women In Engineering. I am in a strange place because I'm not an engineer. Most of the stuff that you see out there,--

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

L. the women's organizations,--are engineering;--very different from what I do. Not ...

J. Right.

L. Different ... on a different level.

J. Yeah.

L. It's a different level of salary. It's a different level of status.

J. Um-hum.

L. in terms of technicians,--you know--and the kind of level on that, except to organize a Union here. I don't know ... I'm not sure where to go with that. I've thought about it a lot.

J. Um-hum. Um-hum.

L. and I haven't seen anything out there so far.

J. What about the situation with women, currently, in terms of the attack on affirmative action and ... and the mood of the country in terms of sort of saying that there is no need to commit to this, there's ... and there's no political will, basically, amongst the articulate politicians. X

L. Um-hum.

J. How do you ... Having watched women, from being there when women were getting into the non-traditional fields, what do you have to say about the situation now?

L. Well, I think it's ... it's deplorable, really.

L. Anything that you ...

L. It seems hard to believe. I mean,--I know it was hard ... affirmative action was fought for hard and it's going to continue to be. I think a lot of people think women have it made now. You

(42)

know,--we're already opened a lot of doors and, basically, what else is there to do,--you know. And again, for women in engineering, for whatever reason, there's only four percent women in engineering and in tech-- ... technical work,

J. um-hum.

L. it's a very low percentage. And I'm absolutely committed to affirmative action. I ... I haven't personally done any organizing around that issue. You know,--I'm ... I'm actually not ... I'm not even aware of what groups are doing now. ✕

J. Well, one of the arguments that I keep reading, the people who are opposed to it, they say that there's already,--you know,--there's already a commitment to equal ... fair hiring and equality in terms of educational institutions and jobs. And ... And so there's no need for this.

L. Right.

J. What would you say to that?

L. Well, I would say ... I mean,--from personal experience ... I went on an interview a few ... about a month ... two months ago for a bio-medical job.

J. Uh-huh.

L. It was a position ... a supervisory position ... It was actually a department head, really, but the guy didn't want to pay the person for a department head so he called it a supervisor.

J. Um-hum.

L. And one of his questions to me was ... I mean,--I am highly, highly qualified. I already do the job here at a much bigger hospital. This is a very small hospital. I supervise ten people now. This was about three people. He said, "I'm very concerned about how the men will react to you,"--you know. "I don't think they're going to like having a woman here." He actually said this in the interview. I was surprised he said it. And I ... I was very angry, but I just said,--you now,--"I work with all men now, mostly. I have no problem being respected." So--I mean,--just the fact that he could ask that question in 1996 ✕

J. Um-hum.

L. of someone who's, beyond doubt, highly overqualified even, for the job, and to bring up the fact that I'm a woman, I just thought was abominable. So it just shows that this issue is very real. It's very much alive. ✕

J. It's alive.

L. and it's out there. And it's out there on all levels of society,--you know,--all levels of society. So it makes me angry. +

J. Okay. Well, thank you.

(44)