

Interview With Lois Ross, Irene Soloway and Evan Rudderman.

J. This is the interview, on March 6th, 1996, of Evan Rudderman, Lois Ross and Irene Soloway, founders ... three of the founders of United Tradeswomen. So United Tradeswomen ... We want to talk about how it .. how it grew. How ~~it~~ came together and how you organized it, and what was your motivation. And so, who wants to start? Lois, do you want to start with the founding?

L. Yeah, I'll start on that one, because ...

J. Okay.

L. I think what happened is interesting. This movement just started taking off in the late '70s, really '78, and when NEW (Nontraditional Employment for Women) ... actually, it was WAP was formed...

I. Yeah, WAP. Women who tend to ??

L. Should I tell a little bit about my own ... just how I got into this?

J. Sure. Yeah.

L. Yeah, Explain a little bit? I had studied economics in school. I was coming from a very theoretical perspective, at that point, and I had done a lot of work on women in the economy, and particularly occupational segregation by sex. And at that point, that was why women The primary reason women were in poverty * was because of that, trying to ...

J. And in the mid to late '70s, that was a hot topic in economics.

L. It was a very hot topic in economics. If you were a progressive in economics, that's what you st?--one of the big areas. So when I got out of school, I started writing a proposal to work in New Jersey 'cause it was a very industrial state, and I thought, what a great place to start getting women into these kind of jobs. And I ... I was working on the proposal, and my friend Cindy who was doing labor work in New York heard of Mary Garvin and said, Hey, there's this woman in New York who's already got something funded, just like you're doing. She says, Why don't you go talk to her? So I talked to her and I ended up working for her,

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'cause I thought it was easier to ... She was already ten steps ahead of me, and so I thought, Well, what an opportunity to do this. And she hired me, and I started working for the Women In Apprenticeship program. And I was also really coming from a progressive per(spective)--you know,--wanting to do (a) grassroots thing. We were very much a grassroots group, at that point. WAP was still ... You know,--all the people ... all the wor(kers)-- ... all the women who were doing the counseling were pretty grassroots. And Mary was herself, a carpenter. And--I don't know,--I was just doing counseling and job development, and I started thinking: God, these women ... We ... We get the jobs,--you know. We help them get the jobs there, and then they're out there on their own. They need something ... They need ... And I ... They need something to ... to sustain them. And I thought: Gee, I said, I've got to start getting people together somehow, and running some kind of group here, organizing some kind of grassroots group out of this. And I envisioned it, from the very beginning, as being a very political group that would advocate for women in all kinds of ways.)

J. Um-hum.

L. And I was in a ... really in a unique position, though. I wasn't a tradeswoman, but I was ... I knew virtually every single woman in the City who was interested in the trades 'cause they all came through WAP. ★

J. Um-hum.

L. So I was really in a unique position to talk to each one and to see where people were at.

J. Um-hum.

L. And I was identifying people who I thought might be really good leaders for that kind of a group.

J. Now WAP was ... Where were they located then?

L. Oh, 80 Fifth Avenue,--14th Street and Fifth Avenue. Can't forget that. ✕

J. And how ... what were they doing? They were recruiting women and ...

X WAP
L. Right. We were doing recruitment,--no training at that point,--counseling and placement. A lot of advocacy, meeting ... going to different meetings of the Port Authority,--I don't know,-- PA -

I. Shaping

L. shaping jobs ... Actually, we didn't start shaping till quite a bit later.

J. Really?

L. Yeah. That was an idea we got maybe a year later.

J. Trying to work with the Unions?

L. Working with the Unions ...

I. ^{CAN} ~~May~~ I ask a question? What year did ... was this the first year?

L. This was '79.

I. '79 was the first year?

L. Ju-- ... I think it was July of '79 or August of '79.
And ...

E. That you started working for WAP or that WAP started? \ 979 -

See AT

L. That WAP started.

E. Oh, that WAP started.

L. I was the original ... the original staff person; Mary, me and two other people, so we really started from scratch, --Cindy and Phyllis.

I. Phyllis Dubell. ?

E. When did you guys move to Park Avenue?

L. That's a couple of years later, about two ... maybe two years later.

E. 'Cause I came in in '79,

L. Um-hum.

E. In ?? and I believe I went to the WAP office up at Park Avenue, and they wouldn't help me.

L. Hmm.

I. I remember '79 ...

L. We were definitely a whole year, at least, at 80 Fifth Avenue.

J. Um-hum.

L. I remember 8-- ... It was even longer than that,--maybe a year and a half, two years.

E. I think I went to Fifth Avenue and I remember ... I remember in my mind ...

J. So you looked around for leaders ... leadership types, or women

L. Yeah. It ...

J. that would be ... respond to this idea.

L. Yeah, exactly, and seeing where people were at politically, 'cause women were coming from all different places. You know,--everyone was real different, and--you know,--people literally sleeping on the streets, people who had drug problems, people who were artists and had B.A.'s in fine arts and,--you know-- really all different kinds of women were interested, at that point. *

I. Another question.

~~I~~ Yes. This is interesting because I never actually ??

I. Was this part of CETA in any way?

L. Oh, yeah. This was ...

I. This was CETA, yeah.

~~L~~ This was a Governor's Four Percent Discretionary Funds.

It was a special fund set aside for whatever the Governor thought was sexy that year.

I. Right. And women in the trades was real hot. And there were a couple of people in the Labor Department who were real interested, so Mary got it funded.

J. Wasn't it sort of through the Community Service Society also, WAP?

L. I. No. It was the State Community Day Association. They were our sponsors. And we were a local project.

J. Um hum.

L. I. So, okay. So what else? So ...

L. Well, the other thing ...

L. See, now while this was happening,--this idea for this grassroots group was happening,

>. Right. Right.

L. in a lot of different peoples' minds. It was sort of germinating all ...

L. Right.

L. among a lot of different people ... I had the idea and I was starting to scout people out.

J. Um-hum.

L. I'm sure, she had ... Cynthia Long, a lot ... everybody who was getting into the trades. A lot of the women who were more savy, or whatever, we were realizing that you need something.

J. Yeah. Well, and the ... and the whole women's movement, feminist ideas and consciousness raising, and was that feeding any of this at all, in terms of ...

I. Well, sure. I mean,--I think it was in--you know--in ... It was coming out of feminism in the '70s, it was unquestioned that this was part of feminism. And if it's part of feminism, you do

it--you know - you do it in a group context. It's not an individualistic type of endeavor.

J. Um-hum.

I. Um-hum.

I. I think that was really even ... You know,--I think that was like, almost across the board,--

I. Um-hum.

~~I~~ you know,--the feeling ...

J. Um-hum.

I. And Mary Garvin was certainly a fe--you know,--a feminist, and had--you know--like feminist credentials,--you know--in terms ... I think. Yeah. (laughs)

E. I don't know what her ...

E. I think that women were driven ... I think individual women were driven emotionally, too. We were very isolated on the job,--you know. You could go for days without seeing another woman ★ on a job, and really be in dire straits just to talk to somebody

J. Um-hum.

E. about something that happened in your work ...;--something really, that wouldn't be ... would seem trivial. And so,--you know--you ... you had this feeling that you were seeking other women. And that was a big driving force,--you know. And also, at the same time, the Unit(ed)-- ... the idea for United Tradeswomen was like developing in Lois' head and other people ... I think some of the Unions that were more centralized, like Local 3, and bigger, like, we started having our own little group of women electricians. And so ... And we did that out of necessity because we were having so many problems on the job,--you know. And that naturally spilled over into it's a good idea to bring all the trades together. 'Cause at that time, and even still today, an issue like changing facilities ... When there's only ... When you have a job, let's say, there's five hundred workers on the job and they're all from different trades. And then, out of that five hundred, you have three women and they're all from different

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trades, it didn't make sense to have three different changing facilities for women in the same way that they do for men: a separate one for electricians, a separate one for ... So it became a big issue of, well, who's going to be responsible to pay for this? If there's an electrician woman on the job, a carpenter and a lather, well then, which contractor ... And the idea that all the contractors would contribute, that was a really bad idea,--you know. The men couldn't figure that out. But as women, we sort of had to start working together on jobs ... across the trades. So then also, like, ... I'm just speaking ... These are all ... These are all from my experience. *

J. Um-hum..

E. From my experience, it just made perfect sense that we had to organize not just women electricians,

J. Um-hum.

E. but we had to organize through the trades, 'cause I was going to run into this problem in every single job,--which I did. And bathroom facilities was another ... *

I. Always the voice of bathroom facilities. She ?? from the word ... from the day one, it's all about,--you know?

L. Yeah, sort of.

E. I mean ... But,--you know,--these were daily basics that were making us ... making the workplace unbearable.

J. And what about sexual harassment?

E. Well, sexual harassment was also.

E. But see,--that could be ... that could be individualized.

J. Um-hum.

E. And you could then feel bad about yourself, and then you could be confused: is it you? Is it them,--you know? But something like who's going to now pay for a changing facility ... And since the men are deciding that, well, we can't figure out how to split the bill three ways, nobody gets a changing ... that just ... that just didn't make sense,--you know. And that was,

(7)

like, more concrete and more practical. You know,--we could stand there and say: we want ...--you know. Whereas, sexual harrassment

E. Is a very charged emotional issue. Very. And it was much more complex.

J. So how did ... how did the move to form this organization ...

L. Ah!

J. how did it start? So ...

I. Is it because you weren't pointing? (?)

E. No. I ... I don't know why I feel like I want to clarify this, (laughs) but I do.

J. Go ahead!

I. Hey, it's .. it's part of the oral history so you might as well.

J. It ...

E. You know,--when we started ... When women started getting into the trades, it was pre-Reagan, and that's why we still had CETA and these community programs, or whatever. When I went to ... I had already worked non-union as an electrician. I had already been to All Craft, and I had worked for a year. And,--I mean,--as an electrician, and I was only eighteen or nineteen at the time. The contractor that I worked for went bankrupt, supposedly, and was out of business, and I decided ... Somebody must have given me the name of this group, Women Apprentices. When I went to them, I didn't have a high school diploma. And when I walked in, it was a coincidence that the electricians had just started lining up, 'cause those were the two years, '77 and '78, I think, or '78 and '79,--whatever it was,--that we had to line up for applications.

J. Um-hum.

E. And so I said, Wow,--you know,--the good news is the electricians are lining up. The bad news is you don't have a high school diploma, so forget it. And I was really hurt,--you know,--that they'd just close the door, like sorry, there's nothing we can

do. Because I thought, God, why wouldn't they be more interested? I'm like ... I'm young. I've had a whole year's experience,--you know. That just was kind of ... and when I left, I did remember that Recruitment and Training program was another program that existed up in Harlem.

X
RTP

J. Um.

E. So even though I lived in the Lower East Side, I went up to 125th Street. They said, NO problem. They said, But just go wait on line. Get the application and we'll help you out.

J. Who was running that?

E. You know,--I, for the life of me, don't remember right now.

I. Laurie Black and then ...

I. ? Block

I. Yeah. It was mostly black male positions.

L. Well, CETA also funded that.

E. I went there with my friend Bernie. We were the first two women that they were going to try to get into the Electricians Union of that application period. Jackie had gotten, maybe before us, through the Brooklyn office, --22 Brooklyn office. I'm not sure, though. But ... But anyway,--you know--it just ... It was sort of like ... I guess I only say it because I think that, at that time, Women in Apprenticeship ..because the women were coming sort of out of college and were new, and were new to Unions and new to the whole thing, they didn't think that they could really work the system in the same way that, for some reason, these men from RTP

WAP

I. Interesting.

E. that were more grassr--not just more grassrooted, but more of the community,--you know--knew that they needed women so badly. The age limit is a big problem. There's a young woman with experience, there's no way they're going to turn down. And so, what they did was ... We waited on line, and I did study with them for two weeks. I had to go up there every single day and study with

them, and I took my GED two weeks after I picked up the application. And we didn't get the results back until August, so I was way late in that. But still, they were able to influence Local 3, and I got in.

J. So you were in the first group of women ??

~~E.~~ I was actually in the second.

J. The second?

E. The first group were Cynthia Long, Melinda Hernandez, Jackie--and I can't even remember her last name now.

L. It wasn't O'Shaunessy. She wanted to know how I got the name. Yeah. Right.

I. Yeah, and Beth Goldman.

L. Yeah. I'd like to respond 'cause that's very interesting. It's true. The Union taught ... It wasn't, I don't think, because of the ... because we were not grassroots. It's because we were just ... Women were just real new to this, and we were not on the inside track.

I. Right.

L. We had no inside contacts. RTP had been around a long time,

I. Right.

L. knew the ropes really well. We were told, "If women don't have a GED, don't even talk to them."

I. Right.

L. We will not accept them." And that was it.

I. Yeah.

L. So we were like, Hey, we'd better ... Right. We were trying to play by the book.

I. Right. Right.

L. We were like, well, we don't want to mess up and give them an excuse to--you know--turn women away.

I. Discredit you. Yeah.

L. So, in that sense, that's re-- ... we suffered from not knowing the ropes,

I. Right.

L. and just being new kids on the block.

I. Right. Right. Right.

E. And maybe as women, being a little bit more timid,--you know. I really don't know. I always felt that, but--you know ...

L. I'm surprised that ... I don't ... I don't remember talking to you.

E. I don't remember you either. (short period of three simultaneous voices)

L. No. When I heard of a woman ... No. I don't think I ever would have, though. If I had a woman with experience, I would have grabbed you in two seconds and thought, I've got to do something with her. I don't know what exactly, but I would have tried to figure something out ?? 'cause that was critical. We had no women with experience. I mean,--we would have grabbed you. I mean,--that's what I would have ..

E. Yeah. That's what I thought was baffling.

E. And,--you know,--the age limitation, at that time, was a *very* big problem.

I. Was it like twenty-one or something?

E. Well, it was between nineteen and twenty-one.

L. Yeah, real narrow.

I. Very narrow.

L. So we were desperate to get women,--desperate.

(11)

I. Right. Right.

E. Electricians ...

L. So I'm I'm surprised somebody turned you away. I really am. But we didn't know the ro--. It's true. We didn't know the ropes. And we hadn't hooked up with RTP. Also, the staff people at RTP were making about twice what we were making.))

J. Uh-huh.

I. (laughs)

L. Those of us on staff were making, like, nothing.

I. Right.

L. And ... and so the whole ... we were just devalued as women, from the very beginning. That's ... The whole organization.

J. Over time, UT started to ... to work with other groups, but that ... that took time.

E. Right.

J. Well, first of all ...

I. Well, let's talk about ... (Chorus of voices)

J. Yeah. Let's hear about the beginning.

L. Well, listen to this. I just remembered this now. I'd totally forgotten this. There was another group of women in the trades.

I. WIT!

L. It was called WIT: Women In The Trades.

I. Yeah, WITT!

E. I remember them.

I. And I remember ...

I. I was part of that.

L. Yeah, I think I heard about them.

J. Myers, ?? Yeah.

I. Cherry Harriet and ... and Eve the Plumber. > WITT

L. You .. Yeah. Right.

I. Alice

L. And I said, Oh, cool! There's a group I can send all these women to. I said, So let me go check them out and see what they're about. So I went to the group...))

I. Jerry
C 14
J 14 ?

L. I don't know,--they were talking about Greek mythology ...

I. (laughs) I remember sitting there and going ...

L. ?? hates. And you were in that group?

I. Oh, yeah. They were my ... They were the first people I met here in New York that were,--you know? > ?

L. Yeah. They were ... They were 'cause I remember, I ran to them when I heard about it. It took me a while to hear about it. I said, Oh, great! This is where I can refer everybody.

E. I don't think I ever went to one of their meetings, but I heard about them.

I. Yeah.

L. But they were just esoteric. I mean,--real ... I said, I couldn't send half the women that I work with to these people. I mean,--they would run ... run away.

I. No. They were ...

I. WITT was ... WITT was mostly women,--middle class women who were ... had their own businesses in the trades.

E. Yeah, I remember. That was my ... I was like ...

I. Right. It was very entrepreneurial.. Not completely, but that was like,--you know--the ... the core was entrepreneur, and--you know--making breakthroughs and--you know Martha Vanderhaven, I think ... I'm not sure if she was in there. But,-- I mean,--it was ... that was the model there.))?
I ↓

J. Um-hum. Okay.

L. Right, which was ... It was a mixture. There were some grassroots women who were looking for some place to go. But none of ... JB -

J. Okay. Yeah.

L. I mean,--I know I didn't feel comfortable there. And I think a lot of other people felt like, Wait a minute, this isn't quite what we're ??

I. I loved it. I like Greek mythology. (everyone laughs)

L ? . I do to, but not when you're ??

L. I Right. L Right. So I remember thinking

I. Yes. That this is ... this is not going to cut it.

L. So I thought, This isn't going to be it. This is not going to be a good ... I can't ...

I. We can cut up all the other groups on tape. (laughs)

L. No. I mean,--they were doing their own good work,

I. Right. Right.

L. but it just didn't seem like the kind of people

L I. That was not what they needed.

L. Right. Right. So I remember thinking, Oh shit, okay. Now I've got to start ... I've got to get something going, 'cause I thought maybe this was my solution. Man, I have to--you know,--

J. Right.

L. so I've got to get something going. So what I started doing was just inviting women that I talked to at group to come to a meeting. I think, the first meeting I had six people, none of which were in the original United Tradeswomen.

I. Really?

L. Then I had a second meeting and a third meeting. And I just kept ...

I. Without me? (laughs)

L. trying to see if there were some people who would emerge

J. Uh-huh.

L. who I felt could really lead something. And I think, then slowly, other people started hearing, Oh, this new group is forming. We didn't ^{even} have a name. I was just getting people together, and we were talking about our problems and ...

E. Was it at WAP ... at WAP or outside of WAP?

L. I can't ^{even} remember. I think we were at WAP. Yeah, so ...
Yeah.

I. So it was ... it was ... it was part ... Was it that it was ...

L. But it wasn't part of WAP.

E. It wasn't WAP.

L. No. I was doing this kind of on my own

I. Yeah.

L. as a separate group of grassroots, independent group. I wanted it to be independent.

J. Um-hum.

I. I know.

L. I didn't want it to be part at all of ... have anybody telling it ... tell it what to do, except for tradeswomen themselves. So slowly, --I mean, --people started hearing about it. I remember Cynthia Long, I think, came by first, maybe. She heard about it and she got involved. And then, --what's her name, -- Chrisea?

I. Chrisea Gibson. IDA

L. Chrisea Gibson who was a

I. Carpenter.

L. carpenter.

I. Yeah.

L. She was maybe a second or third person. And I started seeing all these women ...

I. Did Chrisea come through WAP or ...

L. She was involved ...

I. ² Yeah. Yeah.

L. She was doing stuff on her own, and she was working independently, but she was very much in sync with what we were doing.

I. Right.

E. She did get into the Carpenters Apprenticeship ?

L. Right.

I. She did. That's right.

E. She won some competition.

I. Right. She won the golden hammer ...

L. She was a real ??

J. ?? officers' pension plan. IS No no no ..the golden hammer

^{IS}
H. Right. Well, you don't get the pension plan. You get the little pin.

J. Yeah. That's another ... Yeah...

L. a plaque with a hammer.

I. I have it spray painted. (laughs)

L. You have a what?

E. I have a gold card. (I'm retired)

L. A gold

E. card.

L. Gold Union card.

I. Oh, you do!

E. Um-hum. I'm retired.

J. So ...

L. We don't get any in my trade.

J. Do you remember ... What do you remember about those early meetings?

L. I just remember that they were very personal,

J. Um-hum.

L. like a conscious--CR group,--you know,--

J. Yeah. Um-hum.

L. where people were just talking about,--you know,--I'm having this big problem on my job ...--real person problem stuff;-- people wanting help desperately. And I said, God, I cannot do my job all day and then deal with all these problems. It's like ... and there was no ... in my group ... I remember in the very first meetings, who saw a larger political role for the group, and that I thought really could take leadership. They were more, Help me >>

with my problem,--you know,--which is important. I mean,--that's okay. But then slowly, women started coming on like Chrise and like ... and then you (Irene) and then you (Evan). And pretty soon, we had a core together. And do you remember the first groups that ... that you went to?

J. Yeah.

L. or how you got ...

E. I don't remember a specific meeting...

I. I can't remember like one first meeting because, for me, it segued from the shape up groups,--

L. Right.

I. you know,--where we used to--at least among the carpenters, we used to shape up as part ----you know--with ... at WAP and like ... Not shape up with them, but learn, like, start to work together

L. Right. Right.

I. in ... in teams or as a group, to go and shape up. And it kind of segued. That's ... You know,--I can't re----you know--into meetings, because I started shaping up with Mar--Martha Clanton, and--you know,--and ...

L. She was one of the first people I ...

I. And then.

L. the first people.

I. you know,--so sort of getting to know people through WAP. And then, I remember you kind of crusa--you know,--like a crusader for having something independent of WAP and ... But I don't remember the first meeting. I just remember,--you know--starting to, like, getting to be really good friends with people that came through there. And then, you (Evan) came from outside of there with ... probably with a big chip on your shoulder from what ...

E. Yeah. ?? a little later.

L. A little later, right?

E. Yeah. I came a little later because we were organizing just among the women electricians and ...

I. Right. Right.

E. And then I think, actually, the first meeting--you know--I came to was at your house, I remember. But I'm not sure.

J. Labor aristocrat.

~~E~~ I. Gee, I wonder if Cynthia ...

L. That was ... That was later already. That was quite a bit later at my ...

~~C~~ E. Yeah, so maybe not. Maybe I went to something more public. I remember, Cynthia had gone to a couple of meetings, and she would always come to the women electricians group,--you know,--?? and she'd tell us about this new group that was forming.

E. And then, we started to get a name,--right?--United Tradeswomen. I think that ??

I. And a logo. (laughs)

L. Right. Right (Chrisa did the logo, I think, or was it Brook?)

I. Well, no. Brook ... Brook did the logo.

J. Well, how ... What do you ..

I. ... which was ... which was like ... The logo kind of pulled the whole thing together because we just thought it was so cool. And that ...

I. Then we did the newsletter.

L. And then, we ... we started ... Yeah. But,--I mean,--(think that the core group, I remember, we identified was Brook ... Brook ...

I. Brook Shields. (laughter) Did you know Brook Shields was

an original founding member of United Tradeswomen.

J. Brook?

L. Steel.

J. Steel ...

L. who was a shipyard ... shipyard worker. She was a painter in the shipyards,

I. Right. Right. Right.

L. a ship building company.

J. Um-hum.

I. Great artist.

L. Great artist, yeah. I remember, she said, I was desperate. The ship yard had called me up and said, God, I've got to find ... We need ... We have a painting job open. Do you have anybody who had ... So I started asking everyone who came, "Did you ever paint anything, ever,"

I. Your house?

L. anywhere?" And she said, "Oh, I did some art work in college," or something. I said, "Great. I sent her out. They hired her, like, the next day. But it was Brook, Martha Clanton,

I. Sophie

L. Sophia Torres from The Carpenters and later, the railroad

J. What about Connie? When did Connie ^{Raez} get involved?

I. Consuelo ...

L. Well, Consuelo already was working in the Union before WAP. CR

E. She came ...

20

L. She was like the first woman who broke ...

E. She broke with Fight Back.

L. She broke with Fight Back and with ...

I. Not just ... Not Fight Back, but the group that was down in .. at Confucius Plaza:

E. Black and Puerto Rican Construction

L. Black and Puerto Rican Construction Workers.

E. Well, Black and Puerto Rican Construction Workers and Fight Back had joined together in those years. >>

I. Yeah. She came through there.

I. And then, she was like ...

E. So she must have come in, like, early '78 or maybe even '77.

I. I think it was '77. She, I think, was the first woman carpenter who was not a woman who sewed the seams on the industrial carpets, who were also CR

J. So ...

I. They were in the Carpenters Union. to ...

J. Was she active with the group?

L. Consuelo?

J. Yeah.

L. She came later. That was ...

I. That was later.

L. The early people ?? early: Martha Clanton, Chrisa Gibson,

...

I. Beth Goldman, I think ...

(21)

L. Beth was later too. (unintelligible cross conversation)

E. Beth and me came a little bit later. Cynthia in the Electricians was really the leader

L. Kathy?

E. and getting into ??

L. Zaterovsky.

L. It was mostly Carpenters for ... I mean,--it was dominant Carpenters

I. Dominant ...

L. Right.

I. Alpha Carpenters for a long time. (laughs)

E. ??

L. And ... and then Marty and ... and Kay and all of those people. Yeah.

J. Pottenger?

L. Yeah. *I think* That's how it went.

J. What do you remember about the discussion about the name? How did that happen? Do you remember Or ...

L. Not specifically.

J. Yeah.

E. I don't think I ??

I. It seemed like a natural.

E. Yeah, sure did.

I. (laughs)

L. Where did they take it from, the maintenance construction workers? Wasn't there a group called United Construction Workers in Brooklyn or something?

I. Maybe. Maybe.

L. Yeah. I think we .. we bor--, ad then we thought ... I think there was a group called United Construction Workers that were in Brooklyn. And then, somebody ... Maybe it was--what's her name?--Juanita might have mentioned that.

J. Oh, Juanita ??

L. Juanita ... Juanita Muhammed now.

E. Muhammed now ...

J. Uh-huh.

E. Oh, yeah.

L. also was involved. And a little bit later, she ...

J. What was she doing as a tradeswoman?

~~E.~~ She was ... Wasn't she an EEO officer?

L. She ... Well, she worked as a Housing Inspector

I. Right.

L. with the City.

~~E.~~ And then, she was in EEO. Later.

L. Um-hum.

(2) E. she was an EEO officer.

J. So ... So you ... you started growing, and what .;. what were ... How did you evolve the model for the group: what you were going to be--you know--doing:--all the things that you came to do?

I. Correct. Well, our main thing was grassroots, grassroots, grassroots. We were so intent on being grassroots, which is like

(23)

... it was a double edged ...

E. Right. We were.

I. I mean,--retrospectively, it was a ... 'Cause we were so ... I think that because there ... Probably because there was funding that was--you know--being used for--you know--various projects ~~that~~ had more organizational bureaucracy,--you know,--we were going to be the ones that were not funded.

L. Right.

I. So were ... (laughs) So we were so intent on not being funded for ... That was our prime identity was that we had ... we ... we had no ... we had no ... I'm pounding the table.

J. Don't pound the table, please.

for Ron
I. And some people listening ... listening to this tape are going to be, like, ?? But,--I mean,--that really was ...

E. Well, that was the same for Women Electricians. I mean,--
we were so intent on not being aligned with the established Union leadership IBEW - ★

J. Uh-huh.

E. that we actually stayed way out on a limb,--maybe a little bit to our detriment, in retrospect. >>

I. Yeah. I mean,--that's true. I think if there was anything that was kind of--you know--str--our strength and our weakness,--you know--

E. You know what I think? I think that what we didn't understand at that time is whenever you cross a line between a completely volunteer organization

L. Hmm.

E. and an organization that could actually afford to

J. To sustain itself ...

E. have people who are being paid to work for it .. And we

(24)

were growing at an incredibly rapid rate.

I. Really fast.

E. I mean,--unbelievable.

I. It was very exciting. It really was.

E. And,--you know,--when you begin to have a membership of five hundred people on the mailing list ...

E. We had a mailing list of ... and it's growing,

L. Yeah.

E. And we were trying to establish dues. We never really got it going the way we wanted it to, but ... >>

I. We had so many ...

~~E.~~ structures that we tried to ...

L. Yeah. Our final structure was, I think, we ... three hours pay. So therefore, it ... it was progressive. So if you made \$5.00 an hour, you pay \$15.00 a year. If you made \$30.00 an hour, you paid \$90.00 a year. And people paid.)

E. Yeah.

L. They really did. The majority of the people on our mailing list paid three hours of pay,

I. Yeah, and ...

L. and that was a real fair way to do it. And that was our source of funding. That's the only funding we had to live on.

J. But what about ?? *getty all the WK done*

E. But in retrospect, I'm just saying ...

J. I mean,--who ... How did How did you evolve like, the coordinators. I mean,--over time, you ...

E. Well, in a totally volunteer organization people just

volunteered.

J. Yeah.

E. And then, the ones who volunteer more,

J. Uh-huh.

E. naturally are more involved,--they make more of the decisions.

I. Right. It also became an issue.

E. Well, that's what I'm saying. That's why, in retrospect,--you know,--perhaps if we had decided, Let's try to get funding, and let's pay Lois to be full-time,--you know,--staff member,--or let's have a staff member,--or whatever,--it might have changed the outcome of the organization. But I do think that we had about ...

J. So what was fueling the whole thing about not being establishment? Was it the reaction of your ... your Unions to or ...

I. I think that's an interesting question.

J. Yeah. What was behind it?

E. A fierce independence,--fierce...

L. It was not wanting to allow ...

I. We were all originals,--you know.

J. So here you have ... you were trying to be united, but still ...

E. Well,--you know,--we were seeing ... I'm just speaking for myself, but--you know,--we were seeing corruption in ... at every level in our Unions. Personally, on the job, I experienced,--and I know that other women experienced--intimidation. We saw things happen which I would definitely link to--you know--underworld mob influences, and we were ... I felt like,--me, personally,--I felt like I'm in way over my head,--

J. Um-hum.

(26)

C

E. you know,--with these guys. And I began to become very, very guarded, 'cause I didn't really know ... If I'm talking to my shop steward, who is he really? —

Side Two

E. And I know, for myself, I got to the point where I really couldn't trust anybody, except for ... I really did feel a comradeship and a trust for the other women that came in the same time that I did and I knew were as scared and intimidated and perplexed, and suffering as much as I was,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

E. And then, actually, it began to ... You know,--the longer women stayed in the trades, the more women each began to--you know--see what was going to work for them personally.

J. Um-hum.

E. And,--you know--I don't want to actually point fingers and say, well, sell out this and whatever, but women started going their own ways. And it even got to the point where there were some women that, when I was talking to them, I was just very careful of what I said, because I was very careful of who was going to ... who ... how this information was going to be used and misconstrued, or whatever. It's very intense to ... to really understand what it's like to work and to organize under those conditions. So just because we were women and we were like this oddity, did not make us exempt. In fact, often it made us targets. And they thought that we were going to be easy targets, which some of us were not. (laughs) Thank you. 4/5

I. I also think that ... that some of what wanting to be ... ,--you know,--like, not funded and not--you know,--funding implied control,--you know,--that there would be some kind of control of somebody who would use us,--you know,--you know,--for something that--you know--that wasn't directly ... we weren't going to really grow with,--you know,--that it was going to ... And so, that was part of it. And also, I think, because we were just very excited about each other, and it was very ... and we wanted to be able to be very quirky, too. I mean,--there was a lot of ... For me, I think ... I think a lot of personal ... *

E. Well, there were a lot of lesbian women in the original

(27)

years.

I. A lot of lesbians ... Yeah, that's true. >> (L)

E. and that was another big issue. Because, if you were going to align yourself with any particular funding or--you know--or some kind of established group, or whatever, the issue of homosexuality in '78 was not where it is now in '96. //

J. Um. Um-hum.

I. Right. So it was a very safe place.

E. And we were not willing ... Yeah. Women were not willing to come out, at that point, on the job,--not ... not that many. And women were just being--you know--accused, right and left, of--you know--being gay or ...

I. And one thing that was really interesting that ... that ... that I think was such a good thing about this group was that there were a lot of lesbians, and there were also a lot of straight women. *

E. Um-hum.

I. And because we were all in this situation which was so unique, where the straight women were always accused of being lesbians and the ... and the gay women were always being hit on,--you know,--we ... we ... those ... those lines of demarcation were really as far down as I've ... I have ever experienced between gay women and straight women. And I think we were very turned on by this,--you know,--this kind of unity, *

J. Um-hum.

I. and ... and we wanted to be able to really,--you know--really get into that. I mean,--it wasn't so conscious, but it was ... You know,--I mean,--women who were extremely straight, --you know--and who would tell guys on the job--you know--that ...--you know,--that they were gay just because ... And they thought it was cool,--you know,--and that we could go back and forth like this. And so, anyhow, this was very personal stuff,--

J. Um-hum.

I. you know,--and it was very ground breaking on a personal level for us, as well as--you know. And in fact, it was--you know--it was stuff that--you know,--and it was very intense. So I think that was part of it, too, was that can we be ourselves,--

J. Um-hum.

I. you know,--and let this thing ... let what happened happen:

E. Um-hum.

I. a lot of personal friendships and a lot of ... So we wanted to be able to be quirky. We wanted to be able to be ourselves.

E. Um-hum.

I. And it seemed incompatible, at that time, with--you know--getting all firmed up and everything. >>

J. Um-hum.

I. Is that ...

L. Also, we had seen,--I mean,--I had especially seen women's organizations selling out too, as soon as they got funding,-- >>

J. Um-hum.

L. big funding and--you know,--becoming more and more establishment, and not willing to take the kind of risks and do the ★ kinds of actions and things that might need to be done in a particular situation,

I. Right. Right.

L. because you're worried about your funding source.

I. Right.

L. So we were all kind of--I mean,--almost a little paranoid, I think, about accepting money from anybody.

E. Um.

J. Um-hum.

L. and also proud that we would support our own organization. ★
Women were making good money,

I. Right. Right.

L. and, hey, we could afford to ... to Well, we could afford to run the organization without a staff person. Now, the fact is,--and I ... I still have a little ... some resentment about this, too,--is that I really did function as a de facto staff person.

E. Yeah. Yeah.

L. And I did a tremendous amount of staff work,

I. Right. Right.

L. and with always kind of a strange place, because, at that *
point, I was not a tradeswoman,

I. Right.

J. Um-hum.

L. and so, I always was kind of like treated with some suspicion, like, Well, what's her ...

I. Yeah.

J. Yeah.

L. And I was running on passion for the cause.

J. Yeah. Yeah.

L. I mean,--I really was running on passion. I have such passion

I. Right.

L. for this great ... I saw as this great cause, which I

eventually joined myself, much later on. But and needed more than ever in my field now, and ... than we ever did. }

J. Yeah.

* Electronics *

L. There's less women now in my field than there were in construction back then. But so there was that kind of a strange dichotomy for me. I'm ... I'm the only one in that position, OPL

I. Right.

L. 'cause I was the only non-trade

I. Right.

L. working with the group.

J. Right. And that ... that kind of thing ...

I. Right.

L. But I did function as a de---... I was sort of ... I mean,--really, now, in fact, I was taken for granted, the amount of work that I did for nothing!

E. That's true.

L. We ... We treated another woman,--you know,--as like tak--just like women's labor,--Oh, just like a housewife: Here she is. * She can do this, and her work isn't really that valuable;--and even suspicious of my work,

I. Right.

Like JB-

L. which... which really made me feel very badly. And I didn't notice how badly I was feeling about it until quite a bit later. And there was also this great fear that if we funded a staff person, that the staff person would somehow take over. *

J. Um-hum.

L. I never could quite get that. And I was ... I did have a very prominent role in the beginning, a lot because I was just doing a tremendous amount of work

J. Um-hum.

L. and because I had a lot of good ideas, I thought, of how to bring people together.

J. Um-hum.

L. But we formed a Coordinating Committee. Do you remember that?

I. Right.

E. Um-hum.

L. We had a Coordinating Committee where people volunteered ... I remember, we were at Chrisa Gibson's loft

E. Loft. Um-hum.

1st CC -

L. and I think we formed our first Coordinating Committee. x
We said: Okay, who really wants to do the work here?

E. Yeah.

J. Now, what lines,--along what lines did you have the Coordinating Committee? I mean,--you had ... four different areas,--or different geographical areas,--or trades, or tasks, or who would ... How was the Coordinating Committee working?

I. The first one ... I wish we had the ... I know there's some Coordinating Committee notes. I used to take them ...

I. You used to take, and I used to take pages and pages of notes like they were ... important to record everything that everybody said.

E. I think Cynthia actually ... I think Cynthia must have *pages -* them in her Coordinating Committee ...

L. Yeah. I'll have to ...

I. Well, ... She ... She's a big note taker, too. I thought it was ...

J. We'll have to get them, because we have some ...

32

L. Yeah. You don't have all of them.

L. I don't think we ... We didn't organize from the beginning that explicitly.

J. Yeah. Um-hum.

L. It was like, Okay, who wants to really work at this?

J. Um-hum.

L. And there were maybe seven ... six or seven of us ...

I. I think the idea of the original Coordinating Committee,-- and tell me if you think this is ??,--was that the Coordinating Committee would just think of--you know,--would be like the people that would do a lot of the work, in terms of calling the meetings and getting the program ...

J. A Program Committee.

I. And then, they would get a chance to Their idea would get,--you know ... They would get a chance to do what they wanted to do. I think that was the --general idea of the Coordinating Committee.

E. Well, I ... I volunteered to be on the Coordinating Committee, and I remember ...

J. Wait one second.

E. was that we realized that, God, we really have a growing membership here. And so, that means that our name is out there. >>

L. Um-hum.

E. Women are asking for this. ^{home} There's a calling for this. There's a need. And we've got to seize the moment, and so we've got to start doing, acting,--you know,--being visible, or whatever. And that actually carried us tremendously for about two or three years. We did activities. One of my favorite activities was the Blue Collar Women's Fashion Show. ★

L. Fashion show. Yes!

E. We had the Blue Collar Women's Follies, which was a bit of a flop. But ...

I. (laughs) We had two Follies, didn't we?

J. Yes.

E. Yeah. And then, we did organize a whole series of workshops. So, when we were in that stage, there was a lot of excitement. We were growing, and we were actually doing things,-- you know.

I. Connecting with a lot of other things.

J. Uh-huh.

E. So ... So visibly, when somebody heard about United Tradeswomen, some ... another woman dragged her to a meeting, something was happening,--you know?

J. Yeah.

E. And something, for that particular woman, was real that was happening. I mean,--I'll never forget when we organized that series of workshops and I needed a slide projector. And I asked my brother to bring my slide projector 'cause he had it. And, of course, he came late, and we had already started the meeting. And we started all our meetings by each woman standing up and saying ★ what her name was, what trade, and how long she had been in it.

J. Uh-huh.

E. And so,--you know,--he always--you know--remembers standing at the back of the room and here was ?? And this woman stood up and she said, "And I'm in ... I'm a plumber, and I'm this" And everybody clapped,--you know

I. (clapping and laughing)

E. And it would take us about forty-five minutes before we could begin, because we had to clap and applaud and ...

J. Wow. That's wonderful! And you could feel your strength and--you know--that's really ...

E. Yeah. So that was very ...

I. We were very proud of everybody.

E. That was very affirming for a lot of women, to be applauded.

J. Yeah.

I. (laughs)

J. Yeah.

L. That's right. That's right. There was a lot of synergy, too. It was feeding off of each other's energies.

J. Well, you know ... And the conference that I went to,-- the reunion conference,--you did that. And I didn't know that it was the tradition,--you know.

I. Oh, uh-huh. Uh-huh.

L. Right. Right.

J. And people stood up and said their trade, and everybody clapped and it was great. So ...

L. The early year ... At the very beginning,--once we got kind of the right ...

E. Well, we didn't have too much controversy at that time.

L. There was no ... There was virtually ... Someone would come up and and ?? would go "Great idea!"

I. Well, I have to say that ...

E. And we worked very hard.

L. No, seriously!

I. (laughs) When I came up ... I came up with ... I literally, like, woke up one morning and said, we have to have a ... a blue collar fashion show.

E. That was a great idea.

I. And ... and I thought ... And ... and I thought that ... I think that some people thought, That's weird. But then, it just * became everybody's idea, and everybody ...

L. Really. People were united ...

I. And ... and so it was just,--you know--that a lot of things ... So it happened like that, where, if somebody had an idea, everybody would ...

J. Tell me about the Blue Collar Fashion Show?

I. I mean,--all the ideas were so good.

E. We'd get enthusiastic.

L. What's that?

E. There was a lot of enthusiasm for our ideas and our projects.

L. Yeah. People started ... And fun. The meetings were fun, in principle and political.

I. It was a lot of fun.

E. We weren't ... We weren't (burned out ??) and demoralized. That came later. (laughter)

J. First, before we talk about the Blue Collar Fashion Show, tell me about, like, a meeting,--a typical meeting. How would you run the meeting and what kinds of things would you talk about?

I. Well, I'm thinking of when we were on ... on ... on ... in Chelsea there, on what street was it?

L. 38th Street.

I. 38th Street.

L. 36th Street. It wasn't even Chelsea.

I. 36th Street, Hell's Kitchen.

136

X

L. Hell's Kitchen, yeah.

J. 36th and ...

I. ?? those meeting which were very hot and crowded.

J. 36th off where?

I. Between Eighth and Ninth.

L. That's so funny. You think of the ... I think of Chrisa Gibson's loft, 'cause most of our meetings were in Chrisa's loft for, like, the first six months or so, until we got an office.

E. I think of 36th Street as way later. 36th Street, in my mind, is when things started to go bad.

I. Not really! Not really!

L. No, no. We still had some good stuff going on there.

I. Yeah. We had a lot of really good meetings there and ...
Yeah.

J. Okay. So describe a meeting,--a typical meeting. What would you do? How would you ... How would it happen?

L. We had reports ... I wish I had our notes. We had reports from ... We did have different Committees, I remember, in the beginning.

I. Right.

J. We have them. We could get them, if you want to.

L. That ... That would really refresh our memories.

J. Let's do it. (recorder is turned off and on again) So you're looking at the papers ...

L. Val?

E. Val? Boy, we forgot to mention a lot of people.

L. Val We did.

I. Lisa. Lisa North. ID -

L. Lisa North was a biggy. She did a lot of work with us!

E. Yeah,. A lot of work. Yeah.

E. Remember ,coffee and stuff (and Bustello? and ...

J. There's nothing like having the papers.

I. You know,--this was ... this was ... this was our meetings. We always had beer and Entemman's 'cause we had an Entemman's truck driver who was part of our group. So we always

E. And we also had a Bustello truck driver, later on, so we used to call them Coffee and Cake. >

I. Right. Right.

Beer + Coffee Cake

I. And I remember the beer and ... beer and coffee cake was just. You know,--I always associate it with United Tradeswomen and meetings. >>

E. That was your dinner. Right?

I. Yeah. I still like to have beer with coffee cake.
(laughter)

J. See, a carpenter. (more laughter)

I. Or beer and chocolate donuts.

E. Otto brought it. Yeah.

L. Oh, remember Shoi,--Debbie Shoi? (Check spelling),

E. No, I don't.

L. Yeah. She was a carpenter.

I. Yeah, who ended up ... Yeah.

J. And there's Martha Clanton ??

L. At Chrisa's house.

I. We did try a lot of different ... different structures.
The Borough structure ...

E. Didn't really work.

I. We want-- ... We attempted that because there were ... we had so ... that's when our organization was, like, had three hundred people, and not everybody could get to meetings in Manhattan. There were a lot of single parents and ..

J. Um-hum.

I. And ... and there were a lot of things that people wanted to do. So the Borough structure came up as an attempt to have local, like, almost like chapters that would be easier to get to and more part of your daily life, because, basically,--you know--it would be ... After work, you'd be pretty tired. And they ... I mean,--they ... The Brooklyn Committee was good. They used to go to the Atlantic Antic and have a stand, and ...

E. Oh yeah. I did that, actually??

I. Yeah. There were ... I guess some things happened out of the Borough ...

J. What'd you do? I ... I don't understand?

E. Oh, the Atlantic Antic is like a huge street fair on Atlantic Avenue.

J. Oh, yeah.

E. And we had a table set up.

L. We had tables at the Gay Parade. We had tables at a lot of different things. And that's another way we'd meet women.

E. Yeah. That was ... That was a good way.

I. Mostly, what we did was meet women and get new members from these street ... *fair's + stuff*

L. And raise money, too.

JB
Bklyn Comm.

(39)

J. Uh-huh.

L. I remember we ...

I. Right.

L. we sold ... Val sold carrot juice and made us a bundle selling carrot juice at the Atlantic (laughs) I'll never forget that.

E. Yea, yeah, yeah. Fifty pounds, if I remember

L. Yeah.

E. for Clare.

I. Right.

J. What was her name?

E. Val


L. Val Jones.

J. Val Jones?

L. Yeah.

J. Valerie.

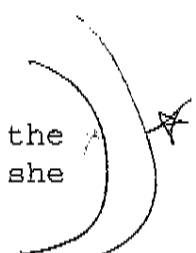
L. Look at ... This is re-- These were our goals.

 L. Oh, okay. We actually defined these, in fact, forget this.

I. You want to read them?

E. Yeah.

L. The primary goal is that every woman will have the guaranteed power to work in any area of employment that she chooses.



I. Boy, were we idealists.

L. Second ... Secondary goals: Increase representation of women in the trades -- in blue collar and building trades work. Improvement of working conditions. Development of working class women's leadership. Increased relationship between the women's and labor movement. Unity among UT members and between members and their co-workers. Fair representation in Unions and rank and file control. *

E. Wow!

J. Very good.

L. Impose broad methods of achieving these goals: Strong and active UT structure;--large and broad membership;--on-going sharing of relevant information within and outside of UT. Wow! I forget how organized we were, it's been such a ... such a while. These were my notes here. We had ... We always ... We had a lot of reports, too, from the trades;--what was going on with women in different trades.

E. Yeah.

I. Can I say that we never actually had a ... Our structure and our activities were change--you know,--

E. Were fluid

I. were very fluid. And we never actually had ... had a set structure that lasted,--you know,--that we ... It was ... We were * always changing and tinkering. And depending on who was around, which is also a strength and weakness.

E. See,--the other thing is,--yeah,--we suffered in a way, organizationally, because we were exhausted,))

J. Right.

E. not because some of us were getting burnt out from the UT work, but because,--you know--we were mostly all apprentices in the early years ,--

40

J. Getting up early in the morning ...

E. so working, going to school ...

J. Going to school, traveling long distances, ...

E. going to union meetings

J. Uh-huh.

E. 'cause that was sort of basically a requirement of your apprenticeship. Then, if you were organizing like the Electricians were, within our organization, that was another meeting,--you know?))

J. Yeah.

E. And then, we went through,--you know,--the difficulties--you know,--I think ... Like, for instance myself,--when I was in my first year, I was hospitalized once, and got hepatitis and was out for a month and a half and ... You know,--I think that stress affected, at least me, I have to say, physically,--you know. *

J. Um-hum.

E. And I know it did other women, so we had a fluctuating active Coordinating Committee;--))

J. Yeah. Yeah.

E. not only a fluctuating membership but a fluctuating active Coordinating ...))

~~I. Our meetings were mostly on Friday nights,~~

J. Um-hum.

I. and so, they became big social things. We ... usually, we'd end up going to the bar afterwards.))

E. A lot of drinking going on.

I. And they were like marathons. Yeah, everybody,--mostly everybody drank a lot.

~~T~~ L. (laughs) After the meeting.

I. Even during the meetings.

L. They'd all sleep, and then ...

J. And so these were weekly meetings.

I. Was it every week?

J. Or ...

E. No, not every week.

I. I think ... Why do I remember every week?

L. I, for a while ... think, in the beginning, for a while, they were every week.

J. Um-hum.

L. They were every week. And then we changed, yeah. In the very beginning, when we were meeting at Chrisa's ... See,--this is dated July 8th, 1980, which was just about a year after WAP started. And we actually had started before this. So before the year was up, we had formed United Tradeswomen. I don't remember the exact per--did it personally. So ... And this was Chrisa.))

E. Um.

L. See,--and we ... we had said, we'll try different types of events and see what draws women.

J. Uh-huh.

L. We weren't sure what was going to bring women out: I

I. Our first ... One of our first big workshops, wasn't it on affirmative action and with Esther,--was it Esther ?? *Esther Begla*

E. We had two lawyers and ??

L. Yes, ?? In fact, we wrote a letter to her to ... asking her to participate. _____

I. And at that workshop we had several hundred people. I think about three hundred people. I don't know, maybe it was less.

We had it at the Rutherford ... Rutherford Church ... Quaker Church.

L. Friends Meeting House.

I. Friends Meeting House. And I think that's when we realized that there's just this amazing ground swell of interest in this, and that ... And we were very ... We had ... Our workshops were very well organized. We really worked very hard to get ...--you know,--to ... to ... to have a structure ... We had more ... You know,--we had a good structure to our workshops. We had ... We had lots of information, and we had ... we always ... You know,--I mean,--they were really well attended.

J. Um-hum.

I. So that was ... I think that was one of the things we did the best: ?? like the sexual harassment workshop ... We had ...

E. The whole series that we ^{did} had was really very good.

I. Yeah. And each ... each one had its own, like, kind of character.

E. That series that we gave at the Labor College, and with the Labor College on 42nd Street, United Trades--

I. Oh, yeah. What did we do there?

E. and they allowed us to use their space.

I. Oh!

E. And that's where we had the sexual harassment workshop.

I. Uh-huh. Right. Right. Right.

J. Do you want to look at more papers,

E. Occupational Safety and Health ...

L. Yeah. This is just ...

J. to refresh your memory. There's .

(40)

L. Yeah. These are just the early

J. Yeah. Those are minutes.

L. minutes.

I. I really enjoyed doing fli-- ... fliers.

J. Oh, the fliers were terrific. They're the best fliers I've ever ... They're so original and lively.

I. They were so much fun.

J. Newsletters is the second folder.

L. Um-hum.

J. You want to look or ... What do you want to see, fliers or ...

I. Let's see fliers!

L. Fliers would be good 'cause then we'll remember ??

I. Okay, now ...

L. We showed "Rosie The Riveter," the film.

J. Yeah.

I. That was ...

L. That was great. And we had ...

E. And you had the woman who did it.

L. from the film: Lola?

E. Lola, yeah.

J. Lola Snyder.

I. Okay ??

L. No, not Lola Snyder.

J. No?

I. It was ...

L. Lola who was in the movie Rosie The Riveter.

J. Yeah.

I. Is that her name?

E. No.

L. I don't think so.

J. Lola Weixel.

L. Wex-- ... That's it.

J. I'm ... I'm ... I'm mixing her up with our Lola from
NEW.

I. Right. Right. Right.

L. From NEW. That's right.

J. Yeah ??

E. Look at that..

I. Okay. There's our first ??

L. Yeah. That was Brook. Right? That's the first ...
Amazing..

J. Isn't that wonderful?

L. I would love to find Brook. You know,--I called her ...
Actually, I tried so many numbers that I have for her.

I. (laughs)

L. That was once something you and me were doing.

J. What are you laughing about? Remember, you're on ...

03.1

I. That looks like my envelope, too. I opened up this little envelope and there's this whole ... ooh, these little cut outs of work gloves. (laughs)

E. That was me and you, Irene. We were doing something. >>

J. I put them all in envelopes...

L. (laughs) Yeah, within the year, --look at, --from our forming, we got an office.

E. Uh-huh. Oh, really?

I. Yeah. Well, that was Lo--

J. 316 W. 35th Street, fifth floor. >> X

L. Right. We shared that with ??

I. An office is a ... Yeah. That gave ... That was a good thing, to have that office.

L. Yeah. Yeah. I remember, yeah.

I. I mean, --having meetings at peoples' apartments is ... is great, but it seems so much more informal.

J. Now, that was the first demonstration.

I. Yeah.

J. That's the one that's on the labor history map.

L. Right.

I. Right. Yeah. I can't believe that.

L. This is the very first demonstration of women construction workers in the country. And there's footage on CBS news with Vic Miles. He did a beautiful piece on us, --a really beautiful piece.

J. We should try to get that.

L. Yeah.

J. Okay.

I. You should definitely try to get that.

Star

L. It was pouring rain, I remember, and we're all walking around getting soaked . And he was covering us with his umbrella as he interviewed us, I remember. He was really very supportive. And what prompted that was the two ... two women

I. Who got laid off,

L. Got laid off ..

I. Yeah.

L. Star and ..

I. Star and Alice? *

J. There's lots of information ...

I. It wasn't Alice?

L. No.

E. And what ... And what job was that that they got laid off?

I. It was the Convention Center.

L. Laborer.

I. And they were the only women there, and then they got laid off ...

I. Yeah, Joyce and Delicado. (Check spelling) Awful. She was in the Iron Workers, I believe, or the Ornamental Iron workers?

L. No, not Ornamental Iron Workers.

15

E. Yeah. Regular Iron Workers?

I. Welders? She was a welder.

J. ?? Welder?

E. Oh.

L. Um-hum. We did workshops on sexual harassment. This was our workshop on sexual harassment.

I. Was this the one that Marty led?

E. Me and Marty.

L. Joyce and Marty.

J. Joyce Evanson,--the panel

L. And Evan ... Evan was in there: Personal Experiences of Sexual Harassment.))

E. I did a lot of work to organize that.

I. Sophia, Katie ...

(I) L. That was a good one.

E. Yeah.

L. They had ... actually was a nice flyer that went with that,--a blue flyer.

J. What's this: "Forming a UT Committee on SH?" Is that safety and health or sexual harassment?

L. It's on

E. Sexual harassment.

L. I actually have slides from this. And I think even maybe a tape somewhere from that workshop? slides - (C)?

I. Oh, yeah. There it is. Oh, yeah.

L. Here's our ... What a beautiful flier.

I. Yeah.

L. "This workshop will be for women only." Right. I remember we had a big discussion about

E. Yeah.

I. Yeah.

L. whether we should allow men to come.

E. But you know what? Was it at that workshop where there was a man who came in and we didn't know who he was? And it turned out he was from the New York State Department of Labor or something?

L. Hmm. I vaguely remember something about that.

E. And then, actually was telling us we should demonstrate or we should ... do something, --I don't know, --and we were all kind of lau-- ... I was really suspicious of him.

I. I don't remember that.

E. I don't know if it was that workshop or the one that was after that.

J. Here's to experience! (laughs)

L. This was like this very big issue. This was a very big issue

J. Yeah.

L. and women really turned out big for that one. Which one was this? Oh, this is our schedule.

This is Irene's fate. Irene's ... Irene's fabulous work here.

I. The schedule for the ... for the ... for two months. Right? (right)

J. "Staying alive."

50

L. Oh, right. We had a happy hour, and that was given

I. (laughs) at your house,--yeah,--or ...

J. This was the schedule for March and April ^{of} ~~in~~ 1980?

I. Did I write a year? Probably not. >>

E. March 6th, 6--9--'82.

J. '82.

E. Celebrate International Women's Day.

L. And that's at Duane Street ??

I. ^{it} March in the demonstration: Women Fight Back! We won't go back! in the Lower East Side. Oh! Look for the UT banner. Women's Carnival later. (all laugh)

E. Oh, I kind of vaguely remember that. Then we had a happy hour at Lois' house? I don't remember that one. But ... Staying Alive! Come and learn how occupational healthy and safety workshop. Oh, I did ... I did that.

I. That was very good.

E. at Empire State.

L. Yeah. Yeah.

E. Sexual harassment on the job follow up meeting. That was after I had the workshop ??

J. So how well attended were the events?

E. Very well attended, at that point. And 1982 was our ... probably one of the heights >>

I. Yeah.

L. Yeah.

I. They were all crowded as can possibly be. We were always--you know--a big ...

L. Great! This is the ... Right. We had two demonstrations, actually. The first one was at the UDC, at the Convention Center, which was mostly organized ... That was organized by us. This one was organized by NEW

E. Um-hum.

L. and it was at Donald Trumps' new building.

E. Um-hum.

L. And we had women bring out pots and pans ... X

E. Yeah. That one was my favorite. *

J. Was this Trump Towers or no.

L. And ... I'm sorry. What?

J. Trump Towers?

L. Yeah. This was at Trump Tower.
That's right.

J. Okay.

E. And that's when we were banging the pots and pans. That's a good one,--a very good idea.

L. Right. Right. I remember that, although, I think, our press coverage was not as good for this one at all,

..... I. No. No.

J. Uh-huh.

L. not compared to the first one, for some ...

E. Yeah. Yeah.

L. I don't know why that was. I think the first ... I think we drew more women, though, in the very first one. Didn't we? This one, I don't think, went off that

J. Um-hum. Now, I see that the name has changed from Women

In Apprenticeship to Non-Traditional Employment For Women. And when that break took place and Laurel Eisner came in, and Mary Garvin was out, did that create ... Was that just internal to the organization, or did it create waves within ... divisions within the tradeswomen. Was there ... It was just an internal kind of thing.

I Yeah. That was ... That was ... We weren't so strongly connected with NEW, at that time.

L. No. No. It didn't ... In fact, Mary Garvin had been a difficult person. As ... being a staff person, she was an extremely difficult person to work with. She caused a lot of disruption on the staff and was very abusive, verbally and sometimes, physically abusive to staff. And ...

I. Really?

L. Yes. Oh, yes. She ... She used to fire me every other day. I mean,--she would just say "you're fired!" Ha! Ha! Or she'd accused me of stealing things off her desk. I mean,--she was like, really, like, crazy. One woman ...

I. Do you want to go on record with this, 'cause this is kind of like ...

L. Yeah. That's true. Maybe I shouldn't.

J. Well ...

E. Well, if it's true ??

~~I. Yeah. But,--I mean,--at the same time, it's ... it's ...~~

L. No. I wouldn't want to say it.

I. it's just whether you want to be on an official ??

J. Well, it was intense ...

L. It ... It was a very difficult ...

I. Yeah.

L. She was a very difficult person to work with. So

actually, the staff were ...

I. Happy?

L. It was a relief

J. Uh-huh.

L. not to have to deal with that kind of abuse every day, plus doing the kind of hard job that we were doing.

J. Right.

L. So ... But as far as United Tradeswomen was concerned, I don't think it made a whole lot of difference for us.

E. I don't remember it affecting ... Yeah. I wasn't involved with NEW or WAP.

L. Except, I think what happened was, at this point, then the Community... State Communities Aid Association started taking over NEW.

E. Um-hum.

L. They put in a woman who was very close to State government, --

E. Um-hum.

L. I forget her name now, --Mary ...

I. Mary Ellen

L. Mary Ellen Boyd. And she was real tight fisted as to how she wanted the place run. She brought in social workers who were totally unac-- ... apolitical and inexperienced with tradeswomen. She deliberately eased out people who were political, --you know, -- young and ready to do--you know, --get out there and ... and make some noise. And that's an example of how ... what can happen, too, in a women's organization when it's taken over by a larger organization with other political agendas. And so, I ... I never really related to NEW very well after ... after she ...

ME Boyd

NEW

(54)

E. Um-hum.

L. 'cause that was her doing.

J. Um-hum.

L. And she really eased out the more grassroots people who were in there, and put in really social worker types who, most of them, could give a shit about women in the trades, to tell you the truth. *

J. Yeah, really! Um. Um.

E. You hired Ellie.

L. Later on, when she realized that her strategy After I left and ... and Chris left, she was left with virtually nobody.

I. Um-hum.

L. who really gave a shit about tradeswomen. Well, Lola did.

I. Um-hum.

L. but she, in her own ... She was,--you know,--a social worker.

I. Yeah. Yeah.

L. That was her background, and she was kind of coming from ...

I. Yeah. The aggressive ...

L. ?? people,--really aggressive, innovative ideas

I. The aggressive aspect of going out on ... which Ellie, thank God, ... Ellie and and ... and she got very grassroots there.

J. Who's Ellie?

I. Ellie Spicer. *

J. Ellie Spicer.)

SS

I. Yeah. 'Cause she ... she insisted on the shape ups. And the shape ups are really critical.--

J. To go to jobs, yeah.

I. you know,--as opposed to being... "Oh here. We got you this job,"--you know?

J. Uh-huh.

L. Right.

I. It was,--you know,--you'll see what the situation is before you even get on the job, you're very familiar with the construction,--right,--and you ... you've gotten your job

L. Right.

I. yourself. And there's a big difference.

L. Exactly.

I. 'Cause you have to ...

L. Remember, when I had gone in

I. From then on in, you have to ??

L. I mean,--I left NEW a lot because I saw ... the whole original, grassroots,--you know,--organizing type of ... of atmosphere, where we organized women to do for themselves, as opposed to social worky stuff,--you know: "We'll get you a job,"--you know. And I remember, actually, before I left, I did a workshop for women. I used to do a lot of workshops to introduce women to what we do. And I said, "You know,--we're not here to get you a job. We're here to assist you and give you the skills and the knowledge that you need to get out there and get yourself a job." Well, this caused an uproar. >>

I. Really?

L. --a big uproar. I heard about it later. "What do you mean, you're telling women that we're not here to get them jobs?" I said, "Well," I said, "We're here to assist women, not to hand out jobs. We don't have jobs here to hand out." And that ...

(50)

Tape Two

J. March 6th, 1996, some of the founding mothers of United Tradeswomen, and me, a non-tradeswoman. So, you're waiting for the word.

L. Right. The early women,--the first group of women who came through,

E. Were aggressive and ...

L. were aggressive,--assertive,--really determined to get what they wanted. They knew what they wanted and they were determined to get it. And they were also more poli-- I think they had more political awareness, in my assessment ...

I. I don't know. With some ... with some ... With some it was political, and with some it was just the force of personality, >>

L. Personality ...

I. Right, because being ...--you know,--having to push your ... Whether you're political or not, you still have to push your way in,--you know.

L. Right. That's right.

I. Right.

L. And the first women, that ... that was not an issue. I mean,--we didn't come there for us to hand you a job.

E. Right.

L. I mean,--that was ... it was understood, Hey, I'm going to have to get out there and bust balls to get my .. get this job. Whereas, the next group of women coming in were more from,--I don't know,--just different backgrounds. They didn't ... They .. They wanted more hand outs kind of a ... a mentality, and didn't have the sense of struggle,--willingness to struggle,--I think, for ...

J. And ... and about when did you see that happening? What ...

L. Oh, probably ... maybe the end of the second year, or

57

something like that. It seemed the whole sort of second group that came in, they ... they didn't have a sense of how difficult it was going to be.

I. You're saying, the first group is like from '79 to '81, and the second group is from '81 to ...

L. Yeah.

E. Probably ...

L. Yeah. Um-hum. Yeah. The second ...

E. You see,--what happened was in the ...

L. Did you get a sense of that, to?

E. Yeah. In the beginning, when, across the board, the trade Unions in New York had to take women in,--which was in '79,--'78?))

J. '78.

I L. '78 was the federal Executive Order 11426.

E. Right,--they did so, but barely. You know,--they took four women here, two women here ...))

I. They were hedging.

J. Reluctantly, yeah.

E. So, by the time we were in our second or third year,, after that, I guess, there was more pressure on them to take more women in. And they also realized that a lot of women were going to drop out, and they still needed to show that they had women on the job. So, I remember at one point, when I was already second or third year, they took a group of women into Local 3, Electricians. There was fifteen women that came in one class of five hundred, which was like, wow! Look at all these women. And suddenly, the women that were in the three years previously, were outnumbered IBEW *

J. Um-hum.

E. by this group of fifteen women that just came in. So, for instance, if all our meetings were democratic and by consensus,

those of us who had more experience,--who'd been on the job now for three years,--you know,--didn't really have that much influence, if everything was like, one woman, one vote,--you know--type of thing. And I remember, we did get into some conflict, at that time. But anyway, just to say, it was about at that time that the Unions were taking in, if you want to say, more women. They were never,--and they still have never complied >>

J. Yeah.

E. with any type of time table. But ... And also, you have to remember, too, construction started to pick up rapidly. >>
big boom

J. Um-hum.

E. ?? in the '80s.

I. Um-hum.

E. So '82 already, you're beginning to see the beginnings of a boom in construction. >>

J. Um-hum. Fed'l \$

E. And that was another reason was that the more federal funding they got for big construction jobs:--the Convention Center was a huge job; IBM, a huge job; AT&T, big job; >>
CC

I. Um-hum.

E. Battery Park, huge,--you had big construction going on.

~~I. You could get laid off of one job, and go across the street and get another job.~~

E. Yeah. Right. They had to take in more women,

L. What does it say?

E. because it was supposed to be in relationship to--you know--some kind of percentage. And that was also when they started taking in more women, at one time. But they also,--you know--like in our Union,--you know--were coming up with all these reasons for women to be kicked out, and dropped out, and that kind of thing.

56

L. Um-hum. It says here on our flier, from '82,--our demonstration,--there was ... seventy-two office buildings alone were slated to be built in the next three to four years. ||

E. Um-hum.

L. So it was a really boom time. The other thing is, in looking at the group as a whole, we were heavily focused on construction.

E. Um-hum.

L. That's where the real ... That's where the federal regs had some bite. >>

J. Yeah.

L. And that's where we, as NEW, as WAP, we made a big push for women in construction. So that was sort of a decision that was made, and also, determined a lot by the federal regs, 'cause that's where we had some teeth, and we could go in and say, Hey, ...--you know,--we had some clout there.

E. And that was the majority of our membership. We had truck drivers and ... >>

L. The majority of the membership was construction. But there was always another section of women that I worked with on my job: telephone company workers, electronic technicians, public utility workers, >>

E. Con Edison ...

L. Con Ed and truck drivers, maintenance workers ...

E. The people who worked for public housing buildings. >

I. Right. Right.

L. --people like that, who were always really the gr-- ... They were always more sym--I don't know what the word is. Their interests were ... were not ... were definitely overshadowed by the construction ... >>

I. Yeah. The construction workers were the most macho and

full of the themselves.

L. It was ... Right. (laughs)

E. Well, we had the most power because we had a very rapidly expanding job market

J. Um-hum.

E. that had to be taken advantage of.

I. Right. Right. Right. Right. And so,--I mean,--there was a kind of hierarchy ...

E. So that ... that also gave you power.

L. Definitely. Yeah Yeah. And they had the Unions, too.

E. We had ... Well, I was about to say, we had unions.

L. The other jobs were largely non-union.

I. Yeah. Or the unions were weak.

J. Or ... Yeah. Or the unions weren't going to do anything for the women,--like the utility workers.

E. Although telephone workers,--communications ... Ilene

L. Ilene Winkler.

E. Ilene Winkler? I mean,--she was a very strong member for a long time.

I. Right.

E. And so was ...

L. And Brook was not. Brook ... Brook ...

J. Steel. (laughs)

L. Steel was in the ship years. Okay, there's another area. But they were few and far between. They were much less than the women in construction.

E. We never really kept women machinists. There was one or two that came by. But for some reason, ...

I. Right. Wasn't Joanne a machinist?

E. She took six months ?? No. There was another woman who was a machinist for Con Ed and ...

L. There were some. I'd have to look through the names. I would remember then.

I. Yeah. You would ... You ... You would ... If you look through a membership list,--which you probably have on a computer disk, don't you?

L. No.

I. You sure?

L. No, never.

J. We didn't have computers back then.

I. Well, what about our stickers?

L. No. We didn't have computers. Did we ?

I. Our stickers? Yeah. When we'd do a mailing ...

E. When we'd do a mailing ...

L. That was at NEW. I never had that ... a computer, at that point.

I. There was a floppy disk that you used to take to ... to a place ...

L. Really, I don't ... I never had that. I think Cynthia might have had that. I never had a computer until much later. Anyway, yeah. So that was another thing about United Tradeswomen was it there was a big tilt towards women in construction.

J. Um-hum.

L. And ... and they defined,--tended to define

202

I. Right. Right. That's true.

L. the agenda for the group and the ...

I. We were the poster girls.

L. which may not be true in other places,--you know. Where there wasn't such a bit construction push, I think you would have seen a different mix, say, in Boston or ...

I. Right.

E. Well, like now, in this time, where construction is at a very low point in New York,

I. Right.

E. as we start to re-organize again, women, you might find a difference in the ratio.

I. Right. Right.

E. You're going to find a lot more women from Con Ed and the telephone company, more stable, established work.

J. Um-hum.

L. Right. So that ... I'm just trying to think of overall themes about United Tradeswomen ??

I. Well, there was something else that I think was ... I mean,--I don't know if you want to approach ... I mean,--this is a very loose interview,

J. Yeah.

I. and I don't know if you want to approach the,--you know,--in terms of, like, what ... what was good and what was ...,--you know,--in terms of critical ...

J. Yes, definitely obstacles and ... and things you--you know--??

I. Something that I was always really aware of is, there was a ... we were like, on the edge between dissidents within our

*split between those who
survived*

Unions and wanting to be ac--you know,--and ... and just the survival within the Union. And there was al-- ... And I think that we ... we were on a ... a thin edge, in terms of ... I think most of our membership wanted just to survive in the Unions. And a small minority, who was probably more active, wanted to shake the Unions

L. Transform them. Yeah.

I. and transform them. But because-- ... as a ... as an organization, I think we tended to ... because, like ^{what} we said, with mem-- ... with membership of like three hundred people,

J. Um-hum.

I. and maybe twenty-five people wanted to,--you know,--wanted to be--you know,--you know--to shake the Unions,

J. Uh-huh.

I. and to ... and,--you know,--two hundred and fifty want ...--you know,--didn't necessarily,--didn't even think about wanting to do that because it was such an unusual ...--you know,--just to be able to get the work and to survive, and to have a good time, and to keep a job, and to,--you know--all of that. So we nev-- ... So we were,--you know,--we were kind of like, just on the edge there.

J. Um-hum.

I. And when we were approached by some of the dissident organizations,--including Carpenters For A Stronger Union,--who wanted to work with us,

J. Um-hum.

I. we ... we had a edgy kind of situation, 'cause,--you know,--we didn't have,--you know,--the sort of democratic kind of feeling we ... that this is not something that most of the people who were in the organization really feel comfortable with. But it was kind of an instinct. Yes, if you're going to stay in the trades and survive, you need to reform from within. So,--I mean,--that was kind of a running,--you know--

J. Um-hum.

ad

I. tension or ... within the organization. You know,--not ... a kind of a ... an edge that we were just riding.

J. Um-hum.

E. Um-hum.

J. What about working with (Harlem) Fight Back? You did some coalition work with them.

L. Right. In fact, I notice here, we have a meeting ... I don't know what year this is (laughter)

E. We weren't ... We weren't very good archivists.

J. I tried...

L. But this is a workshop on the ... This is a workshop on the New York City construction industry with Moses Harris

E. Yeah, I remember.

L. And Jose Rivera.

I. that was a very good workshop.

L. That was excellent. And those were two people ...

E. That was up in Harlem. Right?

I. Yeah.

..... L. ... who'd been ... They'd been involved for a long time ... with,--well, Jose Rivera, with

J. Jim ^aHoughton.

L. No. Jose Rivera had his own group: United Tremont Trades, up in the Bronx, >>

I. Right.

J. Oh yeah. Yeah.

L. which was a Latino construction group, mostly. And Moses

65

Harris was in Brooklyn with...

I. With Black Economic Survival.

L. That's right.

I. Yeah.

J. It doesn't list their organizations?

I

L. No. We didn't list them.

I. (laughs) We're terrible archivists.

J. Well, here. Write it on there because ... Yeah.

I. I wonder if ...

L. Jose Rivera's now a Councilman, by the way. >>

I. Is-he-really? And what about Tremont Trades?

L. I just ran into him. He came me his card. I said, "Wow, Jose.!" He remembered me.

I. Huh.

J. Yeah.

L. They were in the South Bronx, --in the worst section of the South Bronx.

J. Yeah. ??

L. They were really willing to help us, in sharing .. They were really great to us.

I. They were very nice to us, yeah.

J. J. They participated in those hearings that we did when I was at AUD (NYC Commission on Human Rights, 1990-1992).

L. Yeah.

I. So I don't remember ... What does it say in there about

265

the workshop. What ... What did we do? exactly. I remember being in a big circle and everybody kind of talking about strategies and stuff.

L. Just ... the history of their struggle and how it relates to ours today. >>

I. Right. Right, right.

L. That's ... That's all ??

J. So ...

I. Gee, I wish we had recorded that one.

L. Yeah. So we were trying, also, to learn from the black and Latino men's groups. >>

J. The experiences of other excluded ...

I. And they ... Actually, in our demonstrations,

L. They were very supportive.)

I. they were very good.

L. They came out. Their group came out.

J. I interviewed Jim Houghton, and I got a lot of papers from him, just for our archives. And he really always was including United Tradeswomen when we were talking about women

I. Oh, really.

J. and minorities, and in his literature. So ...

I. A lot of women go through Fight Back. > &

L. Yeah. Martha Clanton came through Fight Back, X

I. Yeah.

L. and she was a very active with them for ??

I. And I think it's still ... I always run into women who say, "Oh, you're a construction worker. I come in with Fight Back. I work with Fight Back."

L. You know,--one of the women I placed at the Port Authority?? She came ... I was teaching a class at the Port Authority recently, "Intro To Engineering,"))? Lois re.

I. Oh yeah?

L. and her name was on the list. She didn't get in the class, unfortunately.

I. Ah.

L. I would have loved to have seen her.

I. Ah!

L. Now when I saw her name on the list, I said ...

I. Yeah, there were. I wonder ... if the Bureau Of Labor Statistics would have records on how many women were entering

E. Each year.

I. Yeah, each year. But there was ... I mean,--I just imagine that there was a ...a--you know,--a peak around '81, '82,-- --you know,-- ✕

J. Uh-huh.

I. a real crest. And that was my ... --you know, --when we were ... we were hot too.

J. So, you're looking at the Rosie The Riveter flier and

I. Oh, we had a great discussion at Lois's house,--remember afterwards,--when Miriam

J. Frank

I. Frank was

L. Oh, that's when she came up. Right.

I. And ... and, Oh God, I can't remember exactly what but ...

L. This was a great evening. It was a really nice turn out.

J. I've heard about it from so many different women. Talk about it.

L. And she's a beautiful ...

J. You showed the film.

I. ?? People ... People were really dealing with the racism issue there, in terms of that, yes, it's nice to say that we're all--you know--in this together, but the fact is that black women are really on the bottom within ...--you know;--that we get different ... really .. really different types of jobs,--you know. I mean,--our ... the pattern was that, in the Carpenters Union, the black women generally went to heavy construction, and the white women generally went to inside construction. *racism* *** *)*

J. Uh-huh.

I. And so, there was ... The movie, because it was so confirming of the women and so upbeat, I think it ... it set off a lot of the black women that were there saying,--you know,--"We don't even feel included in this," I think, even though there were black women in the movie. But do you remember ...

L. I don't remember the discussion.

J. I know there was a lot of ...

I. I. Miriam was like in shock afterwards

J. Consternation, yeah.

I. 'cause she ... she was expecting a much more positive *** response to the movie. But I think people,--you know--almost because it was almost seamless in terms of the unity between black and white women in the ship ~~years~~ ... *YAr 20*

E. Well, the issue also was

(69)

I. in ... in the movie. Yeah?

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E. started to really break heavy in all the organizations in construction. I mean,--that was the same period of time where Women Electricians was devastated by that; the two issues, racism and homophobia.

J. And ... and people felt that there wasn't enough attention being paid to the racist issues? Was ...

E. There was a lot of resentment and anger and frustration, and ...--you know,--again, how do you ... how do you change it? You have to go up against forces that are--you know--part of what's the established system. *

J. Um-hum.

E. And it was very scary so ... And it was not really enough for women who were suffering from that to just acknowledge it,--you know. But it was also a hard issue to defend.

J. So, were there ever any attempts, within the organization, to say here's a plan to deal with it? I mean,--how did ... how did you start trying to grapple with it?

I. I'm not sure that we actually did directly.

E. That was a weakness, too. >>

I. Yeah. I think so.

E. That was a weakness.

J. Hard issue.

I. Yeah.

L. Yeah. I remember ... I remember that the one meeting where Sophia was, and somebody said something ... OH no,--Sophia said something,--I just have a vague recollection of it,--

I. Yeah.

L. which someone construed,--Oh, Brook construed as being

I. racist.

L. Yeah, a lack of sensitivity to race or something.

J. Uh-huh.

I. To black ...

L. And it created this big thing. This .. this ... But I can't remember what it was, though.

E. Cynthia felt, a lot of times, different things, I think.

L. Yeah.

I. And there was also ... I think part ... It was diffuse in that there was just a lot of ... anger. And ... and because--you know--that hiatus when we ... when it almost didn't matter

J. Um-hum.

I. what you were, and we were on a real ^{Roll,} ~~role~~, and anybody who came in who had energy was included, and it was not ... that was When ... In that period kind of over that hiatus, and we got kind of like, realizing that we needed more organization, and the ... the notion of like, how do you run a democratic organization >>
that's this big,--

J. Uh-huh.

I. not huge but--I mean--unwieldy,

J. Yeah.

I. and ... and you have to have some ground rules. And then,--you know,--all the issues, in terms of leadership, and who's going to be leadership, and how to have an election. And how to have an election where you've actually identif--you know,--there's like, a lot of people running and not just like,--you know--three people running;--and are you doing all the right things, and ... It was a ... It was very difficult to ... to figure out, like, what the right way to do it is, where people would feel that this is truly a democratic organization,

J. Um-hum.

I. but yet, still continue to function,--you know,--and be active, and not ... not get ... And I think it ... it got harder to ... to deal with internal stuff as ... and it was ... Before, we were dealing just with external stuff, and the internal stuff just kind of came together.))

J. Um-hum.

I. And I think we ... we grappled with that for years before the organization folded, trying to find a combination. And when you get that ... You know,--when you get to--you know--meeting with, like, forty or fifty people, it's really ...--you know,--it's really hard. And we didn't really have a model that we used that was very clear.))

E. See,--part of the problem is, is because we were so independent, we were also isolated. *

I. (laughs)

J. Um-hum.

I. Yeah, in a way.

E. And so, we were sort of like reinventing our own wheel, constantly,--you know,--))

I. Yeah. Yeah.

E. and we didn't really have enough connection and history to previous organizing solidly based and worker-based organizations,--you know,--rank and file,--you know.))

J. Yeah.

Rt F groups

E. Whereas, like, let's say, in the Transit Union, there's various rank and files that are very established. Now, Teamsters for A Democratic Union, at that point in the late '70s, was really at a critical point, nationally,))

J. Um-hum.

E. for its members, and they had not really come out,--you

know. They were a very, very tight underground, tight led ... But we could have really learned

J> Um-hum.

E. something from--you know--people who really did an incredible job organizing in probably the most corrupt Union in the AFL/CIO.

J. Um-hum.

E. And there certainly were other more established Unions that did have clearly established rank and files. But construction has never had that.

J. Um-hum.

E. And we were so dominated by construction

I. Um-hum.

E. that we didn't have a relationship to people that were guiding us or teaching us or ...

J. Um-hum.

E. And we didn't seek it out and ask for it a lot of the ...

J. Well, it seems to me, just from having--you know--going through the papers, that you did do a lot of work of trying to reach out to other organizations,--other advocacy organizations,--to see what they were doing. and you did collect their materials. And I don't know what kind of discussions you had, in terms of learning from them

E. But see, they were also outside, most of the other organizations that we ...

L. Right. But see, this is a tension here between ... What happened, I think, partly, was we didn't ... We kind of lost ... We weren't sure which direction to take.))

J. Yeah.

L. Are we a women's organization? They were again, dominated

by women in construction, some of whom wanted to do rank and file work

J. Um-hum.

L. and ... and democratic union,--you know--unionizing the ...

J. Reforming the ..

L. democratizing the Unions, so there was that whole push. And there were different needs and different ...

I. Or a national political agenda.

J. Right.

L. Yeah. And were we for women and tradeswomen, and how do we move tradeswomen forward? We were kind of stagnating as a movement,--as a national movement,--not just as United Tradeswomen,

I. Right.

L. but the whole ... nationally,

J. Um-hum.

L. Where do we push this thing? NEW was wasted. I mean,--NEW, at some point, had stopped doing anything.

J. And New York City ...

L. What we became is a training organization.

E. And then, also, don't forget,--I mean,--I just emphasized certain things from my own experience.

J. Right.

E. I happened to be in a job where I was working what we called 7-12s;--that's seven days a week, twelve hours a day. This was after I got out of my apprenticeship,--you know.

J. Um-hum.

209

E. And I was exhausted. I couldn't wash my socks,--you know. I was wearing the same pair of socks for three weeks,--you know.

I. We didn't want her in the organization then.

E. Okay. I'm washing my panties right now,--you know. (laughter) So you know ... I mean,--we have to keep all these things in mind. And then,--you know,-- like in an exhausted state like that,

J. You'd go to a meeting ...

E. I'd drag myself to a United Tradeswomen meeting, and I would just be sitting there, and we're trying to figure out what to do. And we ... we were ...

I. There was a lot of people working overtime, then.

E. We were working a lot of overtime.

I. Yeah. Yeah.

E. The original women, who had now become the first journeymen, were now

I. Right.

E. in a position where we were working ... making big money, but also working a lot of overtime. So the fact that we were out of school really didn't ...

J. Didn't free you up.

E. Yeah,--you know. And the other thing also which I wanted to say for myself is ... is that, after five and a half years of an apprenticeship, when I got my A card, it was like, such an incredible achievement to me. And the first day of the first job that I went on to, where I was now making equal pay, was a nightmare. And my partner refused to work with me. And,--you know--it became ... It was like, are we going back to square one,--you know?

I. Um-hum. Right.

E. Are we starting over again? You're saying you just

tolerated me 'cause I was making,--you know--three forty an hour? And now that I'm making--you know--what you're making, it's like ... And,--you know--it .. an incredible thing started happening all over again. And I remember for myself, my first A job was the Convention Center.

J. Um-hum.

E. I was working 7-12, and on a job that also had a lot of other stuff,--weird stuff--going on.

I. Um-hum. Yeah.

E. The FBI was all over the job. And I was having a partner that, every day, was not just one fight but many fights. I mean,--he would do things like ... I'd leave to go get material, and he'd like, urinate right where I was working, and practically on my tools. Or I'd lay my ruler down, when I was measuring pipe,--turn around, cut it, turn back around, my ruler was gone,--you know. I mean,--it really built up. So,--you know--it's like, now we were at a point also, in United Tradeswomen, where women were ... were just coming in, and there was a big discrepancy for me ...

I. Um. Um.

E. E. And that was an issue that was an issue where we never really got to resolve.

I. Right. Right.

E. Because my needs now, as a seasoned,--if you want to say, with a big 5 ½ years experience, and now journey level card, was really different. And it was really trying for me to go to meetings to hear women with their complaints and their fears and their needs of there first days,--you know. I was compassionate, but I was exhausted.

I. Yeah.

E. And ... and so, we couldn't figure out how to be split on so many different ways and yet, remain united.

I. Right. Right, right. This is really true.

E. So we had racism pushing us apart. We began to have

homophobia pushing us apart, as more women came in,

J. Um-hum.

E. and we got past the excitement of the ... so many years.
I ... I remember that clearly, especially within the Women Electricians.

L. Probably more there, 'cause I don't ...

I. 'cause I don't remember any ...

E. You don't remember it in UT? Okay.

I. Not specifically.

E. But then, we had the difference between new and old women coming in.

I. Yeah.

E. And then, we had ...

I. And the construction boom ??

E. we had really overworked, exhausted people.

I. Right. And then, because we hadn't resolved our issue around having a staff person

J. Full-time coordinator ...

I. ~~we still thought that was kind of not a good thing,~~ ^{like} somehow,--that was at a point where we needed to have changed.

E. Yeah.

E. and also, you know what?

L. That was a very pivotal point.

E. I do want to say another thing, is that I think that each woman began to feel that she had to develop her own strategy,--you know,--like, this is me. I'll just speak,--you know--again for myself. I really did begin to feel like, I've got to figure out

2009

some way to survive. I'm coming home with tears every day. I hate the world. I'm becoming really cynical. It seems like I can only relate to other women construction workers and talk shop. And,-- you know,--I'm starting to have a foul,--you know language.

I. I was hitting people.

E. you know. I mean,--yeah, really. And ..

L. Wow!

E. I was unhappy with myself.

J. Um-hum.

E. I was not conscious of the depth of the harassment on the job;--of how it was really going to the bone, to the heart,--you know? And I basically, underlyingly, was still terrified and scared. And that's ... that's key ...

J. And you had to leave the house every day and go ...

E. That's key ... The reason, I think, that that's key is because it's always perplexed me how, in the face of such blatant sexual harassment on such a daily basis, we never went to court. We never ... We followed legal channels to get women in, to fight for bathroom and changing facilities,--for all these things,--

I. Yeah.

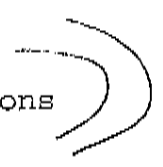
E. but we never did a class action sexual harassment suit. And ... and why? And we met with a couple of women lawyers:--we as Women Electricians did,--and we talked about it a little,--we were scared. We were scared of being blacklisted. We ... We kind ..

I. Scared of losing the suit.


E. Well, we were scared of the fact that we had really put ourselves out there. I think that most of who, now, had been in the trades for four or five years,--who had been active in UT, and really hung our necks out,--and we were really beginning to also suffer from the effects of that. You know,--I'd go to a job and they'd have already made calls about me before I got there. So it was really difficult to try to ... to try to establish the fact that I'm really not this person that you've been told that I am,--

you know. I just think that--you know,--when you have a membership now of three, four, or five hundred women, and they're all individually suffering in these different ways, it's very difficult.

I. I remember meeting ...

E. We can't blame ourselves for everything. Our conditions really had such a big impact. 

J. Uh-huh.

I. I remember a meeting where Connie was ... We were talking to some of the new women coming in. You know,--we were ... And we were,--you know,--we were talking vividly about our experiences in construction. And some of the women, afterwards, were totally frightened. 

E. Yeah.

I. And I think that ... that that kind of exemplifies what you were talking about. Because, as journey level women, and as ...--you know,--we ... we were very dramatic, and things were very--you know ... But,--I mean,--we were scaring ... we were scaring these women. (some unintelligible cross comments)

E. We had become callous. We had also become kind of callous.

I. Right. Right. We weren't . I don't think we were ...

E. in our self protection.

I. Right.

E. We were kind of a little bit vulnerable.

I. And also ... Yeah. . And there was one thing that I always wanted to do, which was ... Yeah,--you know. Yeah, I think so. I always wanted to ... One of the events that I always wish I had put on,--I mean,--I have deep regrets about this,-

E. ?? on women's vocabulary?

I. No,--was the ... was the wrestling matches between

tradeswomen and ... and housewives,

E. Oh God!

I. because ...

J. You have to check out New York Magazine this week;--the New Yorker ... New Yorker.

I. (laughs)

E. I remember her bringing this up.

I. And I tried to get Nicky Bass.

E. I remember!

J. It's in the Sunday Times magazine.

I. And the reason I'm bringing this up now ...

E. Yes, yes.

I. is because the ... that machismo of ... of women who are in the trades was starting to get to me.

E. Yeah. This is important.

J. Okay. I'm sorry.

I. Yeah. This is important because I had ... Well, I had started wrestling ...

E. (laughs) In the meetings?

I. No. I had star--because I was really realizing that I--you know--had all this stuff that I wanted to ... And I needed to test my strength against women, and not always be in comparison to--you know--to men, and because I felt really tough when I was with other women,--much tougher than a lot ... You know,--I felt like, physically brutish when I was with regular women. But then, when I was on the job, you're treated like you're incompetent to carry--

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

I. or you're,--you know,--or you're always being tested. So I wan-- ... And this thing that Evan was talking about,--about machis--you know,--like the women who had been in for five ... all of five years had such tremendous machismo, it was a real turn off to other people. I ... >>

Side Two

I. ... women who ... who were

L. Housewives?

I. Housewives. And (laughs)

E. And I was wondering where was this idea coming from that we should .. You didn't ?? a wrestling match. I remember that.

I. Well, what I found ... What I found was ... These were all housewives who were ... who were being coached by their husbands, and they were wrestling in ... In some ways, it was a living room type of--you know--suburban kind of thing and ...

E. Right.

I. but it was the only thing I could find where I could wrestle. And ...

L. What was it like? I mean,--how did you do against these other women?

I. I did great! And there was one woman who was, like, really trained, who really wanted me to ... But,--I mean,--she was better than me. She was much highly trained and everything. But I realized, Hey, there are ... You know,--I needed this. I needed to be completely,--you know--wrestled to the mat by a woman who was--you know,--who .. who spent a lot of the day doing grocery shopping, because I was getting much too macho. And I thought this would be a really great event,--that we could make a ton of money,--and also humble ourselves and say ... 'cause we were starting to get freakish, like we were so different ... I'd pat somebody on the back and I'd be ... like, they'd be flying across the room,--you know? And I think that was a ... And I think, at that point, like you said, the ... the heavy trades ... the heavy construction orientation of the group,--and then people would come in, machinists, Con Ed workers, and they wouldn't feel quite right. I >>>

think,--you know ... And then, we were super macho, and I thought maybe this would be a way of putting us in our place and we would have perspective that was really, truly feminist,--you know,--

J. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

I. if we would get beat up by a couple of housewives.
(laughs) My own weird way of thinking!

E. that whole time that you were pushing that idea, I thought you were talking about mud wrestling. And I was opposed to

I. Connie wanted mud wrestling. But I asked one of the ... One of the most macho, toughest women in the group, Mickey,

E. topless mud wrestling?

I. No. I ... I thought that she should wrestle this housewife who was, like, incredibly strong. And it would be a political, artistic statement ... that would bring us back to sort of that ... that aspect which was, for me, the most ... best thing about UT, which was the originality--you know--of like, being able to shape your ... to break down walls through ... through creativity in a ... in a tough field,--you know,--

J. Yeah. Yeah.

I. which is very, very ...--you know ... Get ... You know,--when you're ... When you're dealing with all this stuff,--I mean,--you have to use a lot ... I mean,--for me, I had to use a lot of imagination to make myself happy,--you know? So anyway ... But that ... And I think that the point was just that the machismo and ... and the suffering,--you know,--~~(to)~~ go along with each other ...

E. Well, it's that ... It's that we began to really be ... the impact of our environment, and also, the context in which we were not only just individually but as an organization,--you know,--organizing has to be ... be understood,--you know?

I. Yeah.

E. 'Cause sometimes,--you know,--I do have a deep sense of regret,--you know,--about some things;--that ... that we weren't able to continue, and--you know--whatever.

U. Um-hum.

E. But I also always have to remember the state,

J. Yeah.

E. physically and emotionally, that I was in at the time;-- that that's why, I personally, couldn't contribute, and assume,-- have to assume that other women were probably in the same ...--you know. Besides, ...

I. I. I remember brow beating,--like trying to .. like, people ...--you know,--like brow beating ... I remember brow beating you on the street once about that.

E. Yeah, I remember. You and I got into a fight.

I. We really had a big fight. I remember Kathy throwing the New York Times, Sunday whole section at me,--all this violence is coming out,--because of haranguing people about feeling like they were betraying ...--you know,--they were giving up on the organization. And,--you know,--we were losing people, at a certain point, *

E. Yeah.

I. and all of that. But that,--you know,--there was like ...

L. Right. See now here's where ... I mean,--I've been thinking about this a while. See,--this is not just an isolated thing that happened with United Tradeswomen. | *

J. Uh-huh.

L. I ... I read an incredible book, I think it's called Between Women,--which describes this exact kind of thing happening. And I lent the book to a friend of mine, and I wanted to read it, actually, before I came here because I wanted to remember some of the things that she brought up,

I. Um.

L. 'cause I read it a few years ago,--but all across the country, about the same time, this was happening to women's groups,--all over the country.

93

E. Hmm.

L. And they were trying,--these two women who wrote the book,--were trying ... They had both experienced themselves and were trying to explain ...

J. Uh-huh. Oh, how interesting!

L. I'll have to get this book back for you.

I. Yeah. I'd love to read it. Yeah.

L. And some of it, what they said, was just patterns we develop as women: mistrust of each other,--a lack of understanding of leadership,

I. Yeah.

L. and the role of leadership;--us being so frightened of leadership,--of real leadership,--and how to support leadership

I. Right.

L. to take charge and make decisions.

I. Right.

L. And hey, if ... if it's the wrong decision and it doesn't work out, then have a mechanism for changing it: either changing the leader or changing the decision. But there was so much fear and mistrust

I. Yeah.

L. about anyone getting too much power.

I. Right. Right. That became more of a focus ...

L. And it was really a ... a very ... And it paral-- ... This was happening because of our strong democratic tendencies as women,--you know,--and, I think, fear of power,

I. Um-hum.

L. because we never had power as women. And, at least, this

is how ... I really related to this when I read this that ... that ...

I. Right. Right.

L. It made me feel better that we weren't unique.

J. Well, the whole question of oppression, too.

L. We were still women.

I. Right.

L. As macho as you guys thought you were, we were still demonstrating all the patterns of women,--

I. Right.

E. Um-hum. Um-hum.

L. the weaknesses of women. Men don't have that problem;--I mean,--not usually.

I. Well, I think they have a lot of problems with ...

L. They have different problems. But they don't have,--I don't think,--in general, these kind of leadership fears.

J. They have other weaknesses;--their leadership ^wproblems. _{made}
Yeah.

I. Yeah.

L. That's right.

J. But the whole thing of the woman's movement,--I mean,--that was the whole ... that ... that we were all going to be leaders, and we weren't going to have leaders, and the whole ...

I. Right. Right.

J. I mean,--we've been oppressed, and we're not going to let ... You know,--so

I. Right.

35

J. we're going to shy away from that. And that seemed...
And having ...

L. And that's, really, in a case like this, where people,--
grassroots people,--were really struggling;--they could barely keep
their lives together.

J. Right.

L. Whereas, if you had some people who ...--you know,--that
would change over time, who could keep the thing going in bad
times.

J. We're learning from all these organizations that went
before, like Saul Alinsky and Back Of The Yards in Chicago, and all
of these models for organizing. It's not something that we ever
heard about or talked about.

I. Yeah. We ... We were truly ...

L. ?? really.

I. I think ... Yeah. And that thing about, like, being
originals,--you know,--that was our strength, and like, what you
said,--?? referring to ?? right into what you (Evan) said, which
is, we were inventing an ... an organization, when other people had
... had come to terms with these things and found models that
worked, and we could have really used.

J. Um-hum.

I. But because we were so original, we ... it was very hard.

E. It was hard, also, ... The other thing was the identity
of the organization: who were we?

L. That was the other piece. So we would always function

E. And,--you know,--like I remember

J. Well, you had to ?? and how ...

E. I had a subscription, at the time,

J. Yeah?

E. to--what was that trades ...

I. Tradeswomen think?

E. No. But But it was a trades newsletter that came out of Michigan or Chicago.

L. Oh, Labor Notes.

E. Labor Notes, right. And they would have conferences and things like that. But it never really would occur to us as United Tradeswomen,--you know,--as the organization,--

J. Um-hum.

E. to participate in something broader.

L. Oh, I went. I went to ??

E. But you went as a United Tradeswomen representative?

L. No. I mean,--well ... No, not specifically. But--I mean?? stuff like that.

E. You know what I'm ... I'm just saying that I don't feel that we ever really crossed the line,--you know--

I. Yeah.

E. to a bigger ?? to unite with women ...

J. To see what you could learn from other peoples' experiences??

E. But I think ... I think a big reason for that is because we didn't ... We had goals, but that's not the same as a political agenda,--you know. The goals were very general. But the political agenda is ...

E. But the problem is that then, when we realized that and we wanted to try to ... to write a Statement Of Purpose and a letter * to come up with--you know--organization bylaws ...

I. We wrote it.

~~I~~ L. We did. We struggled and we did it.

E. we fought,--we struggled and became bitter. And that, actually, was when

~~I~~ L. It was really rough.

E. people like myself started to say, I had enough,--you know.

I. Yeah. Yeah. That was very rough.

E. I'm not ... I'm not a--

J. You weren't getting enough to ..

E. I'm ... As exhausted as I am, I'm not going to be sublimating .. and,--you know,--feeling and get sort of nuts over ... A lot of what we didn't realize ... I mean,--I still believe sort of in the group thing and,--you know,--whatever. I mean ??

I. It ... So much of it was trivial, really.

E. It became ...

E. And it really did become ... because we really didn't understand the issue of power.

L. Yeah. That's ... That's really ...

E. Power, also, in a volunteer organization. I mean,--now we had been around for how many years, and we were still a volunteer organization.

J. Um-hum.

L. Right. On the other ...

I. So, I guess, in retrospect, it would have been good to find an organization that ... say, We want to model ourselves after

E. Or we should have experimented.

98

L. ... something about, like, the Community Service Society who does ... or they do counseling ...

J. Yeah.

L. consulting work ?? and say, how ... do you help us put this thing .

I. Yeah, objectify some of that nuts and bolts stuff.

L. We were on the ?? . If we had actually ... Well, we had written a proposal,--remember,--for funding.

I. Yeah. Yeah.

L. We actually wrote the proposal.

E. Right. Right.

L. We got our bylaws together, and we were having an election. I mean,--we were actually getting ...

I. Is it in there,--the election?

I don't know.

L. We were getting to the point where we were starting to do the right things,

E. See,--if we could have dealt with ...

L. and then, we were totally burnt out.

E. If we could have made it through that moment ...

L. If we could have made it through that thing. But see,--when I ... I mean,--I really do think that a lot was ... Too many of the strategic people were burning out at the same time. I was totally burnt to a crisp.))

I. And it's true. You had ... And there were a lot of issues that ...

L. And there was ... And I was really being attacked

29

I. Yeah.

L. in just, I thought, a completely unjustifiable way;--I mean,--totally trashed for--I mean--stuff that was ... And people didn't even want to know who I was. They just tra(shed)-- ... And people who had been,--you know--friends before, just kind of trashed me and said a lot of bad things that were absolutely not true. There ... The other thing that happened, I want to point out, is ... is a couple of people came into the organization who, I think, had a lot of personal .. personal personality problems

J. Um-hum.

L. that they hadn't worked out for themselves. Now I look back on it, it seems real easy to see,--I mean,--although some of us ... we ... I remember we did see it back then.

E. Yeah. We did see it.

I. (laughs) Right.

L. We were basically being such democratic women, we let them disrupt us. They ... We spent hours and hours ...

E. Um-hum. Days.

L. And they were basically the people who initiated the attacks

E. Um-hm.

L. and started instigating people, and talking to people on the side,--you know--"Get this ..." You know,--Irene and I were called bureaucrats.

I. (laughs) Bureaucrats!

L. We were bur--I mean,--you know,--because ... just because we had been the people who had been the most committed and done the most work over the years.

I. 'Cause we typed up those Coordinating Committee notes.

L. So what happened ... I think the first big mistake was that we allowed ... instead of saying, "Look. This place is not a

place for you to function. Obviously, you're not happy here. Go start your own organization. You're expelled from out organization."

I. Ooh, expelled.

L. That word was rather unpopular ...

I. We would never do that...

L. Now, if we had ... If I had known how to handle power and leadership, I would have said, "I'm sorry. This is obviously not your place,"--you know. "By all means, go find another organization. You're not permitted at our meetings any more."

E. Well, see,--because we didn't have any ...

L. And this is what I would have done.

E. But we didn't have any established procedure.

I. We didn't have any ...

L. We had no--because we never had anything like this ever happen before.

L. Yeah. But if nobody would have ...

E. So even if you had tried to do that ... We ... We were rather anarchistic, actually, when you think about it,

J. Yeah. Yeah.

L. We were; very much so.

E. because if she had tried to do that, somebody else would have jumped up and said, "Well, who are you to expel somebody?"--you know?

J. Yeah.

L. Yeah. That's true.

E. and whatever ... I mean,--that would have caused a scene. I mean,--I could just see it in my mind. And that, actually, was

really a key point, that ...

L. That was the beginning of the end. ~~*~~

E. by the time that we wanted to establish a procedure and bylaws and all of that, we were already at a real ...

J. ??

E. Yeah. Yeah.

L. It almost seemed like the FBI was involved.

J. Yeah.

L. I mean,--like, if you didn't know these people were really just weird ... And then, they started ... Remember? They actually accused Irene of--because of a flier she had done,--of being sexist.

E. Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

L. because it was a little sexy. I think she had a leg showing in the flier or something.

I. It was ... It was a carnival flier and it had lady tight rope walkers. (laughs) >>

L. And ... Yeah. You know Irene's kookie sense of ... of art. Right? So they said, "This is obviously sexist. Indicates a sexist leadership in United Tradeswomen. Now, this is like so ?? obviously" >>

J. And so far away from the idea of fun, too, which you had started out with. Right?

I. ?? Insane. Yeah. Right. Right.

L. So what we did, in our great equanimity, we decided to let two fliers go out. We actually ...

E. Oh, I remember that! I remember that!

L. let them do a flier and ...,--their little puritanical flier that I would ... which was perfectly fine but it was much

different from Irene's flamboyant.

I. Well, the idea was that you got to express yourself. That was part of the .. the benefits of being in the organization, I thought.

L. But instead of saying ... But see,--they didn't say, Hey, gee, we're,--you know--we have a different style.

J. ?? it would be better ...

L. It was like, "She's sexist. This is sexist. It's exploiting women. Yeah. I would say I would say ... It was ... It was ... It showed women exploi--being exploited.

J. One thing that ... that strikes me real clearly

I. Yeah.

J. is that, you all were fighting so many battles in places that were so hard to win. It was just so hard. And so, you're just hanging onto survival. And so, here's a place where you can really beat each other's brains out, and you really can fight, and you can really feel like--you know ... And the whole idea of stepping back and saying, well,--you know,--maybe this isn't ... this isn't the real fight,--you know. This is. But you really couldn't do that because this is ... this is the model

I. Yeah.

J. that happens throughout our society with blacks and with--you know You're given ... You have these organizations, and their history is beating each others' brains out instead of, like, There's--you know--the capitalists, and there's the ...

I. Right. Right.

E. Well,--you know,--I want to ... I want to say something to that point, which is that, for me, on the job, by this time, things were getting to the point where I was seen as a very serious agitator. I was accused of being a Communist,--you know. I was red bated. I was ...

J. Because of your Union activity? 'Cause you were just ... just demanding that the contract be fulfilled? Or ...

E. No, because I was ... because I was a worker that had some consciousness, that was standing up and saying, This is ... You can't do this,--you know. I got ... I stood up when there was a job with asbestos. and I had the White Lung Society come to the job and do a presentation, *

J. Um-hum. Right on!

E. and,--you know--talk about OSHA. Two days later ... Two days ... Two days later, I was off that job. But,--you know--just different things,--you know--were obviously happening. And I think that what happened was, if I look at myself ... One of our strengths, in the beginning, was that we were very focused on activity, and that brought us together. You know,--we did this incredible job action and had a great effect at IBM. That was one of our best, unified things, where there was like, really, really tremendous graffiti on the job. IBM

L. Yeah. Yeah.

E. And we came up with, like, a three or four part strategy, and each woman was going to do a different thing,--you know. Lois wrote these letters and she was ... as a representative of either WAP or NEW,--I don't remember which,--

L. Both of them.

E. and sent them out, and threatened that we were going to go to the public.

L. And demonstrate there.

E. And I went to the job before work, and I met with the women who were actually on the job, and I said, "Listen! I'm from United Tradeswomen. This ... You know,--we want to help you. We ... We don't want you to work in these conditions." And then, we had a meeting in a bar after work, with me and some other women from United Tra--,--you know. We really had a strategy.

J. Um-hum.

E. And you know what? I think it was, what, in like, five days, it was removed,))

L. And all of the graffiti was painted over.)

and

E. and all of the graffiti was painted over. So it was a huge success. I remember feeling like, wow! we could ??

L. We had power.

E. But what ended up happening was, it became scarier to do things like that, and because I think that the stakes became higher. And I ... my life was threatened on the job. You know,-- physical things started to actually happen. And,--you know,--I saw that you can be killed in construction, and I saw that happening,--you know? And it didn't really matter if you were big time or small time. The guy who's the General Foreman of the electricians at the Convention Center,--which was one of the biggest jobs at the time,--was shot seven times and left in the company van,--you know. Who did he cross, and what did he do? And ...

J. What was his name?

E. God! And I should remember his name.

J. Well, that's all right.

E. Anyway, and Local 3 put out a ransom,--you know. It's still ?? They never really found ... and they never will,--you know. *Continuing.*

J. Yeah.

E. But ... So all I'm saying is ... is that we also, at the time that things were happening ... Like, for instance, I had an incident where I was locked physically in ... in the women's changing shanty on a Friday night, and I couldn't get out. And the only way that I got out was two, two and a half hours later, screaming and yelling my ... to the top of my lungs for all that time, that a security guard whose job it was to make rounds, ★

Q/E. Oh, great.

E. came, heard me, had to go get a bolt cutter, cut the thing, or whatever.

J. Gosh.

E. And when I came to work on Monday, furious, nobody knew anything and--you know--how did this happen? and--you know ... So

(A5)

... And then, I was ... I was walked off ^{the job} by a shop steward, and really--you know--severely threatened. You know,--stuff was happening. And I think that, me personally, I began to see that, if I'm going to continue to organize and fight, I'm going to be more serious,--you know. Otherwise, it's just like putting your head out for decapitation,--you know.

J. Um.

E. And so I withdrew. I withdrew.

J. From UT?

E. Well, UT was going through their problems then,

J. Uh-huh.

E. so,--you know--I also withdrew ... But I withdrew within myself.

I. Yeah.

E. I actually didn't even share some of the worst things that were happening to me with other women. You know,--there's this other woman in my union who's an electrician,--Melinda (Hernandez),--^{who} ~~that~~ happens to have sort of a similar style to me, and the two of us were actually receiving similar treatment. I never knew it. She was getting calls in the middle of the night saying, "Look, if you don't drop"--you know--"the issue on the job, you get ..." and then, the person would hang up. So she never told me that. You know what I'm saying? So we started to withdraw and to get scared. And it was a time to take the next step. And we knew that the next step had to be more serious. We were not little girls any more, playing in the sand box,--you know. We started out,--you know--with the pails and the shovels in the sand box, and it was a much bigger--you know--

I. Um-hum.

E. thing going on. So I think that ... You know,--I hate to keep emphasizing it, but that's just my personal experience that,--you know--affected me,--you know. I didn't have the same energy for United Tradeswomen any more. And ... And, unfortunately, if I had been able to bring that to United Tradeswomen,--if I had been more confident,--less terrified,--then maybe that could have been

our next emphasis,--you know,--as a group, and we could have figured out a job action, like what we did at IBM or do something,--you know?))

J. Uh-huh.

E. But, for some reason ...

I. Um-hum.

E. And now I see that it wasn't just happening to me, 'cause now I've talked to Melinda and she revealed that it was happening to her. And ...

I. Janine (Blackwelder) ...

JB

L. Janine ...

E. Janine, it was happening to ... is that, when your life is individually, ^{really} seriously threatened, it changes you. You ... You wish that it didn't, but it does,--you know.

J. Um-hum.

E. It does. So,--you know--I look back now and I also feel like ... one of my regrets is that I didn't have the confidence to say, "Hey, you know, I was walked off the job and--you know,--threatened. And what can we do about that?,"--you know,--or what does that mean?--you know. Or ... }

I. Yeah, it's true. 'Cause as much confidence as we had as a group, around--you know--a lot of things. I mean,--at my apprenticeship dinner I was threatened, and I ... not for what I did but for something Connie did,--you know? I mean,--by ... by ... by a mobster who was a Business Agent. And I remember, at my apprenticeship dinner, sitting there and being, like,

(I)
★

E. In a cold ^w seat, half the time.

I. Yeah, like ... And so--I told Kathy and Pretzel (?) about it later, and they said, "Well, you know, you should have gone right to the Director of the Apprenticeship School and tell him you were just threatened." And I didn't have the confidence to do that, because when you realize,--you know--this is the big time, and you're not prepared for it.

E. Well,--you see,--the thing about it also, was that ... my true feeling was

J. Um-hum.

E. why would I go to the Apprenticeship Director. The judge, the jury and the executioner

L. How do you know where their ...

E. are all the same people. And so, I had to ... to not take it ...

I. ... And sit there in my best dress and have somebody threaten me at an official function.

E. Yeah. In order to continue to do something, I have to know that I have backing,--you know?

I. Um-hum.

E. And that is where we could have transformed United Tradeswomen. But because we weren't really clear

I. Yeah.

E. how political we were willing to get, and how ...

I. Right. Right. And all these new women coming in who just want to get their first job and survive it.

L. A lot of different needs.

I. Yeah.

E. Who we really were ... Yeah. And all these things ... is that I didn't feel that that was what United Tradeswomen was about. What I felt like was ...

I. Right. A whole ... another ...

E. I dreamed and wished that there was a militant rank and file organization in Local 3 that was already established that I could go to and be a part of.

I. Right. Right.

E. But I didn't really think, at that time, that this was something that could be addressed by United Tradeswomen.

I. I don't think we ... at that time, we were ... we couldn't.

L. ... the strength to do that.

I. We didn't have the knowledge.

E. True. But we could have started to plant the seeds and ...

I. We could have ... We could have ... Yeah. But then ...

E. ... you know,--whatever. And that might have sustained us. I don't know,--you know.

I. Well, it's true. I think that what you're saying ...

E. There was a lot of different things.

I. There's a lot of different things.

E. See,--like, for instance, I'd never heard that.

I. It's hard to imagine.

E. And then, Janine has a story,--you know,--whatever. And then Cynthia has a story. Then Melinda,--you know what I mean. And you know what? The stuff was very serious. you know.

I. Yeah.

E. And ... I ... And I felt like it's just mind boggling to me that we felt ... we were ... we felt, at this time, that if you had the ovaries to be a woman and could dare to work in a man's trade, that this is what you were going to have to eat. So either eat it, swallow it and stay alive and keep your mouth shut, leave, or get hurt,--you know.

J. Because ...

E. And,--you know,--we had a situation with Nicky which, to me, to this day, is still a mystery.

J. What's ... Tell me about the story with Nicky.

E. Well, she was attacked on the job.

J. Who's Nicky?

E. She's a woman electrician.

L. She was very active also in United Tradeswomen.

E. She's a woman electrician.

J. What's her last name?

I. Basque. (Bass ?.) See 6:53 -

E. And she was attacked on the job. Now, she tried to say it was an accident and whatever, but it was clearly not an accident, and it was very, very serious. I mean,--she could have died. Both her arms were sliced, and she was left on the twenty-first floor or something, bleeding, and had to make her own way down. Now, what all that was about? It could have been about,--you know--many, many things,--you know. It's only my speculation. But I'm just saying is you can see that the environment itself, even for men, is very rough. And it's like,--you know,--you can joke around and play around, and all of a sudden, somebody pulls the trigger and it's not funny anymore. And so, that's what was happening to us. You know,--we were palsy-walsy with the guys on the job, at coffee break and in the union meetings and things. And then, all of a sudden, something would, like, come out of left field at you on the job, and nobody'd be there;--very, very bad. >>>

J. And it wasn't the situation that you would encounter a lot of men who were willing to stand up?

E. Um-um.

J. Sometimes ...

I. Well, in the Carpenters Union, there were rank and file people

J. Yeah.

I. who were, like, putting their ..

L. ??

I. and who wanted the women to join them, but the women ... most of us were not willing to put ... You know,--we didn't trust them enough!

E. Like, in Local 3, they have what are called clubs, and the clubs are sanctioned by the Union. And we just felt like we don't trust them,--you know,--and we didn't participate in them. And some women did participate. And that's when each woman started--you know--carving out her own individual~~s~~ way that she was going to survive.

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

I. So,--you know,--I don't know. I mean,--what do you ... It's hard It's so interesting ... difficult to say--you know,--what we could have done. I mean,--I almost feel like we couldn't have done anything else.

J. What do you feel you did?

E. Yeah. Well, that's probably true.

I. Yeah.

E. That's probably true.

J. It ... But there is a ... There ... There was a void.

J. Uh-huh.

I. I don't know exactly what there is now,--you know. But there,--yeah,--there was a void after we stopped. >>

J. Well, the women that I've interviewed who participated in UT,--which is just about everybody,--has ...--you know,--it's like a warm, bright spot;--

I. Um-hum.

J. like, it's been important to the women who made it and it

stayed with them.

I. It's definitely a part of our history.))

J. That's definitely an accomplishment,--you know. So ...

L. L. It was a space. It was a space for women to come and be themselves, >

E. Right. Try to be themselves. Exactly.

L. And ...

E. That was my motto. That would have been like ...

L. Right,--be yourself. And also, here's some information that you might need It was sort of like a CR (~~consciousness-raising~~), but more than that, 'cause it was more political: sharing information and doing stuff. I mean,---we didn't ... We did some good stuff. We wanted to be an action... *

E. Yeah, action oriented.

L. In fact, we called ourselves an action something or other.

X I. Grassroots Action Alliance.

L. Yeah. And just ... So,--you know,--I think a lot of reasons,--a lot of different things, personal and political and endemic to the women's movement and a lot of other movements hurt us.))

I. And I just wanted ...

E. Also, you know what? The Red Scare in this country and Cummu--you know,--the anti-Communist movement and like that, has so hurt Unions and Union membership that--you know,--in a funny way it affected us, too,--you know,--and I think it still affects people, because we also didn't want to really be seen as leftists, or we didn't want to be seen as Communist *

I. Not everybody was leftist. The majority ... The majority of UT was not.))

E. Right. But I think maybe ?? I'm just saying, I think that

...

E. There was, like, this conscious effort to make sure that

J. You couldn't be smeared.

L. Yeah.

J. What about ... I was interested,--when you were talking about the night of the Rosie The Riveter film and the ...--you know,--we got off on the subject of racism. But what about the whole subject of history and women not knowing their history;--not know[^] about ... that women have done non-traditional jobs;--that women have been in Unions;--that women have played leadership roles;--all of that. Was any of that allowed to come out? Or,--you know,--was it ... In ... In terms of--you know--the organization, what kinds of things were you able to ??

L. Well, we showed the Rosie The Riveter film,

J. Uh-huh.

L. which was like a ... and we showed Babies And Banners.

J. Um-hum.

I. Oh yeah.

L. I think we really did try to give all of ourselves ...

J. Um-hum.

~~L. educate ourselves as well as other women. And I know,~~
even in NEW and WAP, part of our rap to women who first came in was the ... The first thing we talked about was the history that "You guys are not the first. There's been plenty of women doing this,"

E. Um-hum.

L. throughout the history of time. We also had Vicky Garvin.
You remember Vicky?

E. Oh yeah.

L. who was a long time black woman activist. You know her?

ask Lois R.

J. No ... since the early '40s. No, I've never heard of her.

L. She was involved ... Oh, she was amazing. She was a friend of Chrisa's. And

I. Right.

L. She spoke, I remember, about her experience organizing.

J. Now, what Union did she come out of?

I. She was in an industrial Union in the '40s.

L. It was an indust-- ... Yeah. I can't remember the exact Union she was from now. She was real dynamic, though, and I remember, she talked to us about her experiences way back with women. So we did try to give women a sense of history. I think it's really important.

J. Uh-huh. Yeah.

L. And one of the things was that we kept feeling with a lot of the new women coming in, they didn't have a sense of the struggle,--

J. Um-hum.

L. what it took to even get to the point where, now, they could be in a position to get a job. But that was a real issue, too.

I. Like that AUD Conference where you had ...

J. Yeah. I was thinking of that.

I. and that ... that ... where there was a woman laborer who was-you know--a young woman in her twenties, and ??

J. Who had fish net stockings...

I. Right, and a fancy hat and a mini-skirt, she ... who was a ... who was a ...--you know,--had been elected into her Union.

J. An official in the Laborer's Union in Connecticut.

I. Her father was a Union official, I think.

J. But it was funny, 'cause I was in the women's room and I was worrying out loud that the speaker isn't here, 'cause I was the conference organizer. And this woman had come in, and she had like a little, short, black mini-skirt and fish net stockings and all, and she pipes up from inside the stall,--you know,--"I'm here." It was like, you can't be a laborer.

I. And she talked about that the guys were great, and that she didn't really feel that being a woman was--you know--was really a big factor.

J. A big obstacle.

I. And then,--you know,--we had Brenda Berk--Berkman, who--you know--who was like, fought her--you know--fires within the Fire Department like crazy,

J. On the same panel.

I. on the same panel, in ... in full uniform,--butch uniform,--you know. And it was so interesting because it was like a huge generation gap. It was great!

J. And there I was on the ... on the--you know--the registration table, and I could hear all these shouts and yells and everything coming from the auditorium, and I didn't ... I couldn't hear the conversation.

I. It was a debate. It was a debate about, like, what are the issues: sex ... Oh, you would have loved it.

I - I never Really...

105

Tape Three

I. And a lot of ... I mean,--to me. This is totally personal opinion, but a lot--you know,--a lot of denial.

J. Well, and then also, what ... what we did was we combined the pink collar, the white collar and the blue collar women.

I. Yeah. What color would that make, kind of violet?

E. That should be our flag, pink, white and blue.

J. Brenda Berkman has a light violet kind of business cards now.

E. Oh, does she?

J. That's going to be her card.

E. What's she doing now?

J. Lieutenant Berkman.

I. Yeah.

E. Yeah, that's right. I read about that.

J. She's ... Yeah. Yeah.

I. Yeah.

E. So it's a very exhausting kind of thing, actually.

I. Yeah. That was ... I thought that was a really excellent, excellent ... [Confused]

J. It was fun.

I. I mean,--it makes you want to do more, in a way, because there's so many contrasts still and contradictions.

J. Yeah. Well, I don't ... I shouldn't really talk about it, since I was the organizer. But I liked ... What I liked: we had all these workshops for people to learn things,--

I. Yeah.

J. you know,--skills type workshops. So what about ...

L. It's quarter after eight,--

J. Okay.

L. ten after eight and we need to rap up soon.

J. So let's rap it up. Lessons?

I. Lessons.

J. Yeah.

I. We're still trying to learn them.

J. Yeah,--or ... or parting shots;--I mean,--parting words of advice, or experiences ..??

L. Study leadership models and think about what,--I've thought about this a lot, actually,--what is a leader to me;--what ... what are the qualities of leadership that--you know--I feel are important. And deal with the fear of power;--those kinds of issues. Look at the larger picture, and fund yourself as well as you can, (laughs) and don't be afraid to let somebody do your work for you, 'cause it can be a good thing,--staff people ??

J. Cornell has a Trade Union school for women. They also have a regular Trade Union leadership program. In the Trade Union leadership program, they have a course on leadership,

I. Um-hum.

J. in which they try to talk about models and more rank and file type leadership.

I. I'm trying to get my Business Agent to go.

I. (laughs)

E. It also has a summer school that ...

J. Yeah, the summer school for women. Yeah.

E. The summer school is basically to develop ... The summer school is basically to develop leadership for women in unions ??

J. Yeah. But that's another thing that people speak very highly who went through the Cornell School For Trade Union Women.

I. Yeah.

E. Yeah.

I. Well, I guess if,--you know,--if we were ...if--you know,--in terms of--you know,--if we could have, would have ...--you know--that would have been a good time ... that point where things started to get really difficult to sort out would have been a good time to sort of use,--since our strength was education,--would be to say, this is our education project,--you know,--

J. Yeah.

I. and ... and we'll still have support groups. But meanwhile,--you know,--we'll get some formal education on ... on how to ... how to ... how to have an organization that ... I don't know. I don't know of any models that ... Myself,--

J. Uh-huh.

I. you know,--I don't (know) that many organizations ... I haven't been involved in that many organizations of working models that I would say, This ... This is ...

E. ??

["Well you (know) how to have a meeting."]

J. Well, what do ... what do you see ... I just ... I can't refrain from asking you, when we look now at what's happening with affirmative action

I. Uh-huh.

J. and the whole effort to--you know--get rid of it, and ... and then you see what's happening with attitudes toward women and politically moving towards conservative,--very conservative positions,--so ... how do you feel? Have ... You know--you've survived this long in the trades, and you've made this contribution, and ... and how do you feel now? I mean,--what ... what's ... What are your thoughts in terms of organizing and ...

E. Well, I'm really involved, the last year, in trying to reorganize a group like United Tradeswomen with ... in the space of
NEW

J. Uh-huh.

E. Nontraditional Employment For Women. And we realized that there probably is another need out there could be, actually, the best place for women now,--you know,--on a pretty consistent basis. And I'm actually doing that. So, in that sense, I don't feel like I completely turned my back and walked away and said, I've had enough. I'll never do this again. But I'm much more contemplative about the purpose of my involvement. And also, much more aware of how much I'm really willing to do, and realizing that, if I begin to do more, then I'm really going to have to cut back because then I would be burned out others (would) have to pick up. And if other people don't pick up, it just means that the organization's not ready,--you know. You, as an individual, cannot--you know--keep carrying the burden 'cause you want things to get done and just--you know--doing what everybody else is not doing,--you know. *

J. That's true. We We all have to learn that too.

E. And that's--you know--something that's sometimes hard to keep in mind 'cause you really want so much to do something. And then, three people didn't do what they were supposed to do so--you know ... You have three months in a row of meetings where,--you know--everybody's saying the same thing. I mean,--that's the way ... That's ... That's ... That's reality and that's where you're at.

I. At the same time, sometimes you feel,--like I was saying all ... all day at the hospital today, where I work, at Lincoln Hospital,--I said, "We need the Young Lords back!" (laughs) I was yelling. "Where are they?"

J. How many people come in here to research them?--it's amazing,--young people.

I. I was telling guys at work, because the hospital was so screwed up,--you know,--and there's ... there's just so many ... It's just so corrupt now. And ... And I'm saying, "This is the South Bronx,"--you know? "People should be in Roberto Rodriguez' (Hospital CEO) office daily questioning him about--you know--where this money is going and ... and ... and why there are people

109

waiting nine hours in the waiting room. And the Director of Maintenance is getting a suite of offices, -you know, --state of the art with--you know ...

J. Movements everywhere need people.

E. It's scary.

I. And I say,--you know ... And sometimes it just,--you know--it's like ?? Today it's like, "Where are the Young Lords? Where are the radicals? Where are the people who were ...--you know,--who ... I mean,--why isn't ?? (unintelligible cross talk) Yeah. I mean,--where am I? Why am I just, like, a total working hump,--you know. It's just ... You know,--it feels ... I feel like (sighs)

E. to me ...

I. You know,--I don't know where this ground swell is going to come from to fight back against all these ... I mean,--we're getting so brain dead, and we're so ... }

L. Well, the whole article, did you see, on the down-sizing in New York?

J. Yeah. That's incredible! Right.

L. Yeah. I've actually been buying The Times just to read that.

J. Yeah. That's incredible.

I. Guys at work are asking, "Can I borrow your Times?"

J. Yeah.

L. Yes. People are talking about it at work. It's like they're ... I think something's got to start raising peoples' consciousness, and it's going to happen. I think something's going to happen.

I. Yeah. We'll start throwing file cabinets off the roof again.

L. The industrialists had a huge ... The International

Re.
Industrialists had a big conference in Europe, a few months ago, and I read some of the reports that they put out. They are afraid of a Socialist uprising, or some kind of worker uprising ...

I. It's time for a Socialist uprising. (laughs)

L. This is ... The top industrialists in the world are now talking about this because of the down-- ... Robert Reich, the Labor Department ..

J. Um-hum. Secretary of Labor ...

L. Secretary of Labor is talking about this,

J. Um-hum.

L. and saying, "We have to stop ... Something has to stop the down-sizing.

I. It's getting too cruel.

L. It's getting too cruel! Even these top industrial people are saying this. It's very interesting. So something's good there.

I. Well, who was the guy who was in charge *Conversion* ...--he was a hatchet man for a corporation, who had, like, a conver--you know,--he used to come in the nighttime and have meetings, and tell them where--you know,--how to ... how to lay off two thousand people in an afternoon. And he had a conversion where he realized that this is not a good thing to do. And he's been going around on speaking tours saying: Layoffs, ... These ... these down-sizings of corporations are to create windfall profits.

J. Um-hum.

I. And every time there's a big lay off, the stock market has a boom. And those in the know make millions of dollars. And then, the corporation that had the down-sizing, layoffs, doesn't ... is not any more productive. In any of the things that he ...

L. There's no new wealth being created.

I. There's no ... There's nothing ... It's .. It's just smaller;--that's all.

112

E. and--I mean,--you know ...

I. And I think--you know--people are starting to hear this. It's not ... not blame themselves.

E. Well, not just hear it. But people are

J. Feeling it.

E. Feeling, really suffering the consequences of it, on a long term basis.

J. Um-hum.

E. You know,--I think that it's been going on, but that people are now ?? getting closer.

J. And ... But it seems that the ... the people who are organizing and speaking are the right. So

I. Yeah. I mean,--we're ... we're saying, like. ??

(Patrick)
L. Buchanan is the only one addressing this issue of

J. Yeah.

L. of lay offs. And I don't want people ?? Buchanan.

E. And he's, like ...

I. Yeah. He's using the rhetoric, but he's a ...--you know

L. Yeah, 'cause he's right in there ...

I. Yeah. And people are seeing him as a working class hero, amazingly, just because he has some verve, and he talks

J. Yeah, about the things that are scaring people.

L. ??

I. Yeah. I mean,--of course, he's,--you know--

J. Right. But

I. he's never been a friend to labor. But anyway, how did we get ... But I don't know. I guess, in terms of forming organizations and all this stuff, sometimes I just wish we could just throw file cabinets off the roof,--(laughs)
--you know,--and that radicalism sometimes, just seems like ... just sheer brute radicalism seems like the thing to do.

E. You know,--when I see myself

I. You know what I mean?

E. now, becoming involved and trying to ^{re-}organize United Tradeswomen, I envision it that you really do have to start out slowly. So you've got to start out,--you know--with people who are going to come to our organization for a reason;--because they see it as a need,--you know,--whatever,--like that. But you can't stay in that place. Once you have people in;--once you,--you know--have a group,--you've got to grow,--you know. There's got to be change.

J. Just like a relationship. It has stages,--you know?

E. Yeah. And you've got to ... Yeah. So now, being more aware of that,--you know,--

J. Um-hum.

E. And now being aware of that.

E. There's nothing also wrong with planning it. It's just, in the same way that we feared leadership, we feared planning,

I. Um-hum.

E. because planning might show a conspiracy,--you know,--to get power or something.

J. Well, look at the bosses. They go to all these schools and they ... they have all these workshops, and they ... they study organizational models

I. Um-hum. Um-hum.

J. and they learn something from it. I mean,--they spend a lot of ...

I. Yeah.

9 E. Right. So,--you know,--I think, actually, the goal would be to eventually, to become more integrated and less isolated,--you know. That's what I would say. And ... And I would ... I would say that it would be important to establish an organization, and give them a new voice, so that if there is a broader,--you know--workers' based organization, that women are represented in a good, powerful, equal way,--you know,--and that that's an important thing, too. And I think the labor movement still suffers from that. I mean,--the labor movement suffers all around,--you know. >

Evan. Yeah. So ... Also,--you know,--I do have to say, though, a big difference is ... is that, personally, I had to retire from Local 3 as a worker. I'm still a member, and I still get my benefits from them, or whatever, but I'm no longer on the job, and it makes a big difference.

J. Yeah.

E. See,--I'm willing to take risks that I had reached the point where I wasn't, before,--you know. And also, I feel like I have inside knowledge and inside experience that I can use--you know,--even in diplomacy,--you know. When I go to--you know--approach--you know--people, or whatever, I know that I can be two faced like they can,--you know. I can look at them and be thinking to myself: But I know who this guy is,--you know,--and I know what his interests are. *

J. Um-hum.

E. But,--you know,--I'll go along,--you know--but--you know,--
-whatever:

J. Um-hum.

E. Yeah.

L. Right. I just have to say that, as far as we've come,

J. Um-hum.

L. I had an interview last week for a job. What did the guy ask me? >

E. What do you do when you get pregnant? >> Low (E)

L. No, no. "I am concerned about how the men are going to react to you as their supervisor." It was for a supervisory job,--you know,--as an electronic technician supervisor. "I'm concerned about how the men ... I think you're going to have a real hard time." So I had to ... I said I can't ... But I had to not do that,--you know. I just ... I couldn't believe it! I couldn't believe it! I was so discouraged. I was, like, I ~~can't~~ believe this is 1996,--all I've been through,--and I still can sit in a fucking interview and have some jerk still bring that fucking issue up,--you know. It just pisses me off! ||*

J. And how did you respond?

L. And I said, "Well, I've been working with men,--I've been supervising ten men for the last three years. Some of them did not like it at all, in the beginning. And right now, I've got good relationships with all of them. They respect me for my technical knowledge and they understand that that is ... I'm their supervisor, and that's the way it is."

J. Um-hum.

L. And it's not a problem."

I. You got the job.

L. And I haven't gotten the job yet. They haven't called me back. And I don't think I am going to get it because I think he was also talking about his own personal ...

I. Yeah. Yeah.

L. You know,--he put it off on the guys 'cause they're working class guys but ...

J. I'm all right, but ...

L. You're okay with me, but I don't know how the guys are going to feel. Yeah. Right.

J. Yeah.

L. So anyway, I just found it very discouraging and I wished

102

I had a voice activated thing. I said, I wish I had this man ...
I would take this in ...

J. You know what it makes me thing¹² of??

L. So it's still happening.

E. that's a big problem for women in the trades, and ||
especially women in construction

J. Um-hum.

E. is that the glass ceiling is ... is like, at basement |||
level,--you know.

J. Um-hum.

E. It's like, you get out of your apprenticeship, boom!))
You're hitting the top,--you know. (laughter)

J. There's one ... one expression ... Janine Blackwelder was JB
very frustrated with having all these skills and being always put
on ...--you know,--not being able to use them.

I. Yeah. Oh, she should have been a supervisor,--a job >>
super,--way long ...

J. Yeah, run a job. She ... It's a big frustration for her.

I. Yeah. She ... She could have run a job. And it was like >>
major ...

L. And the other issue for women who've been around for a
while ...

Evan. There's a lot of women ... You know,--there's a lot of
women ... If I hadn't gotten sick and I was--you know--still
working,--which I'm sure I would still be,--

J. Um-hum.

Evan. I would be extremely frustrated. Because what happens +
is you see the guys that you went to school with. And then, you *
see guys that came in years after you,

J. After, yeah.

Evan. and they become your sub-foremen. And the next thing you know, you go on a job, and they're actually--you know--like a General Foreman or something. And it just really begins to irk you,--you know,--

J. Yeah.

Evan. that here's no ... there's no recourse, because it's all a hand picked thing,--you know.

L. Right. And the issue of women supervisors. Once you get to a point where you're an expert in your field,--you've done everything you're supposed to do,--it's a real big issue.

Evan. Women are ... Yeah. So women are starting to try to get out,--you know,--go back to school,--become artists,--you know,--do other things,--you know.

J. Second phase of life. Yeah.

E. Yeah.

Evan. And ... and go ... go to less money, too. >>

J. Um-hum.

Evan. You know,--that's the other thing is the money ... The money was really ...

L. That's exactly what I'm thinking,--go into teaching. You make ... make less money and it's less hassle. >>

E. The money was really attractive and was--you know--like, an issue.

J. A big lure.

Evan. But once we crossed that and we got the money,--you know--more or less, and realized that we were never going to get the big, big money,--you know,--

J. Yeah.

Evan. people are now willing to make thirty thousand a year that were making sixty just to have some satisfaction and happiness in their lives,--you know.))

J. Do ...

L. That's what I think about it.

J. Do women ... What's the prognosis for the future? I mean,--do women belong in the trades?

I. Yeah.

J. Do women ... Nah. I mean... So that's like a crystal ball,--you know.

L. In my field, there's still about four percent women. It hasn't changed in twenty years. 4 %

E. It's actually gone down. There was an article in Ms. Magazine, which I thought was a great article, but it was about women in non-traditional work. And they really did show how management in most of the trades, the ... the percentage of women has dropped in the last few years. Find))

I. Yeah.

J. You know the Department of Labor has this handbook on women workers, and they have all the figures for all the different ...

L. Um-hum.

J. They don't even include women fire fighters.

L. Really?

J. And there's no ... I can't find any figures in there

L. Huh!

J. that even include women fire fighters.

I. What did they say about construction?

J. Well,--I mean,--I think it shows what you were saying.

I. And that it's gone down.

J. It's going down.

I. Yeah. Yeah. I mean,--it's ... it is unbelievable,--I mean,--when you think about it, unbelievable to me that I ... you know,--sometimes, working somewhere, and some woman goes, "Oh, I've never seen a woman carpenter before. Gee!"--you know. And I'm like, Jesus Christ, I've been doing this for fifteen years and ... and ... and it's still considered like, really odd.

J. Um-hum.

I. And it's ...--you know. I mean,--I may be trying to get out of it for--you know,--for--you know--for various reasons, but it's a damn good job compared to so many jobs. And then there's still so few women in it. So,--you know,--I see the real need ...

J. Yeah.

I. I see the real need for the organization.

E. The sad thing ... The sad thing about the loss of affirmative action really is, the strength of affirmative action was the fact that it put people together in a day to day work environment, that would have never had to deal with each other before. So I worked with men that had no other interaction with women in their lives except for their wives,

J. Um-hum.

E. who barely had this thing nowadays about complaining about their wives, or--you know,--whatever, and their mothers,--you know,--if their mothers were still alive ...

J. And their daughters.

E. daughters, if they had them. And then, the ... the ones that were single were just always--you know--on the hunt, or whatever. But I think, for a huge percentage of men that I worked with, it was quite an astounding thing to actually work with a co-worker that was female,--you know. And I think that we in ... such a minority that we were, still had quite a big effect ,--

I. Um-hum.

E. you know. So I think that there really is importance to integrating the work force on all levels. And I think, if you have to do it by force fed means, then absolutely, you have to do it. And affirmative action is a great loss to everybody, not just to those who were going to benefit in the pocket,--you know?



J. Well, it's not dead yet. And the question is, (laughter) is there going to be some kind of way to fight for it,--to push for it,--to keep it alive. On a resuscitator now, but to bring it back to where ... Equal opportunity is such a radical idea, but that we can move closer towards it,--you know. I thank you all. It's a really ..

I. Okay.

L. Thanks for bringing us all ... *together.*

E. Thank you.

J. I'm hoping that--you know,--your stories will inspire other people, and they'll learn from your experience.

E. I hope so.

J. And that's the idea.

Evan: "Was that inspiring?"
JK: "Yeah."

(120)