

Interview With Veronica Sessions

J.L. This is Jane Latour on July 26th, 2006, interviewing Veronica Sessions from the Carpenters.

So, Veronica, tell me about your background, where you were born and all.

V.S. Okay. I'm originally from Andrew, South Carolina,--both my parents are from from Andrew, South Carolina. I myself was born in Wilmington, North Carolina. It took us a long time.

J.L. What year were you born?

V.S. 1959,

J.L. Okay.

V.S. so I'm forty-seven.

J.L. Any siblings?

V.S. I have an older sister who has passed on now and I have two younger brothers.

J.L. And so what did your parents do for work?

V.S. My father worked for GM in Tarrytown and . . . she worked at Deel Corporation and they used to make parts to cars, not the ??

J.L. Your Dad was a member of the UAW.

V.S. Yes.

J.L. And your Mom was a Union member?

V.S. Yes. I don't recall what Local it was though, but in the Union.

J.L. Um-hum. Okay. And so what about your Education?

V.S. I graduated high school at Brooklyn Tech.

J.L. Okay.

V.S. Do you want to see where we stopped there? So you were at Brooklyn Tech.

V.S. I graduated Brooklyn Tech; was called what is called an Industrial Design major. I did not go on to college. I . . .

J.L. What were you thinking of doing with that degree, Industrial Design?

V.S. I thought of being an industrial designer, but then got . . . College at that point in time was a committment that I could not . . . I had some family issues and college I just did not believe I could take on

so I went on to work. I really wish I had worked it out kind of and--you know,--and went on to graduate from that too, but I didn't. But I ... I knew it was a ... a very good high school where you just get a very good education and .. and learn how to use your ... your head.

J.L. Now, did you learn math there?

V.S. Yes.

J.L. You have good math skills?

V.S. Yes.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. It was a good ... It was the second best high school at the time. I believe it still is.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. There were three high schools , Bronx High School of Science, Brooklyn Tech and then Stuyvessant.

J.L. Okay. We'll try again.

V.S. Isn't that voice .. the ?? the ?? thing, with that on, maybe that's it?

J.L. Let's see if ...

V.S. Yeah. That might be it.

J.L. Okay. Technical know how comes in handy.

V.S. Okay. I'm not sure if we were done ...

J.L. So how ..

V.S. where we left off. I don't know what picked up.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. You want me to go through the high school again?

J.L. Yeah. Well, tell me about your ... what jobs you had before you went into the Carpenters.

V.S. Let's see. Basically I was Assistant Bookkeeper for a, like, department store, balancing their ... their .. the books, and then I was at the Bank Of Boston which is called a factory bank, a non-commercial bank, where one is ... where one is buying goods goods from the other and we're checking their credit to see if it's okay; that kind of thing. And I was there ... It would have ben close to ... It would have been ten years shy of, I think, three months or so and that's when I decided I wanted to be a carpenter and then left. But I was already ~~bested~~ after five years anyway.

J.L. Okay. Okay. I was thinking about that.

V.S. Um-hum.

J.L. So you decided you wanted to be a carpenter. Now what made you think about that?

V.S. Well, actually, there was a, like a half hour sit com Well, I ... In .. in Brooklyn Tech there's always kind of shop classes. There's an actual foundary where you're making wood panelling and .. and .. and making the mold and .. and, like, kind pounding ?? and making a cast of something. then there's actual wood shop. And then there's drafting class and all these are classes and in which you use your hands and your--you know--your skills. So there was a half an hour sit com. There's a Spanish lady and I couldn't .. I can't think of her name but her husband owned a ... a business, a carpentry outfit, and she used to help him, and I just thought, well, I could do that. (laughs) And I decided, yeah, that's what I wanted to do 'cause my job wasn't fulfilling. It was a lot of responsibility. I was the head of that Department for not much money and a lot younger than most of the people so there's was a lot of friction and .. and it wasn't satisfying there. So when I got that motion that I wanted to be a carpenter I just searched for work around the City or at least looked into ?? bit jobs and asked for work and eventually--I think maybe a year and a half or so, and I got lucky and somebody said that they'd take me on. I wasn't aware of the Apprenticeship Program or anything like that; that maybe I could have tried that venue. But I found my first job on my own

J.L. Okay.

V.S. and the Foreman said he'd give me a try for a week. So I took a week off from my job.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. He said let's see how you do in a week and see if you're serious or whatever, and then that week passed and he said I was doing good. And so I went back and quit my job ...

J.L. Uh-huh. Now, this was a non-Union job.

V.S. No. This was a Union job.

J.L. It's a Union job so

V.S. Yes. It. It was a Union job.

J.L. Okay.

V.S. And he told me that I had to contact the Local

J.L. Okay.

V.S. and the Apprenticeship Program. And so I contacted both and got and got in. And ...

J.L. So a nice guy.

V.S. Yeah. I was very fortunate. And I was on that job for about ... close to a year.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. And probably, I guess, toward the end of that time he told me ... And that was my ... Well, of course that was my first year and my very first job and he said I was doing as good as any third year Apprentice, so I .. I-you know--I appreciated him saying that.

J.L. So then you had an aptitude for it.

V.S. Yeah.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. I believe I would have and it--you know--turns out I do. That was the best choice for 'cause I actually had the Electrical apprentice application. I forgot how I got that. But anyway, I had got that but ... and I held onto it for a little bit and I said no. I just decided I wanted to be a carpenter and I think that worked best for me.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. So since that first job I've been doing

J.L. Now, what kind of things were you doing on the first job?

V.S. First job there were a number of deliveries 'cause it was quite a big job. Actually, it was Down State Hospital in Brooklyn.

J.L. Oh, okay.

V.S. It was a section of it, like, that's on New York and like Lenox about ... And I used to wait in the lot and ...

J.L. They were doing a new addition?

V.S. Yeah,

J.L. Okay.

V.S. uh-huh. I don't recall what was there before. I don't remember.

J.L. And what year was that?

V.S. '79. No, '89.

J.L. '89.

V.S. '89, uh-huh, 'cause I'm in seventeen years right now. Uh-huh. And individually he would kind of like let me work with a partner sometimes and .. and help frame. But then again, one of the guys that I knew from that job who I'm still in contact with, he used to kid me all the time that he used to want to keep me away from the general

population 'cause he thought I was maybe too attractive or whatever and that would--you know--influence the guys and there would be, like, friction or something could happen. But if you're not all that involved or close to ??--you know,---less chances of something could happen with that.

J.L. So he was protective.

V.S. Yeah. So ... But he was .. he was fair. You know? The Foreman was fair and it was a decent group of guys. I had one little issue with some--you know--little knucklehead but it didn't .. didn't mushroom into anything, and it was a ... it was a .. it was a good first experience,--

J.L. Good.

V.S. a very good first experience and ..and towards the--you know--end especially I got to use my tools more and so I .. I ... that was a good base for me. You know? I felt even more confident that I could continue and so on. You know?

J.L. So now, what was it about the work that you liked when you started doing it?

V.S. Well, I .. I like using my hands. I like, I guess, making things--you know?--and you .. you get to kind of like build, like, an erector set if you do any framing. That's basically what it is. And you could see--you could see what you'd done at the end of the day.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. You know? You could visually see it--you know,--from the ... from beginning to end, whether it was a small project or a big project that'd take maybe two or three days. But whatever, you could always see--you know?--see the accomplishment at the end and .. and I liked seeing that. And I was ... I was attracted to the fact that I would make the same as a man. I didn't It just really wouldn't rub well with me to--you know--be doing something--I don't know--whatever field where--you know--they're getting paid more than I am.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. You know? So that .. that was very attractive. You know? And of course, it's--you know--good pay and benefits overall.

J.L. Right.

V.S. But .. And I thought it would all come together well for me and it pretty much has--

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. pretty much has.

J.L. Now, tell me about going to the Union and getting into the Apprenticeship?

V.S. Well, as I said I .. I called and .. and registered as far as

the Apprenticeship School And I don't know if it was ... I think I had to wait a couple of months before--you know--the next school I could get into the next cycle of classes. The School was relatively one--uneventful I think. I mean, I passed all my classes as they came and

there's no how you say, specific degree when you're in. You just go through all your four years and if you complete the class and complete all your assignments and do well,--you know--you just ... just move on. There's not, like, a .. a degree or something that--you know--for Carpenters at least. I think there are for Electricians. You get something. But the classes itself , they're ... Of course, they're .. they're pretty good and they have a pretty good setup as far as the school itself. It's very well equipped.

J.L. Where is it?

V.S. It's 395 Hudson now. The entrance is around the corner.

J.L. Is that where you went?

V.S. Yeah. Uh-huh.

J.L. Oh, okay.

V.S. Yeah. They had just moved there from another location.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. Yeah. I forgot where it was but, yeah, they had just moved there. So it's very well equipped.

J.L. How about women in the Apprenticeship Program?

V.S. Not many. Not many. I believe we're still ... As far as Carpenters are concerned I think just about two percent, maybe two point one or something.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. But it's very close to two percent and that is my understanding that it hasn't changed very much.

J.L. So did you have some in your class?

V.S. I don't .. I don't recall I don't recall having any women in the class.

J.L. Now, did you ever meet anybody who did any sexual harrasment training or ... I know they instituted that at some point and I think Ellie Spicer was involved with that or somebody

V.S. The ... As far as I recall Rebecca Lewery,

J.L. Okay.

V.S. Yeah, was doing a sexual harrasment training and now it's someone else. It.. it may be Erline Fisher last I heard.

J.L. Oh, okay.

V.S. Yeah. I think Erlene Fisher. And actually I was ... I was .. I keep saying but for lack of time that I wanted to sit in on a class just to--you know--to ..to take it in kind of, and see how the guys are taking it and ?? I was not, but I just haven't had time. But, yeah, they ... they do have sexual harrassment classes. And actually, the one I was in Ribecca was doing it at the time. Ribecca Lewery was doing it at the time.

Ribbecca P.

J.L. And what was the reception?

V.S. I . I don't think it was taken as seriously as it should,--you know?--although there ... there ... You know? The class was presented but I don't think they really understand the impact that it ..that it has on a female emotionally and how that affects her work because she still has to work to complete her assignments or whatever, too, and I don't think they--you know--they really grasp that,

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. that is is serious and not just--you know,--it was just a joke or--you know? I don't think they get that yet.

J.L. That's what I've heard. Okay. So now did you have to join a Local when you went into the Apprenticeship?

V.S. Yes. Since that job that I was ... that I started on was in Brooklyn I joined the Brooklyn Local and I went up and signed up and paid my fees. I don't recall what they were there. I was a member

J.L. what Local is that?

V.S. Local 926

J.L. Okay.

V.S. in Brooklyn. They were on East 96th Street at the time. Actually it might have been They moved a couple of times but And the .. that gentleman who was the head of it, he had just left and his father, Phil Fagiri, was the head of that the ?? that Local when I joined.

J.L. So his name is Italian. Were there a lot of Italians in the Local?

V.S. Yes, there were. Uh-huh. Actually, now I think .. I think it's more people from the Islands or pretty close to it.

J.L. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

V.S. And--you know,--'cause, like, you have the East Flatbush area and kind of like that, so I think we had quite a few probably in all the Locals or, like, of Caribbean descent.

J.L. Um-hum.

7

V.S. But so I joined the Local and I was received--you know--well. We worked fairly steady. Actually, this ties in. the time that I joined and.. and now the work--how you get work in different.

J.L. Okay.

V.S. Now ... Well, at that point used to get it from ..from your particular Local.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. Now there's a general out of work list. I'm trying to think. Maybe five years now or something like that. For .. for a number of years, which is out of the District Council, so everybody calls that one thing. And it's one ??

J.L. Okay. And how does that work with all the Locals?

V.S. all the ... Yeah. Well, the Local ... I guess they .. they maintain--how you say--they're ... they're own territory still so that there are still actual Locals but we don't get our work from the Local.

J.L. Okay.

V.S. They, I guess , like man their area, try to turn non-Unoin work to Union, or do different things--whatever.

J.L. Yeah. So have you found that anew system better?

V.S. I think it is better but there ... there's still some things where .. where there are, like, loop holes or ways to kind of like get ..get around the thing 'cause--you know--as .. as we talk to each other we realize that ... Like, I've never been sent out on a big job and it seems like certain people ... And I actualyy think it was in the pay ferlow and John Convoy's right up there. Certain people who are getting the big jobs all the time.

J.L. Right. Um-hum. Yeah.

V.S. You know? So somehow ...

J.L. That persists.

V.S. Yes, that .. that persists.

J.L. Yeah, big jobs and the big bucks.

V.S. Yes. So .. But overall I think it's ... it's .. it's somewhat fairer but .. And they signed their new contracts and we just have a new contract since July, which I don't have the specifics of,

J.L. this July.

V.S. Yeah, this past July,

J.L. Oh, okay.

V.S. And ...

J.L. You mean right now, 2006.

V.S. Right.

J.L. Okay.

V.S. and I heard that some things weren't--you know--the best. And then .. And even the last contract before that they .. they allowed them to-what do you call it?--like, request people,

J.L. Oh yeah?

V.S. 'cause prior it's supposed to be fifty percent company people who ... they're Union people. they get paid no different, but ... but they're ... they're working for the company all the time

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. and that's a good way for the companies to keep people that hey know, and .. and whatever. And that's fine. And there was supposed to be fifty from--straight from the list,--you know?--

J.L. Uh-huh.

V.S. but now they've ben given Most of the contractors ... Like, say, even prior to this July, the contract before that, the ability to request people. So if they request people, they request their buddies till. so now it's no true fifty/fifty. You know? It's still all coming ... which makes it hard for the Shop Steward, 'cause then they .. they want to ... they'll want to do things they're not .. they're not supposed to. And you're being pushed to do things they're not supposed to. And if the Shop Steward don't have enough backing--you know?--

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. then ... then they can't do anything. "Cause if you tell-you go to the Business Agent and say this is going on-and .. and ... they'll say well ... they'll kind of ignore it and say, well, that's okay, or they'll blow it off or something and they won't do anything about it. there's a lot of people now know .. they don't even try to kind of like do some things. But even ... I'll just .. I'll just mention this. Just recently on the .. on the job there were some, like, Foremen who .. who .. who ?? some Foremen who whatever--they normally ask their own guys to work Saturdays, of course, and again, it should be fifty/fifty, but whatever. But they weren't sure if we were going to ?? work long hours, work extra--you know?---

J.L. Uh-huh.

V.S. So the .. the .. the guys asked me: Do you know who worked just the seven hours? and I said that's what he said. And he said: Well,



then we wanted to make sure 'cause they'll ... they'll try to .. to not .. not have them get another break, just .. just work ..work through it. And when the Foreman asked me ??together he said: We need you to protect us, 'cause I was the Shop Steward. so they .. they want somebody to be able to do what's right by the men--by the workers.

J.L. Um-hum. Yeah.

V.S. You know? But again, the Shop Steward a lot of times

J.L. Is in a position not to be able to.

V.S. Right.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. You know?--when .. when they're actually legally, technically right and all that. But if--you know--the BA's don't back you up and you know that, sometimes you'll try; either sometimes you just--you know--realize you're not going to get any ackup. But .. but the issue is they .. they really want somebody to be able to stand up for them so they can say okay, we can't. You know?

J.L. Right. Yeah.

V.S. But then they're being pushed .. the .. the workers are being pushed to do things that they .. they really don't want to do that they know is . is harmful to the Union as a whole and what not, but .. but they need .. they need backup.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. They need backup.

J.L. Okay. So tell me about ... So what year did you finish your ... So if you went in in '89 then it was four years,

V.S. Right.

J.L. so it was, like, '93 that you ... Did they have a little graduation ceremony?

V.S. Yes. There is ... Every year when they graduate they have a ... Actually, I don't know if it's at the same place all the time, but there's a gradation and--you know--you can invite at least two people--you know--to . to celebrate--I guess the same as a high school or whatever--you know?--to celebrate your . you completed

J.L. Do they have a dinner?

V.S. Yes. uh-huh. Actually, I didn't go to the last one but I went to the one before that just as kind of like guest 'cause I wanted to kind of reach out to the women especially as they---you know--were there. 'Cause, like, since I don't often go .. go to the school any more I don't necessarily see everyone.

J.L. Right.

10

V.S. But so it was arranged that I could come and so the women that I saw there I just kind of introduced myself and ... and--you know--gave them some contact information and let them know about the Women's Committee and so on. And I don't think we didn't do it this .this past one but I guess I should bring that up again, for somebody to see if they could--you know---be there and--you know--kind of like welcome them--you know--as well.

J.L. Right. Yeah. That's a nice idea. So tell me about ... Well, why don't you first talk about becoming a journeyperson and then we'll talk about when you became a Steward.

V.S. Okay.

J.L. Was ... was Did you feel a difference?

V.S. There was actualy nothing that really stands out, but that is ..that is a critical time because--you know-if you haven't been , like, gaining your skills and building it the whole time that' where-you know--it really can really take a bad turn for you because, of course, Apprentices is always paid less than mechanics there. You know? They . the y want you to be able to hold your own. And I kind of transitioned into that fairly well. Like, again, I had a pretty good start and I guess even coming from Brooklyn tech I just .. I just kind of knew I would be--you know--fairly well suited

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. . for the business so I .. I didn't have too much problem in that way. But I .. I know a lot of people and a lot of women do because ... Even .. even some guys do, especially if they're not company guys 'cause some .. some companies have Apprentices which only work for them, and usually when they turn mechanics they're pretty decent and they keep on.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. You know? But women are always kind of at the bottom rung of everything so they .. they get less of a chance to use their tools and skills as they're ... as they're building--you know?--up in their years so I think that definitely is an issue;--definitely is an issue. But fortunately for me I . I made that tran--transition pretty well. But a lot of times, I've .. I've heard from other women, li,e when they're .. they're working fairly steady with the same company even, and they become a mechanic and then they're let go 'cause sometimes they don't even have them doing real skilled work. You know? So ...

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. 'cause you ... 'cause you ... you need to learn your skills for the longevity.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. You're apprenticed for four years and you're, like, a

Steel

Carpenter for up to twenty--you know?--or more so ...

J.L. It's time to make it happen.

V.S. Yes.

J.L. So what do you see as the challenges within the industry?

V.S. I think one key thing to turn things around is that there has to be--well, there has to be really good Stewards with reall backing

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. 'cause I can tell you the .. the people they really want someone to be able to say no, this person can't do that. This person can't stay late without getting paid overtime. This person can't ... You know? When it's time to rap up they're .. they're kind of skittish because they want to give them a little bit more. You know? whereas, like, as far as the company is concerned, they want them to be back from lunch on time. they don't want them taking any more time. But it's okay for them to stay a little bit later to do a little bit work. So the .. the people, the workers, really want somebody to be able to say no. this or that can't happen.

J.L. Right. Now, how did it happen that .. When did you first become a steward and how did that happen?

V.S. with some changes the .. the government and getting involved in ... in the

J.L. District council?

V.S. District ?? yes because of arious, I guess, racketering charges and--you know--certain charges, the government ... we've been ... been overseen. And prior to that the Stewards used to go out from the Local. They used to be--you know--appointed kind of. So since the government got involved the Stewards just ahve to complete certain classes and they're like, various health and safety classes, Union ... like the Union .. a description of how Unions came about, a Union history kind of thing, HILTY certification--different classes--maybe like eight to ten roughly, classes you have to complete and then you get certified as a Steward. and then you get .. when you put your name in on that general out of work list

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. you'll go down as a Steward. And when they have--how do you say--a combination of ... Because when you put yourself on the out of work list you put in what borough you want to work in,

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. you put in They have your skills listed. You know? And when .. when those two things come together ... 'Cause some people only put down sheet rock, lot's say, and some people have, like, hardware, framing, sheet rock and concrete and all that. So the more you have down the faster you will go out.

J.L. Right.

V.S. But .. So it's a combination of the skills you have and where you say you want to work. I .. I, myself, I normally put down everything besides Staten Island because I don't want to go out that far. So I'll put down the Bronx and I'll put down Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens. So when those two things come together, type of work and location, you'll get a call. And again, that's ??

J.L. And you put Steward there too, that you .. that you're a Steward?

V.S. Right; that you're a Steward.
And also as a minority, that ..
that is also called a skill so it's just like .. it's like framing or sheet rock and whatever. If you let them know that you're a minority
....

J.L. Uh-huh. And what about female? Does that count for anything?

V.S. Not really, no. (laughs)

J.L. It used to but not anymore?

V.S. Yeah. You're taking a jobs well.

J.L. I guess ...

V.S. And as .. as contractors call and indicate what they need: I need ten wood workers over here, and if your name is at the top more or less and--you know--you do wood work and ..and you said Brooklyn, then--you know--they'll give you a call. And they have--I don't know about five people making the calls between three and six. and you'll get a call and they'll give you the location, the Foreman's name and so on,--you know?--show up with your tools. And Stewards generally go out faster than just a normal worker just because ...

J.L. Now, how did you ... why did you decide you wanted to do this?

V.S. Well, the Steward thing, that was because I did see a change in the business and not for the better.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. It wasn't so much that I figured that I'd work more, but it was that I .. I ... I wanted to do the right thing by the ... the workers.

J.L. um-hum.

V.S. You know? I wanted to 'cause I know there are some Stewards who just kind of want to show up and (laughs)

J.L. Yeah, take advantage.

V.S. Yeah, yeah, and not do the right things.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. But I did notice a change happening and I ... I kind of wanted to be a part of the solution for the better,--you know?--so I .. I ... That .. that was that was the main thing.

J.L. So what kind of responses did you get to trying to be a Steward ?? But what are some of the

V.S. Sometimes it's ... Sometimes it's .. it's good but a lot of the times it's hard if .. if the company, say, like, they indicated that they have, like, the company people and then they put in for a request for more people, it's basically all company people so (laughs)

J.L. You're not really enforcing anything.

V.S. Right,--you know?--that kind of running the show more or less, and you can kind of try ... and especially also if the .. if the ... the local has a good relationship with the company, for whatever reason, it's hard to affect change when you see something--you know--wrong, it's hard to address an issue, which is very frustrating although I still try, but it's .. it's very hard. And the thing is I mentioned that that's one thing ... Well, I think I mentioned that I think the main thing that would change things are ... are really Stewards who have ... 'Cause I think Stewards and most people, they ... they want to do the right thing. But if they know that they're not going to be supported it's just ... it's just no use. But. .. but that and doing away with that requesting or at least limiting it to maybe--I don't know--a quarter percent of the .. the workers or something. But basically they could request ... and again, it's just all ... If you can have seven people but if they all will your buddies there's no true fifty/fifty. There needs to be a true fifty/fifty and then they're less likely to go along with ... with the program. You know?

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. But I ..I've ... I've ben successful sometimes and then not in others. But they really do ... The workers really do want a Shop Steward who's able to do something.

J.L. Now what year ... Do you remember what year you became a Steward?

V.S. I think it was roughly six years ago, six or seven.

J.L. Okay. How ..how is it with the safety situation, the health and safety and asbestos and things like that?

V.S. I didn't ..I don't recall running into any asbestos type issues. Sometimes ... So generally I find there's like ... kind of like where they're working inside, like, an open shaft or something,--you know?--instead of, like, having it barricaded correctly.

J.L. Oh yeah.

V.S. You know? you're just kind of like working close to it and trying to be careful--you know?--and those kind of things so that ... those I try to address because all it takes is somebody--you know--to walk by with a ladder or something that makes somebody trip, or whatever, and then they're gone. So those are .. are the one kind of things. and then a lot of times they might make a make shift ramp--you know?--

J.L. Oh yeah.

V.S. just too quickly and then it's just not correct, or let's say, the ramp is not connected to the floor correctly and then there's a step and little things like that, where they just try to--I don't know--you just tend to overlook, but yet that can make somebody trip and fall--you know?--and then that person is out for weeks or whatever and then there's a law suit and whatever. So ,little things like this. And especially since I'm Steward I just kind of ?? stop and just kind of do it--you know?--myself. And .. and recently Inow somebody was walking by an open panel and I'm like, well, we need to get the electricians over here to close the panel and put a cover on the panel 'cause the wire was live and then,--you know--let's work safely. Meanwhile, I started to cover it with the .. the Painters had a--what do you call it?--those drop cloths,--you know,--and so I did that meantime. but then I got the electrician--you know--to .. to put a cover over it. So I think it's more or less like open areas where there .. where there can be falls or. ... or--you know--something like not . not closing, like, live electrical panels or situations ... not too much asbestos. Actually, I had an asbestos license which I let expire 'cause I didn't use it. I got it just for work. "Cause what we would do is we don't do the removal but the Carpenters would do the..they would build the decon area that's required for it

J.L. Oh yeah.

V.S. so I got a license to do that. But I never got a call for it so I let it expire. and then I said, Well, that's just as well 'cause sometimes they try to cut corners (laughs)

j.L. Yeah.

V.S. and asbestos is, like, no joke. So I decided--you know---

J.L. Yeah. Grand Central is full of it.

V.S. Yeah.

J.L. Tell me about ... what about challenges or obstacles with the Union. Is

V.S. Okay. Well, the challenges ?? Let's see. I think as far as as far as being a woman there are I guess little or minor things which is not really little or minor because it takes extra time. So I would say like .. 'cause we're supposed to have our own separate bathroom and a lot of times they try to just .. just not adhere to that. But sometimes when they do .. Like, we'll be on a job and .. and they'll have one ... They're supposed to give everybody a key. Every woman on the job is supposed to have a key, for instance, and they'll, like,

they'll put one key in one location and we'll have to go--you know--go get the key, and the key can be the opposite direction from where the bathroom is. So that means you have to go and get the key, then go to the bathroom. and in .. in construction sometimes the guys don't even like to stop to use the bathroom.

J.L. Right.

V.S. they'll use the collar. Okay?

J.L. Yeah. Right.. I told you I was just writing about that.

V.S. Yeah. And ... and that's not because they don't really want to use the bathroom. They ... they don't want to take the time to ...

J.L. Want to save time to

V.S. they want the time do it. So meanwhile, we'll have to go .. go get this key and .. and ..and use the bathroom. so,-you know-and it takes time and then .. and ..and you're walking one way ... And the thing is, if they see you going one way and they know you're working over here, they know that you're going to the bathroom.

J.L. Right.

V.S. You know? So it shouldn't be where we're so visible and ? she's going to the bathroom. She's taking--you know,--she's taking time. And then ...

Side Two

J.L. Okay. So ...

V.S. Yeah. So I'm just kind of explaining about the little things which are .. are big things. And I think also that sends a message to the men that kind of like we're .. we're just not worthy or something. You know?

\ J.L. Right. Um-hum.

V.S. And actually, I was on one job where actualy they--you know--the company lied and said I did a lot of things that I didn't do to try . ?? said that I was going to falsely accuse somebody of sexual harrassment, which was just ridiculous 'cause that's as serious thing. But so they had the whole list of things--of lies and one of them was that I went across the street to use the bathroom. Now, that's where he told me to go to use the bathroom

J.L. Right.

V.S. 'cause he didn't have a bathroom on site for me--you know?--so it was a ... You just want to--you know--kind of like explode. And they had no records of, like, having ... You know, I think they had, like, two bathrooms there or whatever, and I didn't feel like I got any support 'cause all the Union had to do was come down and at least look and they would have saw that there was no bathroom there. You know?

J.L. Yeah. Right.

V.S. And there was a MacDonal'd's or Burger King or something across the street which he told me to use. But I wasn't going along with his program. He wanted to have non-Union ^{writers} to come in and that's like .. I said: No. You need to get a new purchase for that. And he went and he asked me several times on different occasions... different points in time maybe a couple of weeks apart or whatever. You know? So I wasn't going along with--you know--what he wanted to do.

J.L. so it was retaliation.

V.S. Yeah, so he chalked up all these lies. But I think the bathroom thing is an issue 'cause you're made to feel like ... kind of like, less than. And .. and even though it's construction, we're still women and we're still .. it's still a job for us and we shouldn't be treated less because we don't work in an office. You know?

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. So we should have an accessible bathroom. We should not have to go through changes to get a key. You know? ?? made for us just like that if we feel ... Okay. Why .. why make a dollar-fifty key. You know? and also sometimes you just .. one person will forget, so one person will use the key and everybody will go with them.

J.L. Oh, absolutely. Right.

V.S. ?? Yeah. You've got to track down the key which takes more time. And you're kind of like nervous or ill at ease 'cause you want to get back to your work in time to finish. So that's one thing which is minor but then major.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. And .. let me see. I lost my train of thought. But ...

J.L. What happened with that ... that list of charges? Did you get the Union to represent you and ...

V.S. They kind of took back some of them. I'm trying to think. They had about three or four things. Okay. One thing ... Well, when I went off site. One thing he falsely accused me that I said I would falsely accuse somebody of sexual harrassment. One thing was that I tried to stop somebody from working. something else .. There was one or two more which I forget. and the the thing about stopping somebody from working was we we had a delivery coming in, like,--you know--before the window is put in--the panel for the window as put in,--

J.L. Uh-huh.

V.S. and the guy, I think, was working close to the edge, as I recall, so I just told him to be careful. You know? don't be a hero. Wait till it comes ?? or something like that. But I wasn't trying to stop anybody from working, but that was a complete lie. And as I recall they

tried--this was a few years ago and they tried to retract some of it. and then I don't know why they said, okay, all of this didn't happen . And then. .then they kept it in there. so .. But I-actually, I was the one who brought the company up on charges 'cause they .. they laid me off and then to . to-you know-bolster their stance is when they made up all these lies. so actually, I didn't get say any ..any penalties but they didn't either--you know?-so I didn't feel satisfied with that at all because, for one thing, I didn't feel that the Union really wanted ... because when I'm the Steward, I mean, I'm representing the Union. That's what I'm there for. You know?

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. So I felt And they don't have to be--how do you say ... And I don't think they're necessarily supposed to be impartial but .. 'cause if the Steward is saying this and that happened, you you should be wanting to know ... try to find if that was true or not.

J.L. Um-hum. Right.

V.S. and I don't feel that that was the case at all. It just was not. "Cause simply, all they had to do was come to the job and see if there was a bathroom there so you ... and you could expel that.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. And then you could have said, Well, why did you put that and . and-you know-- .. and then also ?? from that was it the arbitrator 'cause we had to have several meetings--you know--whatever, and nobody asked me if I--what do you call it?-if I ... was I trying to be Norma Ray.

J.L. Oh really? Somebody from the Union or the company?

V.S. The District Council.

J.L. the District council!

V.S. Yeah. Was I trying to be Norma Ray? and I was just almost stunned. I'm, like,--you know? I was just kind of there doing my job. It's like--you know-I just find it hard to believe that that could even cross that person's mouth and he's supposed to be impartial if anything and just trying to find out--you know--facts in order to make up the truth.

j.L. Yeah.

V.S. And I stated whatever I stated so that it certainly didn't require you trying to be Norma Ray.

j.L. Right . Yeah.

V.S. I'm trying to .. to support the Union here. You know? So it ... it's just not easy. And it just seems that nobody really wants to get to the truth

j.L. Um-hum.

V.S. or really wants to do anything about the.. the bad contractors or the bad things that are happening out there.

J.L. That's probably because of the chummy relationships. Right?

V.S. Yeah. I think too many people ... Just like a friend of mine who is also a Carpenter, she was saying that her ... her boss is on the Board of I think it's the ... the Building Association or something--you know?---and he was talking to her about that I think we're supposed to have ... I don't recall it--like,--what was the term he used?---something, a market rate, 'cause we're trying to get ... 'cause we don't have residential work in Long Island, the Union Carpenters out there, they do residential work. But otherwise in the .. the boroughs, we don't have a Union of residential work. So there's trying to be a market rate--a something market rate. So

j.L. Or a prevailing rate or .. No, a market rate.

V.S. Not. . not prevailing. I think they called it market and then something else, but whereas we get paid less so that you could compete with the non-Union.

J.L. Right. Yeah. I see what you're saying.

V.S. and I think they said it's supposed to be twenty-eight dollars an hour. I think ?? your ... your ... your credits will .. wil work the same and I think the health benefits and all of that ...

J.L. You just get paid less.

V.S. Right. You just get paid less.

j.L. So how much of a difference is that?

V.S. So we get forty what? We just got a raise. I think it's forty-one twenty-five. Yeah.

j.L. So twenty-eight instead of forty-one?

V.S. Yeah.

J.L. wôw! That's quite a reduction.

V.S. Yeah. So I didn't get the whole of how that's going to work but apparently there's supposed to be, like, two lists and I guess .. I don't know if you'll be .. if you on both at the same time. Probably not. I wouldn't think, but I'm--you know--I'm not sure 'cause I don't know--you know--the ?? Just I know that the proposal for that ... Who the proposal goes through I'm not sure but (unintelligible)

j.L. Well, don't the members get to vote on the contract?

V.S. No, we don't.

j.L. Oh!

V.S. We have delegates. Like each Local has a certain amount of delegates depending on the members ?? the members

J.L. And they vote.

V.S. and they vote, and I .. I can't imagine .. and there are some things that I heard with the dispatcher that are not necessarily good so I can't imagine .. I'm just curious as to who voted on this. (laughs) I'm curious ??

J.L. And do you think you'll ever find out?

V.S. I don't know. Actually, I'm wondering if if that information that--how do you say?--that members have access to. I'm always asking ??

j.L. Um-hum. We'll have to find out. Yeah.

V.S. Yeah. I'm really curious about that because there are some things that it just continually .. I mean, veen though we ... we have certain rights even in the past, but if you're not supported in them then--you know--?? anyway.

j.L. Right. ??

V.S. But still now, see, like contractuall things have ben changed. the language--you know---actually is ?? in their favor,--you know?--and so that ..that is established inblack and white.

J.L. Now, I seem to recall that you had a sexual harrassment case around 2000-2001. Did you? You had some kind of legal action going on 'cause it was when I was at AUD. You were looking for a lawyer. Something was going on.

V.S. Yeah. I ..I just can't be confused on the year.

j.L. Yeah.

V.S. But that was a situation where I was working ... Actually, there was a concrete worker worked with a partner-you know?---stayed with the same partner and he would continually ask me, like, to go out with him and

J.L. He was a Union member?

V.S. Yeah. He was a Union member. He was a company person for .. for that company and .. 'cause they would usually match a company person with a non-com--company person. and he would--you know--show his interest in ... in asking me out and what not, and then also kind of like brushing up to me ?? not necessary where there wasn't necessarily close quarters or that kind of thing. and I would continually .. continually tell him that I wasn't interested and so on and then and it was kind of--you know--kind of building up and I said okay. I didn't .. I thought of telling the Shop Steward but I said, Okay, well, I'll--I don't know---kindof wait a ... Actually, for some reason I thought I wouldn't have much longer there and I would kind of like just get through it. I didn't anticipate the job was--I don't know--kind of go on and on. But anyhow, one ... there was one incident ... The shop

20

Steward normally just .. It was in queens and there was ... was, like, long blocks and the Shop Steward normally dropped me off by the train station instead of me having to walk. And one day he .. I think he was leaving early so he ?? didn't do it. so he didn't know what was going on till he had told me---you know,---so he .. so he to drop me off. and now this guy is-you know-- .. So I got--you know-I got in and I just said, okay,----you know--I'll just let him drop me off. Well, just during that little time he I think he put his hand, like, on my leg or knee or something like that, and then I said okay .. Well, earlier that day, I believe it was, or either . or either ... I do have my actual log ?? and then I'm trying to remember if I ... I'm just remembering now. He ... They were ?? and I realized,--you know,---okay, look, I'm going to have to tell someone, I had said. But then, that particular day, he .. he--you know--he got in the car and he touched my leg and I said, okay, he's just kind of like, not getting it.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. You know? He's just not getting it and either just be ?? just before that or just after he .. he had tried to kiss me and he tried to do something where he tried to put his arm around me. So okay, okay. Now, I said, Monday ... You know, the last thing was on a Friday and I said, okay, Monday when the Shop Steward comes I'm going to have to let him know that certain things are happening and this--you know--he's not backing off. So actually, And then I did tell the shop Steward that Monday--that Monday morning that I needed to speak to him later 'cause it was ... he needed to kind of do some things, so I told him I needed to speak to him as soon as--you know--?? well, before that--before I had got to speak to him, we were working arr--fairly far from everyone else and he ... he .. he pinned me down--pinned my arms down--and tried to kiss me; tried to put his mouth on me. And--you know,--being he's a man I had to struggle to get away,--you know?--and you know-he';s turning my head back and forth so--you know-he could make good contact to kiss me. And I had--you know,--broke away and then I just went--you know--straight for the Steward and ...

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. and I told him that this guy--you know,--basically attacked me. And all along I was telling him that I wasn't interested and he said something ... He .. he was from Portuguese and had a bit of an accent, and whatever, and he would say something like: You ... you .. you don't like me. I like you.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. And his wife is in Portuguese, and this, that and the o there. And--you know--he would always say: You ... you ... you like women? I ... No. And I just said: I don't like you. You know? (laughs) I said ??

J.L. And ?? job.

V.S. Yeah. Yeah. It's not that I like women. It's just that I don't like you. So,--you know--he .. he was just never getting it. So at that ... that .. that day when he--you know--you know--pinned me and

tried to kiss me that .. that was the last straw. So I .. I let the Steward know. we called the Local;--I was locking ?? at the time,--you know--with the area that it happened in, and the ... the guys from the Local came down with him the next morning, I believe ?? that day. But I had stopped work. I was quite upset. There was, like, a diner or something about a block away so I just went in there and .. and tried to get myself together. I'm just ... Well, I guess that nobody would ... would like that, but--I don't know--all though my life I .. I don't like people touching me when I say no. You know?

J.L. Yeah, right. Yeah.

V.S. I wasn't one of those women who might--you know--kind of like laugh and think it was kind of cute or something.

J.L. Yeah. Right.

V.S. You know? I .. I just --you know--because you didn't listen to me. ??

J.L. Right.

V.S. So I was quite upset about it and I filed a grievance, and at some point in time,--I guess it was almost a month ... Well, the ..the guys in the Local, they did come down and .. and spoke to the other guys--you know-- ... I guess they spoke to They had laid ... They had laid the .. the offender off and I know they had spoke to the other guys. Actually, I heard he had left that job, but then I heard--somebody told he was working another job ?? But he left that site. He didn't ... They got him off that site. But the guys from the Local, they interviewed the other workers and some did say that they heard me telling him, like, to heave me alone and to stop, and some other things. They didn't witness that incident 'cause we were far ??

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. and we were kind of end of a little ditch also where we were ... we were ... we were erecting forms. But they heard various things that .. that would have supported what--you know,--what I was saying that was happening. And .. and,--you know--as far as reputation, I've got a good one for my work and, I guess, my character so that'll always lend you in good stead. and eventually the .. an internal trial??

J.L. With the Union.

V.S. right--and we went through that process and--I don't know--he didn't show up. I guess he felt that was his strategy not to show up. But he didn't show up. The head of the Local showed up. and I had--you know--the documentation that he had with the interview that he did with the other people, and basically he was thrown out of the Local.

J.L. Oh!

V.S. He was thrown out of the Local. He--what do you call it?--H

J.L. He appealed it?

V.S. Right. He appealed it some months later, but then that was turned down as well. so he was kicked out of the Local and--you know--I heard ?? A friend of mine who's actually in that Local, she was saying that--you know--as ... as .. as happens, word get around; the story gets turned around so I was the bad--you know--I was the bad guy.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. But I did what I had to do. And he was a grown man. He was forty-three or something like that so he--you know--he should have known better. He had--you know--plenty of time to ... opportunity to stop but he just wouldn't bother, so that. ..that I consider on him,--you know?--as a grown individual.

J.L. Yeah. Well, it seems to me that's progress in the Union.

V.S. Yeah, exactly so. I was ... 'cause if ... if they didn't do that I .. I just would have ben furious.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. I just ... I just .. I don't know what I would have done. I would just have ben furious--you know?--because (laughs) So ...

J.L. Well, this is a good segway. You had mentioned the Women's Committee.

V.S. Um-hum.

J.L. And you're active with the Women's Committee?

V.S. Yes.

J.L. And tell me about that. It has a long history.

V.S. There's ... There was a, I guess, kind of a grassroots one that I got involved in, I guess, probably within my second year as an apprentice

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. with Barbara Trees and Grace Margolyn and some other women and we ran that for a number of years. More recently it'd ben .. it kind of petered. And then more recently--this is 2006; 2001, yeah--I think 2001 where I guess the International decided to have kind of like, a conference ??

J.L. Conference, right. I heard.

V.S. And so women just kind of went to that. And from that first conference when, basically, when people got back we started developing a Women's Committee in the different--you know--States or locations, or whatever.

J.L. Um-hum. And they were offering scholarships to women to go?

V.S. In the first. But the second one they didn't. The first one

...

J.L. Well, that's alright.

V.S. Yeah. The first one ??

J.L. So you started putting it together? And how did ... Didn't they do a survey at some point, of the women Carpenters?

V.S. Yeah. We did a survey, 'cause I .. i had one that I was doing back from the probably the more grassroots one back in ... in, like, '90 or whatever, and I still had a hold of that so I started to circulate that one. And then the other women said: Well, let's--you know--like, kindof let's expand on that and so we did that. We revised some questions and worked with Cornell in order to--you know--get ... get that done and so it was, I guess, done more professionally, or whatever. So Cornell ... Cornell helped us with that in ... in ... in getting it done. And-how do you say?--apparently there is--you know--people that do that kind of ... that kind of thing-survey.

J.L. Yeah. Do you remember the name of the person from Cornell, Casey Wagner or ...

V.S. Casey Wagner and Dimone richardson.

J.L. Oh, okay. I know Dimone. Yeah.

V.S. And then also, once it was ... And we made a big effort to get it out 'cause some women either didn't have time or .. or just didn't feel it would do any good, or whatever,

J.L. Right.

V.S. so different .. we .. we encouraged, like, little meetings after, like, let's say, Union meetings where we could go to somewhere nearby and fill it out together and that kind of thing. And then we'll kind of like check up who .. who did that or not, and then maybe give them a call ?? after that so we kind of kept ?? with it.

J.L. And did the Union ever provide you with ... I mean, did they provide you with the names and addresses so that you could give it to people?

V.S. Yeah. Yeah.

J.L. Now, there's a big improvement.

V.S. Yeah. they absolutely did that or else--

J.L. Okay.

V.S. you know,---yeah, it would have ben a lot harder to to make sure that we tried to get all the members,--you know?--?? try.

J.L. who ... Who's the liaison from the Union? Is that Ellie?

V.S. Yeah, Elly Spicer. Since she worked in labor/management she

would be. But as far as we--how do you say?--organizing the women's Committee we have eleven,--you know?--'cause different areas may have different ...--we have eleven women. And

J.L. Only eleven women who are members of it?

V.S. Right,

J.L. Oh!

V.S. who are part of the Steering committee.

J.L. Oh, the Steering committee. Okay.

V.S. who kind of--you know--help 'cause certain things need to be done or you need ...--you know,--in order to put on .. we .. we have a Committee. Yeah.

J.L. Right. And you're on that?

V.S. so I'm one of the eleven on the Steering Committee to--you know--whatever--get the work done. And I think we have a mailing list of roughly two hundred and fifty--

J.L. Wow!

V.S. you know,--general---you know--women members.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. And there are different sub-committees, I guess you'd call it. Oh, and I started to say we all--how do you say it?--we don't have a ?? as far as President, vice-President and things. We're all eleven equal.

J.L. Okay. that's nice.

V.S. But again, Elly, since she works there, she has more contact with them so that's why she's the lia--liaison. But we all have the same title. And different women are involved in different aspects--different sub-committees.

J.L. So what are some of the sub-committees, like organizing or .. program, or what ??

V.S. Right. We have ... well, we have the Habitat, which was what we ... Actually, we're kind of on a--how do you say?----a little ... little discussion about

J.L. Reorganization?

V.S. what do we call which Committee now 'cause, like, we had the Political Action which Habitat came under that because that satisfies what we call our 21-G allocation. Every member has to give eight hours a year

J.L. Okay.

25

V.S. towards either picketing or, let's say, if somebody's running for office and we're supporting them they could work at ... at--you know--doing that.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. But they have to give a full day of .. of service to one way or the other. So it's not necessarily picketing. You used to call it picketing duty but it could be .. it could be just picketing. It could be be the .. the political thing

J.L. Uh-huh.

V.S. or it could be the Habitat. we were able to get Habitat to .. to make that requirement as well--you know?--so that way--you know--(laughs)

J.L. So what are some of the other Committees?

V.S. So there's the Habitat. There's the--what do you call it?--like, Outreach.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. I'm having trouble with the titles 'cause we ?? them, but which .. which is I'll say the ... kind of like the career day kind of things

J.L. Okay.

V.S. where we try to ... to have one of the women speak. I ... Well, I've ben doing that ... the head ... the head of that Committee, if you will, since its inception. For the last maybe six months Tammy has joined me--Tammy Rivera has joined me in doing that.

J.L. Now, where do you go to speak?

V.S. We get different ideas. Actually, the AFL/CIO have a number of schools that they do that with every year. So ...

J.L. The Central Labor council.

V.S. Right. Peggy Ortega, she normally gives me her list every time ...--you know? She'll let me know what she has.

J.L. Right.

V.S. But some women, they .. they just give us things ... Like I got a call ... They haven't called me back with the specifics, but, like,--what do you call it?--like a ... a battered women's shelter that needed some work done.

J.L. Okay.

V.S. so we got a call about that so I just told them, well, just let me ...--you know,--asked me was that possible. I said, yeah. You just have to ??

(26)

J.L. was that the one that was on the Prince list where Janette

V.S. I'm not sure. I got this through one of the guys at the District council 'cause they asked apparently who do I contact 'cause whoever wanted to do a contact through that so they gave them my number. And he asked me as I said, yes,--you know,---possibly. You just give me the date and--you know--kind of like tell me what they want done and the contact there, and that kind of thing, and we can make it happen. That was maybe two weeks ago. He just hasn't called me back yet.

J.L. Oh, okay.

V.S. Yeah. so I get stuff like that or ...

J.L. Speaking at vocational schools?

V.S. right. I was going to say Francois Jacobson from ...

J.L. Oh yeah. Right.

V.S. her daughter goes to Mot 2 School, I believe it is, so I did that-whatever,--like, a middle school which I want to do also.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. But we do high schools.

J.L. Um-hum. I know they're trying to set up this women's--I mean, this high school, but trying to get women to go to high school for construction

V.S. Um-hum.

J.L. and I saw that people were were ... she was encouraging people to speak there.

V.S. right. I think .. I didn't do that one. I think either Tammy might have done or FEmmie or, yeah, one of the other ladies--you know--did that. Well,, yeah, so we get information from new resources and we're trying to get the word out there to think about-for women in particular to think of non-traditional work as an option as well.

J.L. That's terrific. Tell me how many women would you say in the District council ... I mean, you have this long mailing list. How many women are, do you think, actually participating in the work of the Committee?

V.S. Like I say, there's eleven core members and .. and .. and two of them actually are trying to see in what way kind of we can get the other women involved in some way. It would help take off some of the load off of us, but also give them sort of owner ship because it requires time and all of this is volunteer. Actually, one of the women called me today had to do ... We were talking and she asked me do you get paid for this and I said no. (laughs) This is volunteer. So it .. it does ?? time

J.L. I mean, and, like, going to that dinner, the Apprenticeship dinner, I mean, you had done that ... I mean, to have people do that kind of ...

V.S. Yeah. Yeah.

J.L. It's time consuming.

V.S. Um-hum, it is. It is time consuming,--you know?--and you've still got your own lives as well. And sometimes women,--you know--they try to support themselves with side jobs or some other--you know--if they're not working steady enough

J.L. Right.

V.S. getting a side job or some other kind of job that's helping with the income so it's ..it is time consuming.

J.L. And do you ever have any regularly scheduled meetings for this?

V.S. Yes. We decided to have it quarterly 'cause monthly is definitely too much.

J.L. Right.

V.S. Two months is still kind of soon so we've been doing them quarterly and I think the next is September 9th??September 9th. But we've been doing them quarterly and--you know--that's .. that's fairly steady now but it's not too ... too--you know--overloaded for ourselves and--you know--that's what we decided is best.

J.L. Um-hum. Good.

V.S. On Fridays.

J.L. Do you remember anything specifically about the survey: what women were interested in? did you find that useful?

V.S. Actually, I think one thing that I was going to bring to the women at ..at our next Steering committee meeting--you know--'cause we're supposed to have a meeting prior to meeting,--

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. is that I think we need to go over that survey for .. for the information some more 'cause one question was .. came about was, like, there seem to be more Apprentices coming than mechanics. And,--you know--there are several reasons for that but ... And then somebody was saying maybe we--you know---of course, need to try to find out why but they suggested a survey. so I'm like, Okay. We just had a survey, they said, so ?? mechanics ??(laughs)

J.L. you thought. Yeah. Yeah.

V.S. we .. we have to make sure we have all the information from

28

the other survey that .. that we can extract to try to get our answers for us. But that's .. that's a question. And . and I know some of the reasons why the mechanics are not coming. But the Apprentices are a little hungry for ??

J.L. They're looking for--you know-support and ...

V.S. and they're looking for support in this here thing and ways to keep--you know-in the business.

J.L. Have you talked about doing any ... this is an old idea in New York tradeswomen stuff, but the whole idea of doing mentoring wit the young women?

V.S. Yeah.

J.L. Uh-huh..

V.S. No, actually to .. I think, to kind of like--what do you say?--sub .. sub

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. for the mentoring, yeah. Oh, we maybe started that about six months ago and I think it's going okay. and also I was reading some stuff over ... trying to catch up on some of my email actually just yesterday and I hear there was some talk about .. amongst, like, like, nationally about some other mentorship program and a lady was mentioning that, that that was kind of petering. And I don't know if ours is necessarily petering already but ... We thought that it might be useful, but I don't know if it's as useful as we think somehow. But they've been trying to combine--how you say--a place where the Mechanic and the Apprentices could .. could learn,--you know?--physically--

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. you know,-do a project or a job, or whatever, and that's one-how do you say?--one sub ... sub-workshop that we're working on too.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. Like, even if ... even if we're just helping with somebody else'sn house it gives them an opportunity to work together and use their tools...

J.L. Use tools and ... Yeah. That's good.

V.S. And we thought of .. we thought of maybe even going to the Home Depot classes together--

J.L. Oh yeah.

V.S. You know?--'cause they have classes in whatever and things like that. and also doing fun things together where you'll--you know--develop a bond there.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. and you usually support people when you know them. (laughs) You know? There's just a wall. That's how life is. You know? But if you disconnect yourself from ...--you know?--the issue is not your issue. But, so try to do social things with them, the mentor and mentee, and opportunities for them to work together and use their skills. So I .. I .. I myself am not a part of that Committee, but when the person kind of like reported on that it was--how do you say?--the report was fair but not necessarily as, I guess, as ... as .. as good as they thought it was going to be. Some people seemed to think ... apparently, out of the---I think I think they had sixteen, if I remember, sixteen matches. I think it was even. It turned out that it was even 'cause-you know-they put out a request who wanted to be a mentor; who wanted to be a mentee, and then I believe the number was sixteen on each side so they matched them. But I guess it's a plus but it just doesn't seem to be as big of a plus as ... as thought for some reason. I'm not sure necessarily why yet, whether it's time commitment or .. or what. I'm not sure. But maybe if we really get the opportunity for .. for them to use their tools more ad not just talk about things but to use .. use their tools more

J.L. I'm not getting to use my tools. Yeah.

V.S. 'Cause there's certain mentoring that ... that has to go on that has nothing to do with tools, just the business and how do you get ?? on certain issues at work. Just last week I ran into a woman,--I think she's third year now,--and she was having issues on the job where a foreman was asking her out in front of the guys and what not. You know? So she was having some issues so .. so she needed support. And . and so I took her name and number and I gave her mine. And ?? I could tell her at the time, I said to myself mentally I should--you know--contact her in about a week or something just to see how things were going. But I did tell her that you need to keep your notes. (laughs) I did tell her that.

J.L. Right.

V.S. And of course, she was .. she was--you know,--she didn't want to cause trouble and ..and she said she was kindof trying to blow it off, kind of like laugh it off a little bit. But the things she said he was saying was ... And then, in front of the guys too. It wasn't that he was trying to catch her alone. He was kind of being bold with it something so I said it's not indicated that he was going to probably back off.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. so I aid you may need to think about how you want to be at least more .. more direct in... in, like, ... I told her: In your own words think about how you want to say it, but try to think of ways you want to let him know that--you know--you'd rather just want to b treated professionally and .. and--you know--that you didn't ?? You know? But I did tell her that it .. it's really necessary for you ...

Tape Two

V.S. Yes. I ... I was just saying that--you know--there's mentoring

30

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. on kind of like how to persevere in the business--you know--emotionally and how to handle certain situations. So there's always that even if kind of like your skills are okay. You know?

J.L. um-hum.

V.S. Sometimes you just need somebody to talk to and .. and that's okay when .. when you had this situation, how did you handle that and that kind of thing. So as far as the ?? are concerned, I think that ... that at least the ??--you know--at this time would ... that .. that it didn't seem like he was going to stop so you should start taking your notes and if something happened at least you would have your notes. You know? You'd be ?? yourself if you didn't.

J.L. Right.

V.S. You know?

J.L. tell me about ... Well, I'm interested in other things that you do around tradeswomen. Do you ever participate in the Tradeswomen Coffeehouse at NEW?

V.S. Yes. I haven't

j.L. They have been doing it this summer, I think.

V.S. right. Last I spoke to--who did I speak to last?--Nicole?--was it Nicole?--I can't think but I spoke to someone last 'cause I ..I was going to .. I was going to suggest a topic for one of the--you know--

j.L. Yeah.

V.S. for one of the dates and .. 'cause, January, I guess, we had had people from--Oh gosh--we had, like, a workshop on occupational health and safety.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. And I can't think of the hospital that came but ?? from

j.L. Maybe Mount Sinai?

V.S. Mount Sinai. thank you. I contacted them and they were able to come and .. and give us a presentation

J.L. Great.

V.S. 'cause that's always helpful. "Cause one of the things ... the thing ... You know, this is a tough business and .. and everything was made for a man's height and weight and stuff so everything is more .. strenuouswise. You know?

J.L. Right.

31

V.S. Even to carry sheet rock--you know?--everything. So I thought that it would help. And actually an offshoot from there is several things 'cause the back ... back injuries are prevalent in this business

J.L. Uh-huh.

V.S. just because of the nature of the work so one of the ladies was doing some health and fitness stuff. I put her in contact with Mount Sinai again 'cause I don't necessarily have to be there. I just did the first thing,--but shoe exercises specifically on how you strengthen your back--you know?--to .. to help avoid injuries. And also there are certain ergonomics that--you know--we try to get the benefit of. I was told there are certain gloves that ... that can be of help so I was put in contact with from Mount Sinai, from the physical therapist.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. I still have yet to call them, but he gave me certain companies who were making certain gloves that might help us, certain gloves with jell in them

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. and ... and and some other kind of glove. So I figure we'd have kind of like a little non-scienc--scientific study, if you will. I wanted to get some of the women together and use a power tool, maybe a shotgun, a screw bar, a drug or something and use the gloves and see if them seemed like they benefitted us or not but I still .. I still have yet to do that. So

J.L. So you're going to do that through the coffee house?

V.S. Actually, I was going to do that through ?? or something. I was going to do that for ... for one of our meetings or a sub-meeting or something.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. We were starting to have these sub-meetings in addition ... in addition to formally.

J.L. The current meetings.

V.S. Yeah. So but that made me thing ... That's why I had called NEW and asked them 'cause I thought that was beneficial to us, so if they wanted me to contact Mount Sinai and--you know--and .. and. . and they would arrange the same kind of thing for NEW. And that's when I was told if they ever want to do this they weren't going to have the regular monthly meeting. they were going to have--you know---a liited time of the year. I don't know .. I don't recall if she said quarterly ... She probably said quarterly ??

J.L. Yeah. So they're cutting back.

V.S. Yeah. So they're definitely not going to have the monthly, she told me.

J.L. Um-hum. So now, I'm very interested in Habitat For Humanity. How did you get involved with that and .. and

V.S. Probably You know I'm not sure.?? Probably Nefitory .. Well, Nephatory Barnes and I,

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. we do that together. We're both on that Committee. We're .. we're the two members that . that run that.

J.L. And is that through the Carpenters?

V.S. Yeah. that's ... that's with the Carpenters

J.L. Okay.

V.S. and we normally ... well, the key people at Habitat would normally--you know--sit down and ... and arrange certain things through the year.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. We usually have about four dates that they'll ... we'll arrange to work with them.

J.L. And this is Women Build?

V.S. right.

J.L. Okay.

V.S. They call it Women Build when there are all women there, whether they be skilled or not, 'cause they still have their regular volunteers.

J.L. Right.

V.S. Right. So sometimes we're working with the volunteers and then sometimes it's all skilled.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. You know? So it depends on what Habitat we ??

J.L. right.

V.S. But, again, we normally have several days during the year,

J.L. Um-hum.

..V.S. and they'll let me know how many people they want me to get (unintelligible) and we'll get ... Like, one day they wanted ten women and one day they wanted, like, fifteen, or whatever, so it just depends how many they ask for. So as the dates come they'll .. they'll let me know kind of like what they're up to because as .. when we're not there,

there's still people working on the project--you know?--

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. so it can be in various states and they'll let me know we need, let's say, ten women and we're going to be ... we're going to be doing bathroom tiles, or whatever. They'll let me know what the scope of the work is going to be and we'll just put it out there. We'll either make calls or put it on the Internet that we need certain people for a certain dates. And I'm there definitely on a Saturday. This last couple have ben on, like, a Thursday which is hard to get ?? foreman. You know? And I wasn't working and I was so scared that I was going to get a call from work. But I still got a call from work that ..that day so I was at habitat for Friday. "Cause you know it was so close and, like, so .. so difficult.

J.L. Nerve racking.

V.S. ?? You know? We work with them in trying to get the--you know--to get the women there to---you know--help complete that project. and also, well, this is a way to get by. It's a way

J.L. Right.

V.S. And we're hardly on jobs together so it's a way for us to work together at this point.

J.L. Is it fun or Tell me about it. I mean, is it rewarding?

V.S. Yeah. It's ... it's a lot of fun. We're getting our work done but we're having a lot of fun 'cause, again, we don't get to work ... we don't get to see each other on the job site. there's one say, one ?? 'cause there's not a whole lot of us in the first place.

J.L. Right.

V.S. So it's .. it's fun. And we have a--you know--your sense of accomplishment and you have a sense that you're giving back to the community for this. There's awlaysy somebody less fortunate that you.

J.L. Oh yeah.

V.S. so it's a good way to give back. And then on the days when there are non-skilled people there it's a way for them to see that there are actually people doing this for a living;-you know?--professional people are doing it. And-you know,--I['m sure it's happened to some of the there women, but I've got a few women who have asked me--you know--about .. about being a Carpenter so I give them the info---you know--and contact information and so on, and so it's just a way to also get out there that women do this--you know?--for .. for a job. You know? So it's .. it's rewarding all the way around.

J.L. Right. I ... I was thrilled to see you in the paper, in "the New York Times."

V.S. Um-hum. Yes. (laughs)

J.L. You've ben .. done some work around Union democracy issues I know. Have you ben doing anything with that or not so much? I don't know when you have time to do all this

V.S. Well, exactly. Not so much. I've ben trying to find a way to could I extract myself from so much

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. obligations because things take time and .. and you want to be--you know--well rounded and not have to be somewhere all the time. You know?

J.L. right.

V.S. and have a meeting here or something to do there.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. So I've been--you know--trying to cut back some. I actually did run for Delegate a few years ago

J.L. In your Local?

V.S. yes, in my Local. I lost by, like, five votes which was---you know---??

J.L. Now, this was a Delegate for the District council,

V.S. Right.

J.L. not for the Convention but for a District council

V.S. Right. Right, ??

J.L. Okay. And so you lost by five votes? That's very good.

V.S. Yeah, so that was a good

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. a good thing for the first time. And the last time it's just that I had so much on my plate--you know--familywise I would not have ben able to devote the time that's necessary 'cause I didn't want people saying, okay, I'm Delegate and I'm not

J.L. Doing the job.

V.S. doing it. I'm not doing what I'm supposed to do.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. So I didn't want that. So,--you know--maybe the next time I'll ... I'll ... I'll try 'cause I really want to see ... to be able to be in there and to see how the wheels are turning and for myself try to get that change across. And I just feel that I could see--how do you say?--people for who they are. (laughs)

J.L. Right. Now tell me, the guy who beat you by five votes, is he doing a good job or ...

V.S. Actually, there was a ... there was ... we have eight Delegates and actually I think I ... I ... there were two guys who got the same number which was ... and I was amazed that that many people come out to vote approximately, actually,--you know-compared to how many members we have.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. It's a very low turn out.

J.L. Do you have any idea of how many members are with your Local?

V.S. I'm trying to think. I knew at one time. ?? twenty-five thousand in New York city, I think, with retired and .. and not ... I think ... I think ... I think my Local has three thousand ??

J.L. Okay.

V.S. And I forgot the number that turned out but it's like thirty-nine, which I hear is pretty common (incomprehensible)

J.L. Do you know if there's any other female Delegates?

V.S. Now there is. since then ... Since I had ran Elly Spicer is a Delegate

J.L. From?

V.S. six months now roughly,--roughly six months now.

J.L. Out of a Local?

V.S. She is in .. Yes. she's 608 too.

J.L. Oh, okay. Wow! That's pretty interesting.

V.S. Uh-huh. Yeah, and she was the first one in, I think, a hundred and twenty-five years something. Yeah.

J.L. Wow! Okay. that's cool.

V.S. And I think she ... she was a Delegate to the Convention as well.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. But, yeah, she ... And so, actually,

J.L. So that's a recent development.

V.S. Yeah.

J.L. um-hum.

V.S. And actually we--in general we all kind of--you know--are support of ?? equality and what not, and I didn't I .. I think I would have made a difference had there been that much organization around ... around mine.

j.L. Yeah.

V.S. not that it couldn't have happened, but I'm just saying--you know--

J.L. Uh-huh. Yeah.

V.S. we .. we .. we did all of that for her. I .. I think I two days I visited with with them. a lot of them did--you know .. I think we did, like, three days on the subject--you know--of equality so that ... I'm sure that made a difference in--you know--in ..in--you know--the woman Delegate now, which is always the first step. (laughs) You know?

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. But like I say, so I will probably run the next time because I .. Well, for one reason, since if you don't know if it's public information on who voted how, you don't necessarily know ... necessarily know who's doing the right thing or not,--you know?--

J.L. right.

V.S. 'cause they can say one thing and .. and .. and-you know--kind of like do another basically ??

J.L. Right.

V.S. Yeah. So that, like you said, I'm interested in finding out.

J.L. Tell me about .. Now, corruption has been a big subject in the Carpenters and has that .. how has that affected you or ... I mean, we talked a bit about that in terms of the cronyism and closeness to the bosses,

V.S. Um-hum.

J.L. but any other things you care to say about that subject?

V.S. Well, I think the--how should we say that?--people ain't going to hear about it so much. I was going to say, I think maybe the corruption as far as, like, mob related maybe lessened--but that's probably still there too,--but I think the worst thing is .. is the .. the contractors or foremen--you know--just ... just having too much power and just kind of doing what they want rather than ?? the contracts . But the .. the contracts or language is not is not as in the past. 'Cause if you .. if you .. if you used to read our contract, I mean, it was great---you know?--the things that they can't do. But again, if it's not heeded,

J.L. Of course. Right.

V.S. it doesn't mean anything.

J.L. Right.

V.S. And what I'm really concerned about now is that the actual--you know,--they're giving them some actual rights that it's going to be hard to get back.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. Just like I recently heard,--I don't know if it's true because I don't have a contr--a copy of the contract,--like, that, let's say, lunch. Lunch used to be ten minutes to twelve to twelve-thirty 'cause you .. you got ten minutes ?? time. But now .. And then, the end of the day you rap up ... If you get out two-thirty you rap up twenty after 'cause you got (incomprehensible) your needs, your whatever, different things you might have out. So now I hear ... in the contract I hear that, let's say, lunch is five minutes to twelve and you rap up twenty-five after so that means they got shit in

J.L. It's whittling away.

V.S. Yeah. It's like .. it's whittling away.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. And .. and well, the thing is, at the end of the day .. and .. and that's not ?? something before. That's not every floor. There's nothing gained for us, like, with ... So how do you rap up at twenty-five after and then be done with your day ??

J.L. Yeah. Right.

V.S. You know?

J.L. Yeah. so it's your time

V.S. Yeah. Right.

J.L. that you're contributing.

V.S. Right, exactly. So things like that is, like, again, I'm like, how could ... how .. I'm thinking how could one have voted for that to be okay.

J.L. somebody who hasn't ben^v on the job for quite a while probably.

V.S. Yeah. There's no way. And then .. so I have to try to get that factual information. And actually, I was supposed to ... 'cause they have a .. we have a anti-corruption line and something where you could call it anonymously ... anonymously--and some people do. I've called it both anonymously and sometimes with my name, 'cause sometimes when I find I call the Local .. Now, this is ?? and I'm going to check with Myra. Like, I work .. I work, let's say, in the territory of the ?? and you just kind of get blown off. But that's .. that's information you need to know as a worker, but especially as a Steward. You know?

J.L. Um-hum. Yeah.

V.S. So what I .. what I was thinking of was calling that hotline asking them .. I need factual information that I'm not able to get. and I need to know that as a Shop Steward, to be--you know--to basically be as effective. But that's one one thing that I heard is .. is now actually in the contractuall language that--you know--lunch .. your lunch is different. But as I understood--you know-- we're supposed to get ten minutes clean up time

J.L. Right.

V.S. because we're-you know--dirty and ... dirty and what not and so basically how could we eat. So I need to get some factual--you know--legal information.

J.L. It'll be interesting to see if you get anything out of them.

V.S. Yeah.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. So again, I--you know---that's ... that's what I intended to do today 'cause I just didn't trust getting it from the Local actually. Like I said, I got kind of blown off--you know---

J.L. yeah.

V.S. when I ..I asked about some things as far as the new contract. I had the information in reference to

J.L. do they have, like, rebriefing Stewards courses. You know?

V.S. Well, only .. only in the sense that certain licenses expire and you have to have a license renewal from the Fire Department to be a Steward

J.L. Oh, okay.

V.S. and that expires every two years, and certain things expire at different times so you have to get those recertified. But no, which I think there should be, ongoing ... Actually, I think and I was hoping that since we were overseen by the government, that some .. or even these people from the Corruption Hotline to just have, like, maybe at lest quarterly meetings with Stewards to .. to see what is happening.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. You know?--because there are certain contractors who are known to be bad, who are known to be just real bad just almost like slave work. You know? and .. and .. and there are just certain instances--you know ... They'll get away with what they can get away with. You know?

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. And even the good ones, they'll just try to push it so far 'cause we can get a little bit more here, we can get a little bit more ... But I ... that's what was in my mind is how to make that happen. But that maybe some at least quarterly, 'cause monthly may even be too much, at least quarterly--you know--you'll ... you'll see what the steward say is happening

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. and then from that you should try to tackle the situation ?? tackle the contractors or--you know? But .. but . but you see what's going on so you could .. so you could rectify it.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. and the best way to get that is .. is from the Stewards 'cause I from .. Okay, since I've ben a Steward I've noticed how ... 'cause, like, if it's a regular worker, let's say, I don't notice as much. I'm busy with my job---you know---

J.L. Um-hum. Sure. Yeah, 'cause part of your job as a Steward is to be vigilant, to e paying attention.

V.S. Exactly, to be paying attention--to say .. to be paying attention to . to different things. so that's when I ... I noticed .. and then over the years, how ??--you know--things have changed. You know? when I work for a company for ..for a couple of years. So, again, in those instances--you know .. And they're not ... they wouldn't ask me to do anything wrong,--you know---I'm working my days Actually, I wasn't--you know ... They didn't .. they didn't want me to work for any less.

J.L. Right.

V.S. They didn't want me to, like, .. like, say, stay for overtime and then, like, pay me regular time or anything like that, but So I was company ..for a company named Cardvo Property. But when I wasn't, when I was just a regular worker, you ... you just don't notice things. But when you're a Shop Steward you'll ... you'll just see all the bad things that are going on and you'll see how you're not being supported by ... by the Local--you know--if you have an issue. But what, I think one thing would be a great thing is if there could be quarterly meetings and then you .. you act on the things that you're told--that you're finding out. You know?

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. But how that's going to happen I don't know.

J.L. You might have to make it happen.

V.S. Yeah.

J.L. So tell me, your ...your plans for ... your goals, your dreams. are you planning to continue working as a carpenter or you have some ... something else in mind or ...

40

V.S. I ..I just .. I just love the. the work so much and it's .. it's hard to be .. I'm thinking about--you know--if I want to---I don't know--be a teacher, be an organizer or do something else. For one thing, you have to consider age. You know?

J.L. yeah.

V.S. And there are ... there are certain aspects of the building--you know-of being a Carpenter that are less taxing than--you know--like some others, like, ?? foundation or framing--I mean, not framing so much but sheet rock ing is hard. But if you were doing hard ? like, ?? you could do that. You know? it's the lighter end of the work. "Cause I ..I just truly like to work and I don't want to--you know--leave it, but I can't necessarily produce as much--you know?--and
....

J.L. Right. You think you might like to teach carpentry?

V.S. I was definitely thinking of that as a alternative.

J.L. So ...

V.S. Actually, yeah, teaching is .. teaching is an alternative. Actual, I teach at CWE sometimes

J.L. Oh, okay.

V.S. --what is it?-Consortium For Education.

J.L. Consortion ...

if I'm not working. It depends--you know?-'cause ...

J.L. And those are the classes for kids--right--in the high school?

V.S. Right, they usually come through 'cause we're a certain ... in the last year or so. They kind of get segwayed into--you know--the program ??

J.L. And do you ever get any girls in there?

V.S. A few. There have ben a few. I know one has become a Carpenter. Sometimes ... A lot of times they want to become electricians.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. And--you know--I recall one of them wanted to be a plumber. But there may be one or two in each class, but, yeah, not that many. That is one of the reasons why we try to do the career day things to try to get more women to---you know-to think.

J.L. Right.

V.S. 'Cause I don't recall anybody coming to my ... Maybe it was the nature of my school ?? I don't know. But--you know--I don't recall

41

it being an option for me. You know?

J.L. Yeah. Right. It definitely wasn't .. wasn't for me.

V.S. right. (laughs) You know. It's a little more ...

J.L. Tell me your thoughts about women in the trades, like, do women belong in this business?

V.S. Oh yeah.

J.L. What's the forecast? what .. what do you think?

V.S. they absolutely do belong, but they have to get the message that they're ... that they're ...that there's an alternative and that they're capable. And it's not for everybody because a certain amount of it, no matter which field, is physical, and no matter in what trade. But they have to realize that there are more options. Otherwise than being a secretary, a nurse or ..or---you know--which are wonderful careers, but it may not have--how do you say?--satisfied them as much as this would if it was an option, if they knew. 'Because I'm very sat--satisfied with the work. Like I say, I really would not want to ..to leave it. And ?? once I had left my other job that I didn't ..I didn't look back once.

J.L. have you sen the new ad that NEW is doing on ...

V.S. The one where

J.L. women working and it says the average wage and fifty ...

V.S. You know, I'm ?? visualizing the picture. I'm not sure what she's doing.

J.L. Yeah. She's working. I ... I think they're trying to make it look generic. You know? And then it says carpenter, electrician, plumber, whatever.

V.S. Right. Right.

J.L. And it says the average wage in the building trades is fifty-three something. Need we say more?

V.S. Yeah. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

J.L. You know? And it's ben very effective apparently. It's gotten a lot of calls.

V.S. Yeah. I've seen a lot of women saying yes ?? whatever.

J.L. And they're .. they're doing a new--a whole new bunch now on buses and trains and ...

V.S. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

J.L. Yeah.

42

.S. You see it when you stand for the bus and other places, which is .. is a ?? policy. ??

J.L. So that's that's exciting. That's .. that's very good.

V.S. Yeah, and .. 'cause I don't think they know working that .. that--you know--you could make a good living if you could--you know--into this kind of ... You know?--taxing in other ways but --you know? I mean,

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. but it's .. it's a good way to make a living and to have, like,--you know---you could do one job rather than two or three,---you know--paying--you know--minimum wage or

J.L. Like, in MacDonal'd's or

V.S. Yeah. You know? So

J.L. Now, tell me about the question of race and gender. Which has ben the biggest factor in your career? Or one of the women said it depends upon what day. Joy Biers said that.

V.S. Um-hum. Um-hum. I think it's probably .. I think it's probably gender.

J.L. um-hum.

V.S. I .I think just overall they .. they just don't view women as .. as equals. You know? We're not necessarily equal in ... in physicall ... because there is a difference in us physically.

J>L. Yeah.

V.S. That's just ... but you need to be treated equal. You know? Like I said, at the beginning of construction or whatever, everything was based on a man and it should have been based on both,--you know?--but it wasn't,--you know?--so everything is more taxing for us. But that doesn't mean that--you know,--physically that we shouldn't be there. We should be treated as equal people and--equally intelligent, that's for sure, and it's just .. it's just that over... over history and time ... women haven't ben taught to do this work; that ?? not necessarily come naturally as .. as .. as a boy who might have had shop classes or his father took him around wherever. You know? It's a different situation for women in that respect. But they absolutely belong there. and .. and as I tel some women, you go on the job like you own it. You can't ... You don't be meek about it. You just go there and like you're supposed to be here and hold your head up high. And .. and some women I can see that they're just kind of ...

J.L. tentative ...

V.S. time--yeah, timid and tentative about it, and I think that--you know--works against you. Just on the job where I am a guy .. I forgot what we were talking about, but then he says .. he say something like, ... he said, you're good, and then he said .. and then

43

he said And a lot ?? but they think that a lot, but they think that-and the problem is and you know it. (laughs) And I jut kind of laughtedn, but that's not rue. But I . I know I'm a capable person and I just go about--you know-doing my thing.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. And I just ... I just ... I just remember the comment, 'cause a lot of times they think you're supposed to ... they kind of walk two steps behind and look to them for all this guidance. And as an Apprentice, of course, you're looking for guidance. But ... but they just generally think ... because I think that life and society teaches them

J.L. everything ...

V.S. Yeah, every-everything teaches them that ... that they are baasicaly better.

J.L. As a man.

V.S. Uh-huh ?? Yeah. They are the man and that's that and that's the better thing to be. And so it .. it .. it's hard to get re--respect. So actually, I was a little bit frustrated over--you know ... there's--you know Everything has to go in the book so I'll just say to you

J.L. Okay.

V.S. that there was an electrician who ... (recorder turned off and back on) I was going to say I think ?? are men think about sex, like six times a day or something, but, like, a lot. I forgot. I knew at one time.

J.L. Right. Yeah.

V.S. So how you dress on the job in an environment with all these men, it does make a difference.

J.L. It does.

V.S. It just ... it just does. It's just a fact of life. You know? you don't want to dress sloppy but you want to dress appropriate in ... in women's clothes that--you know--

J.L. You're giving sig-signals.

V.S. Yeah. So that I really thought was--you know---opening on it the wrong way. And actually, I told her, I said: Well, you know .. I forgot how I said it to her but I said something like your .. your top is up and you need to pull this down, or something like that. And so she did it that day and then she seemed like she was--you know-kind of like getting ... getting the picture. But then another day I see her having on something tight and short. And then I noticed in the mornings--like, I think I noticed today when she came in to work she had on this tiny tank. And so even though she .. she changed that part. But the thing is, you're giving a guy a visually

44

J.L. Really, yeah.

V.S. and you should always keep it professional.

J.L. Right. Yeah.

V.S. so it's it could be ?? They think about sex all the time, so either they don't need anything

J.L. They don't need any help. (laughs)

V.S. Actually, and did, like, spare .. spare a comment and then ...

J.L. One thing leads to another.

V.S. Exactly. exactly.

J.L. And .. and the fact that you're putting out signals.

V.S. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

J.L. That was a scene in .. Well, I won't go into it now. So any advice you want to offer to young women or sum up about your own career satisfactions?

V.S. Well, I'll say maybe in my own career ll Like I said, I haven't looked back and I just really enjoy the work itself. I love using my hands and I just love--you know--seeing what I've done at the end of the day and .. and .. and knowing that , I guess, I've succeeded in seventeen years in .. in being here, 'cause I think a lot of women they'll .. they'll start --you know---I think for various reasons they'll .. they'll just decide to leave because it ... it is a lot to deal with and maybe they .. maybe it's too physical for them or maybe the . the environment is--you know--not acceptable enough for them and then they just decide to leave. But I've hung in there for the ..for the seventeen years, going on eighteen, and I'm proud of myself for that. And I think one person, because somebody somebody .. I don't know--I don't know who the first woman carpenter is, but somebody decided to do this and you always make it better for the next one if you do the right thing and if ... if you're professional.

J.L. Well, we have in this book we have the first woman Carpenter in New York City

V.S. Okay. I was wondering!

J.L. and she's fabulous. You would love each other. I mean, she's so great. She's like you. She's a real .. She's an organizer. She's ...

V.S. Oh, that's great 'cause I was wondering. Actually, I was saying a couple of months ago, several months ago, I said we .. we should find out who the first woman carpenter is in New York---you know--of course, and then celebrate her.

J.L. Well, I mean, she was in the Union. You know? There are

45

probably women Carpenters who are doing carpentry work for your Union,

V.S. Yeah. Uh-huh.

J.L. yeah, Consuelo Reyes Terrell is her name and she's a real activist.

V.S. Uh-huh. Yeah. ?? write it down 'cause I aid ?? and we should--you know?----'cause I thin it was maybe Mother's Day or something and ?? were having, I mean,--you know-a Mother's Day march and I just thought--you know--you know--we should celebrate and we should find

J.L. Yeah. We should know our history.

V.S. Yeah, exactly. so let me start get the ball rolling.

j.L. well, and Elly Spicer has a very interesting history. She used to work for NEW

V.S. Right.

J.L. and she--you know--she's just a tremendous person. so ...

V.S. Yeah. She came .. she decided to sort of-how do you say it?--follow all these other women into this high paying career ?? myself.

J.L. And that happens. You know?

V.S. Yeah.

J.L. Connie was helping minority men get in when she decided, hey, wait a minute, I'm going to do it too.

V.S. Yeah, uh-huh, exactly. You see ... So if it had it not been kind of like put in front of her kind of--you know-it wouldn't have ben a thought. So again, that's the .. that's the emphasis for me doing the .. the career day kind of things because you've got to get it out there. You've got to get it out there.

J.L. that's right.. we've got to get it out there more now.

V.S. Yeah.

J.L. Tell me how did ... where did you get your ethic to be always organizing; to be doing all those things you're doing? where does that come from?

V.S. I don't know. But I guess ever since I was young I had a sense that whatever it was, whatever the situation was, that the bad things that were going on was that individual people decided that they were going to do the wrong thing, or they weren't going to do the right thing or they were going to turn their head.

J.L. Um-hum. Um-hum.

46

V.S. but it was the individual people that--you know? ... 'cause it's not one person that's, like, got everybody, like,--how do you say?--brain-washed or, like, something .. Okay. We've got to do this,--you know?--like ... like ... like drones or something, but it's all these individual people who have a decision to make--you know?--and basically made the wrong one. You know?

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. So I always said, at least in my life I was going to do the right one and would try to .. to influence people--you know--in a positive way. But I knew the one person I had control over was me and it's a decision that I made and they would have an impact, good or bad. But I don't believe anything is indifferent basically. You know? There's not much indifferent in the world. You know? It's either kind of like good or bad, positive or negative,--you know?--and you always have to try to make the ..the right decision. so that I .. I don't know. I just had a sense of that when I was very young,--you know?--that all my decisions, for one, that they would lead me in a certain direction, like, maybe bad ones if I decided to take drugs or if I decide to rob somebody or do anything, that that would lead me on the path and definitely. and even if .. if .. I don't know. Let's say relationshipwise, I didn't want to, like, use people or anything. You know? I just always wanted to . to .to be proud of myself, to . And again, if I were to use people that would be bad energy out there, if you will, that would ... If it wouldn't necessarily get back to me, it would make men think worse than what .. So everything has a consequence to me.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. It just always did. so I knew one person I had control over it was me and and my life, but I always ..always knew my life could

Side Two

J.L. ?? I have so much information so ...

V.S. Yeah.

J.L. but she's great, but not in this book. so tell me about the conferences that the Carpenters have done that you've attended.

V.S. Okay. I think the first ... we had one 2005; the last one Chicago in '5; and I think the first was 2003 or '2.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. I forget. But somehow the ball got rolling, and I assume the International and ..put out, I guess, the word and then the different Locals throughout the United States. and then actually, Canada came as well. And so that first one was . it was just wonderful because you got to meet all these women carpenters from all over. You know?

J.L. And about how many were there would you say?

V.S. The first time .. I think the number two hundred and fifty was in my head. the last time it was a lot more,

(47)

J.L. wow!

V.S. 'cause I think the first time there were, like, if I could recall. Oh no, like, we had at least double the number that went from New York this time than before.

J.L. Um-hum. Good. Yeah.

V.S. It had got a lot larger. A lot more people came so it's--you know---progressing.

J.L. so what ..what kind of program did they have? Was it political in the sense of actually talking about tradeswomen issues and things like that or what was it ...

V.S. there were ... Unfortunately, I can't even remember all of the workshops. There were workshops. I just recall one on having to do with, like, for lack of a better word, how they kind of like how they handled different situations that .. that happened to individuals on the job sites. I guess some of them handled it with humor; some of them handled it in different ways; but just how--you know--you kind of get through it. And for some reason that's the only one that I can remember.

J.L. Did you feel it was worthwhile?

V.S. I think well, I think it was worthwhile, but I ..I ..I don't think it was concrete enough in that, okay, once we have these workshops what are you going to do.

J.L. To go forth and have some plan.

V.S. Yeah. You know? And I recall in ... in one of the workshops--I wish I could remember what it was titled,--and there was ... I think there was one or two men in the room and .. and we were talking, I think talking about the lack of bathrooms or something. You know? You know, as ... when you get together you talk about different things, of course, people have common .. common instances all over. Right? so we were just talking about something, and then I remember somebody said, like,--I don't know how you say it,--but kind of like be mindful that we have a man in the room. and so I said .. I said .. Well, this is .. this is the women's conference. this is the opportunity for us to--you know--speak our truth.

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. and ... and we weren't saying anything bad about him. We were just talking and . and speaking our truth. and I felt .. I was just kind .. I was just kind of annoyed that we have--I don't know--thirty women in the room, or whatever, and .. and

J.L. And this one man ...

V.S. ?? Yes. and there's this one man here. I'm not quite sure why he was there.

J.L. Yeah.

48

V.S. Anyhow, but that we .. were were trying to temper ourselves 'cause we weren't using nasty words and, like, being man haters or anything like that. We were just talking, and .. and this person was .. wanted us to, like, to ... to temper ourselves and change the subject 'cause there was this man in the room. And so,--you know--I .. I just kind of said what I said, that--you know--we're just speaking and speaking the truth and not being disrespectful so I .. I don't think ... I didn't think that was a fair comment to .. to even make. But I think a lot of the women .. Well, if ... if not .. if not anything else, they just en--enjoyed being together and .. and you get more momentum, and you just get when you were thinking ...

J.L. Power ...

V.S. Like, I think one lady did say ... She was having, I guess, there were a number of them there that were having a lot of that--you know--situations, especially a lot of times if you try to speak out--you know--they can make it real hard for you. you don't work a lot or different things happen. and one of the ladies, she was really having a hard time and she just said that she was glad that she came 'cause she got another .. she got kind of like shored up so she could try to go on to more,--you know?--rather than leaving. So at least that ... and I'm sure if it happened for her, it happened for--you know--some other women there as well. But I .. I .. I would like for the conferences to, like, seeing like, if you're going to have this and you're going to get the information for whatever workshop it is, then you should be doing something with that and I .. I don't see that. It's .. it's .. it's ... it's .. it's a way to get together and .. and .. and support each other and that kind of thing, but I don't see as much concrete change happening from it.

J.L. a plan. that's right.

V.S. Right. You know? ??

J.L. And there's ... there's a lot that needs to be done.

V.S. right. so that we shouldn't be able to ... I mean, we shouldn't be left to do it ourselves.

J.L. right.

V.S. You should be Okay. If we .. if we don't know .. If we don't ... If we're not in full contact with what's going on out there, these women are telling us this, so then we .. we have to act on it. It's not for us to .. to ... to hash out our problems and .. and work them out ourselves. You know? It's ?? we have a District council for that. we have our International for that. so to me, it's kind of ...

J.L. ... interesting to see what they are doing. You know?

V.S. right. Like I say, it's wonderful. But if there's changes, nothing that is not--definitely not as meaningful as it could be, and that it's only for--you know--kind of like .. like, to keep some women come and going,--you know?--like .. like the woman said. But something needs to be done with Karen or a .. a Committee or something should be

...

J.L. to put women on the radar more.

V.S. right, to .. to ... exactly.

J.L. did you meet a woman named Elizabeth Blackwell from Boston?

V.S. I don't remember ??

J.L. I'd met her when I went up there for some ... Oh, for a AUD conference. and then she was talking about this conference was going to be coming up in the future for women. and then, actually, I was really surprised that it did.

V.S. Yeah. I don't recall if I met her or not.

J.L. Yeah. I saw she was elected to office up in Boston. Maybe I'll try to

V.S. Well, okay, some .. some .. Since you mentioned that, what we did find out was when one of us--I don't know--somewhere ... it was either one of those classes or workshops ...

J.L. she might have been appointed too. I can't remember. I read about it.

V.S. we .. we found out that in other places,--again, it was ?? but we found out in various States that there are women in a lot more leadership positions than right here in New York.

J.L. Um-hum. Yeah.

V.S. That was definitely bold and blatant and what not, which was .. which was a little stunning considering we're New York. we're supposed to be progressive and all of that. But there were a lot more women in dif--in different power positions, whether it e organizer .. I think one woman was a BA and I don't recall where, Joanne something ?? I can't but it was a ?? named Joanne something. I believe she was a BA somewhere. And there were women who were organizers and different .. and different things--you know?--

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. a lot more than New York. You know? there are women in different--you know--aspects, even teaching. And well, we don't have any teachers now. Elly taught for a period of time, I think, (unintelligible) Yeah. I think the only teacher might have ... teacher actually, might have ben Elly. I know Star was there ...

J.L. Is Lisa Narducci still around?

V.S. Yes she is. she hasn't ben so involved in the Women's committee, the new one. She was heavily involved in ... in the one that you ?? myself, Barbara Trees, Grace Morgan and some others were involved in, and doing that--you know--for years and years. and I guess, more or less, she's decided to ... you know? You get kind of warn out. (laughs)



J.L. I know that feeling.

V.S. and just decide to devote your time to either work and family, or .. or whatever,

J.L. right.

V.S. but other .. other aspects.

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. But she's still .. of course, she's still a Carpenter and I've worked on her ..with her on the job, I think, for the I guess ? restaurant maybe nine months ago, 'cause she was .. she was taking another women Carpenter out of my Local. And I'm rarely on the same crew with a woman. Sometimes there may be--you know--like two or three different Carpenter outfits on the same job, like maybe Fame ... like now with Fame&?? and I'm on that crew. And then we had a furniture crew come in ... Actually, there's no woman on that. But in the wood working crew, another carpentry outfit, there's a woman there name Marsha Dawson. she's a Carpenter. So sometimes there can be more than one carpentry outfit there and there may be. .. may be a woman on another one, but usually .. very rarely, like, three Carpenters working on the same ... with the same company or the same group. And actually, one guy kidded us about that.

J.L. Oh well, they're taking over. (laughs)

V.S. Yeah ??

J.L. I wanted to ask you are you active with TNT? are you a member?

V.S. I .. I'm trying to remember now 'cause I believe I .I did become a member but then ... It's just .. my time is just devoted to

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. try to effect change more concretely--you know?---

J.L. Yeah, locally.

V.S. in the Carpenters now.

J.L. Yeah. I .. I .. I was always a member. I was a founding member with AUD and--you know--the Women's Project. But this year I let my membership lapse because I put so much money in the book and I took this leave and .. but I have the paper for when I go back. I'm going to .. I think we should support it because I think they're really trying to ...

V.S. Yeah.

J.L. you know?--just even through membership with no time. But I think they're .. they're actually--you know,--I think they're actually making some headway. they have some smart women involved in it. Yeah, and ...

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V.S. I know Angela ... Angela .. She .. she was like ..I can't think of her last name but you know.

J.L. Ol-Olshevsky. Yeah.

V.S. Yeah. She was on the Board.

J.L. And Lauren Sugarman,

V.S. Yeah. Uh-huh.

J.L. so we should do that. We should support it.

V.S. Yeah. I think they're definitely worth support. ?? hours in a day.

J.L. Okay. And .. I know. I know. Yeah. So thank you so much. I really appreciate it. Anything else you want to say?

V.S. Oh, you're welcome. I ... I can't think .. I think you had asked me anything I wanted to say to other women.

J.L. Yeah. Oh yeah.

V.S. But I just .. I just want to say--I don't know-just ... just think out of the box,--you know?--

J.L. Uh-huh.

V.S. for .. whether it be construction ... but at least not traditional, because generally they pay more, whether Con Ed or-I don't know-something like that, they generally pay more. And you want one job that can support yourself and your family rather than a few, 'cause if you---you know--you would have work but a family also, at least a life other life.

j.L. Right.

V.S. And if you have .. if you--you know,-if you can do one job, then therefore, you don't have to work others, then you could--you know--enjoy life 'cause life is not just work. You know? . . .

J.L. Um-hum.

V.S. But think out of the box and know and .. and to know your value. 'Cause when you feel value, even though some things might not necessarily come to you--how do you say?--easily, but you'll;ll know that you're, if given the opportunity, you can learn it,--

J.L. Yeah.

V.S. you can go somewhere to learn it or you can build up what you have. But you can always do more than what you think you can do,--you know?--once you put your mind to it. and that box, if you think out of the box, you can realize that you could actually build the box itself. You know? If you're a Carpenter you get to build that box so you could

ex--expand your box. But--you know-think ... think out of the norm and your life opportunities will expand for you as well.

J.L. good.

V.S. so ...

J.L. Excellent.

V.S. that's my advice to them.

J.L. thank you, Veronica.

V.S. You're welcome.

