

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Women's Herstory Project

Personal Experiences

O. H. 742

SANDRA LEE GROZA

Interviewed

by

Danna Bozick

on

November 30, 1987

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: SANDRA LEE GROZA

INTERVIEWER: Danna Bozick

SUBJECT: engineers, women electricians, discrimination,  
women's movement

DATE: November 30, 1987

B: This is an interview with Sandra Lee Groza for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, by Danna Bozick, at Ms. Groza's home, on Monday, November 30, 1987.

First off, Sandy, I just want to ask you a little bit about what it was like growing up in your family?

G: I had a great time. I have an older sister and a brother two years younger than I am. There were no other children in our neighborhood until we were about ten, so I played with my brother. I enjoyed it. We built forts; I was always athletic. When the neighborhood began to become more developed and people started moving in around us, there were more kids. I played baseball, and all that fun stuff, until we were about fourteen. Then the boys discovered there was a difference between girls and boys, and I wasn't allowed to play anymore. But it was fun. I'd do it again.

B: So you were close with your brother?

G: Yes, I was.

B: Did you tell me before that you two had a paper route together?

G: Yes. I was twelve and he was ten, and he delivered one half and I delivered the other half.

B: So that was really your first job?

G: Right. Yes, it was my first job.

B: Did you run out and spend your money right away?

G: No. I saved my money and bought a ten-speed bike when I was fourteen. It took me four years.

B: You must have been a good manager.

G: With the help of my dad. He managed my money.

B: Was it your idea or his?

G: His. (Laughter) We learned to finance when we were that young. It was more or less, "Whatever you put into your bank account, I will match." If I put five dollars in, he put five dollars in. If I took money out, he took money out. So I paid, I think \$65 for my bike, and he paid the other \$65. I only made four dollars a week.

B: Wow! You did save.

G: There were only 36 people on my paper route; my brother had the other half.

B: Did you have to get up early on Sunday morning?

G: No. My brother and my dad delivered all the papers on Sunday. I only delivered Monday through Saturday.

B: So you got off easy?

G: He made more money than I did, too.

B: How about high school? What was that like?

G: High school was fun. I was a lariat on the Chaney High School dance line for one year. I ran on the track team two years. I enjoyed high school. I didn't get the best of grades. I got all B's. I was a B student. I got into my share of trouble. I would do that again, too. I had a good time.

B: What kind of trouble? Bad trouble or fun trouble?

G: Just throwing paper airplanes, things like that, fun stuff, just to irritate the teachers.

B: Somewhere along the line, I think you must have turned into a good student. Did that come later?

G: It depends on what you consider a good student. I don't consider myself extremely bright. I think I have a lot of good common sense and self-discipline to keep pushing, but I've never been one to get all A's or to be on the honor roll. I never pushed myself that hard. I have to study.

- B: And yet you are in a field that is a traditional field for men, where it's considered that you have to be fairly bright to get through engineering, right?
- G: I don't know. Like I said, I don't consider myself real, real bright, but I did it. I think anybody can do it if they push enough. You give up a lot of your Friday and Saturday nights. It's a lot of work, but it was worth it.
- B: Do you think that you worked harder than some of the other students to get through--what's it called--electrical technology?
- G: Electrical Engineering Technology. Two-year degree is a technician, and the four-year degree is a technology.
- B: Did you feel like you spent more time at it than the other students?
- G: Well, that was back when I was nineteen. At nineteen, you really don't care about education. I think most students don't. All they care about is getting out, get done, no matter what kind of grades you get, just get done and get out. It wasn't until I went to work for GM, and I started to go back for a Bachelor's in business, that I really started appreciating education. I really appreciate it now, but back then I didn't; all I cared about was going to fraternity parties and having fun.
- B: So you were anxious to get done with that two-year degree to get your first job and make some money?
- G: Right.
- B: And was that what you thought it would be when you got out there doing that?
- G: No. It was a whole different world. Serving an apprenticeship in an electrical field is all hands-on. You carry tools around, keep machines running, and do construction work. You learn a lot. There's an enormous amount of information to be absorbed when you serve an electrical apprenticeship, especially in an industrial plant--industrial manufacturing.
- B: How did you get to serve an apprenticeship? Are those hard to get?
- G: How did I get it? I did not apply at GM. I applied everywhere else but the Lordstown facility. And one day, right before I graduated with my two-year, in 1978, someone from the welfare office here in Youngstown called me up on the phone, and asked me if I wanted to work at General Motors out in Lordstown. I said, "Yes." They said, "Okay, I want you to go out at such and such a time and take a test." So I went out there and took the test. They explained to us that

they would call us within a certain amount of time, which I think was about two or three weeks, and if they didn't call us by then for an interview, then we may as well just forget it. Three months went by. I never thought that they would call me. I thought that I must not have done that well. Well, they ended up calling me up on the phone to ask me to come out for an interview about two weeks before I graduated from college. The day before I graduated, they called me up and said, "Would you like to come to work at GM? You've been picked for this apprenticeship program to be an electrician." I said, "Yes!" So, Monday, two days after I graduated, I went out to my first day at work at GM.

B: Was that kind of scary?

G: Well, I wasn't really scared until I walked into that plant. The machines that make the parts are so huge--when they roll over, the whole floor shakes. It was so loud it was very intimidating. Yes, I was scared of those machines at first.

B: Do you wear headphones for the noise?

G: No. Well, I could but I wear earplugs instead.

B: Do you know what to wear? What do you wear?

G: I wear coveralls when I get there. I just wear regular clothes into work--jeans and T-shirts--and I put the coveralls on when I get there, in a locker room. They issue you the coveralls.

B: So the first day you got issued your coveralls.

G: Well, you don't have to wear them if you don't want to. I didn't wear them at first because I thought they were kind of big. I fit the smallest size they have. So it wasn't until the last seven to eight years when I started wearing coveralls. I didn't wear them in the beginning.

B: You decided that you might as well save your clothes?

G: Right. I thought, "If I'm going to get dirty with this oil and grease, I may as well let them wash my clothes." It's dirty and expensive to wash your clothes; the oil and grease ruin your clothes.

B: Serving an apprenticeship, does that mean that someone was teaching you the job?

G: Yes. You work with different journeymen until you find one that you get along with fairly well. When I first got there, since I was the first woman, the foreman decided to put me with the worst--the guys with the worst personalities, known

to be temperamental, and known not to want to work with other people or women--and I got kicked around a lot. I don't mean physically, I mean mentally.

B: Does that mean that the foreman that did that assignment wasn't glad to have a woman on his crew?

G: No. He openly admitted it, not to me, but to other people. He did not think that I had any business being there.

B: So, were you hired then to fill a quota?

G: Right. I think so. There were thirteen apprentices hired, and I was the only one off the street, and the only woman.

B: That's kind of unusual that they called you up. Does that mean that they got a list from the university?

G: Yes. They called the university for graduates in the engineering program.

B: But you've been there how many years?

G: Over nine.

B: So you proved them wrong?

G: I think they expected me to quit, but I stuck it out.

B: And apprenticeship lasted . . .

G: Four years. You go to school for two and a half years--trade school--and your time is four years on a forty hour week working basis. But if you work a lot of overtime, you can be finished before that. I was finished in three years and nine months.

B: Then what do you move up to?

G: Journeyman, an electrician by trade.

B: That's the same sort of person that was training you to start with.

G: Right.

B: You moved up into the ranks?

G: That's correct.

B: Could you tell me just a little bit about what sort of things you do on the job?

G: It depends on what you're working on. You can work odd jobs,

which is more or less maintenance--small jobs here and there--splicing wires that have been cut or broken, replacing limit switches inside the dies that are broken, repairing boxes that have been knocked off the walls or machines, or installing a 440 volt receptacle somewhere on a column in the plant. Those are just odd jobs here and there. You could work in the construction crew, which most people like to do. That's where the engineers bring down prints that tell you what boxes to use, what sizes, the cords, the cables, all the electrical components that go in it that you have to mount in the box and then wire up. The print will tell you how to do that--where to mount the box, how many buttons to put on it, how many lights. Installing computer-automated systems on the lines are a new thing. The past four years, they have been automating a lot of lines at the B.O.C. fabrication plant. That's a good job; it's clean work. A lot of people like doing that.

B: Did you have to bid for those? How do you get to do the jobs you like?

G: Seniority. It depends though. If there is an opening, you can get in. If you have more seniority than someone else, then you can get in before them, then you stay there until there is another opening somewhere else, then you can move.

B: How do you stand with seniority now?

G: I'm right about in the middle. I wouldn't get laid off from the top on an inverted layoff; I wouldn't make it. If they started from the bottom, I still wouldn't make it. I'm right about in the middle.

B: That must be a good feeling. I mean, you're pretty secure, right?

G: I want to get laid off. (Laughter) I want to get laid off so I can go to school and just study, and not have to work. I really would like to do that. Some people don't want to get laid off because they want to work the overtime, which is fine. But for myself, in my situation, I don't need the overtime and I would like going to school and just studying while getting paid ninety percent of my forty hour week pay.

B: But you are going to school now, anyway, right?

G: Yes.

B: So you are working full-time, and going to school?

G: Seven days.

B: Do you work seven days?

- G: Every day. We don't have to work seven days. They can force you to work six. On Sunday, we don't have to work unless the plant is running full capacity and there is an emergency or something, but other than that they really don't make you work on Sundays. The only reason why I work every day is so I will get up in the early morning and not waste my day sleeping in until ten or eleven o'clock. I won't go out the night before. I'll get my homework done, if I don't have a job, or I can do it at lunchtime. On my breaks, I get my newspaper read.
- B: You find that you operate more efficiently if you're working every day?
- G: Yes. If I go to work, I behave myself. If I don't go to work, I got out the night before, and I don't want to do that. It keeps me in line and you get paid for it too. I'm not an idle person; I don't like being idle. I like to be busy.
- B: Let me just go back a little. You said that when you first started out on the job, it sounds like you sort of had to prove yourself?
- G: Oh, I still do. It doesn't matter. There is a saying that goes, "Once an apprentice, always an apprentice." That's what they say. They treat you like that forever if you served your apprenticeship in that plant. But when I was an apprentice-- apprentices are supposed to make mistakes, and it seems like mine were mountains--I wasn't allowed to make a mistake. If I made a mistake, it was always, "Oh, that stupid woman." I always had to be ten times better than anyone else just to be equal. I think any woman who works in a field that's traditionally dominated by men will tell you that they have to do four or five times better than everyone else just to be considered equal.
- B: What made you stick it out?
- G: The education, the experience. I thought I was going to have a future in engineering. I really did.
- B: And now you don't think so?
- G: No. I have my doubts. Right now they have a salary freeze; they're trying to cut down salary personnel because they're top-heavy with salary people.
- B: Are you qualified to move up?
- G: Definitely.
- B: But that hasn't happened for you?
- G: No.
- B: Do you think that's because of discrimination?



- G: Yes. There are so many men in the corporation, and even in our local offices, who earned their way through the ranks, from years of working there and many don't have college degrees. Now that GM wants people with college degrees, they're not moving on it because these people are choking them.
- B: It's too threatening to the ones at the top who don't have that education?
- G: Right, exactly. I truly believe that.
- B: So, you've continued going to school while you've been working, right? You finished your Associate's, then you went back and got a Bachelor's in business.
- G: Right. I majored in industrial management.
- B: To prepare yourself to move up?
- G: Yes.
- B: Have you seen any other women move up?
- G: No. In fact, there was a young lady who was an industrial engineer in the plant, and she quit. She got tired of being treated like a secretary in the Industrial Engineering Department. She had stupid, ridiculous, menial jobs, and she couldn't stand it anymore. So she quit this past summer, in August. I was hoping that she wouldn't. I thought that by quitting, you're just doing what they want you to do. But she just got sick of it. No one could talk her out of it. She went back to school to study horticulture.
- B: She switched out of her field totally?
- G: She was very unhappy. She hated it.
- B: Do you feel a solidarity between the women who work there? Do the women support each other and try to help each other move up?
- G: No. Most of the women who work there are not in skilled trades; they are in production. They are older. They have got family and children, and are wrapped up in their own lives. They really don't have the time to give to a women's organization that would make any significant changes in the plant.

Just about eight months ago, when we were having national negotiations . . . If we want to submit something for national negotiations with the union, we could submit something and put it in the box. Well, I had typed up this idea to have a day care center at GM. General Motors should get with the times, have day care centers so there wouldn't be so many people missing work in the summertime to stay with their children.

These people try to go on sick leave, and get paid for it while they stay home with their kids. I thought that if they had day care, all they would have to do was invest in a facility and just deduct it out of their paychecks. The company wouldn't even have to pay for it. But I had submitted it, made copies of it, and I told all the women in the plant that I handed them out too; all they had to do was sign it and put it in the box. I thought that they would take up on that, take an interest in it, and push it. I gave it to someone who was a leader in the Women's Committee and I said, "How about making something out of this? I think it's really important that you push this and accommodate the American worker." There are a lot of men who have children, too, who would like to have a day care center--or the mother and father are both working. They could see their kids at lunchtime and . . . Well, I pushed it and put it in for national, and nothing became of it. Then, I put it in for local, and nothing became of it. The women just didn't pick up on it.

B: They didn't do anything?

G: No. I was disappointed. I wish I had more time to put into an organization like that. But I started it--I found the time to write up on it, and I thought that they should do something to take it up. They have these meetings once a month. What they do at them, I don't know.

B: Oh, they do?

G: Oh, yes. I don't know what they do.

B: Is it social though?

G: I don't know. I've only been to one of them.

B: What about the union? Does the union do you any good?

G: Not really. Except for benefits, the union doesn't seem to do anything for you, unless you are fired or you have a problem--an alcohol problem, drug problem, or marital problems, or an absentee problem, or you get fired for doing something like stealing company property or setting off fire alarms or wrecking a truck in the plant. They'll do a lot for you. Of course, if you consider just the fact that the union exists to keep management from taking advantage of hourly wages, it does count for some good.

B: What if you are discriminated against? Can you take it to the union?

G: No.

B: Aren't they supposed to handle that now?

G: No. The union has nothing to do with management, only in safety factors and things like that.

B: How about just the men who you work with, the workers. How do they react to having a woman in the ranks?

G: There are a few men who really hate me. I mean, they don't even talk to me. They ignore me, they look the other way. They pretend that I'm not there. They didn't like me from the very beginning. And no matter how nice I was to them, they always tried to find a reason to keep that friction between us, so I just ignore them. Most of the guys are fairly decent people, but there is always that twenty percent or thirty percent, in my opinion, who I think are real jerks.

B: After you've been there as long as you have, what do you think about women working in nontraditional fields?

G: There is not enough for me to make an opinion on it, really. There are two other women who I work with. One is on second shift. One is on first, with me. She lacks any initiative to do anything. She is a nice person, but she is a family-type person. She wanted to have a family and have a baby. You know, that's all fine and dandy. She doesn't really care about the women's movement or any of those organizations that helped her get her job. That's just the way she is; she doesn't care either way. The guys treat her like an assistant, or helper, on the job, but that's what she wants. She doesn't want to be a leader. She just goes on the job and they tell her what to do.

I'm the one who creates a lot of friction, because I have my own ideas. I'm more or less seen as being abrasive. A woman can't have her own ideas. We're supposed to be passive. If you have any self-motivation, or you have any ideas of your own, and you voice them, you are considered abrasive--a pain in the neck. That's truly how I think that they see me. I told you once before that one guy told me that I should keep my mouth shut and quit asking questions, that I was just like his kids--meaning that I should just be quiet and do what I'm told and not ask questions, when I have every right to ask questions. I mean, we're supposed to be equal, but he doesn't see us being equal. That came out subconsciously. Now, I don't think he meant for it to come out that way, but he sees me as being a child or one of his kids and that I should do what I'm told. I've been told that before.

B: Instead of seeing you as a person who has the same training, the same background . . .

G: Right. There are a couple of guys like that. There are a couple right now who won't talk to me anymore, because of that. They think that I should just do what I'm told, and not question anything.

- B: How do they react when you do a good job?
- G: Oh, they just pretend that they didn't see it, or that it didn't happen; they don't say anything.
- B: Do you think that working in the kind of field that you've worked in has sort of . . . When you talk about the women's movement, do you think that it has opened your eyes in a way that you might not have seen things had you stayed at home and been a housewife, or . . .
- G: The women's movement really had nothing to do with my going into the engineering field.
- B: No. I mean, the fact that you are in the engineering field, and you're out there working in a nontraditional field. Do you think that that has given you ideas and made you see things differently than if you had, say, gone into the physical education teacher?
- G: I see.
- B: I'm just wondering where those ideas developed from. I know you're involved.
- G: I think a lot of women don't appreciate the women's movement. The women's movement is what got them those jobs in those plants. If it wasn't for the women's movement, they wouldn't be there. A lot of it goes unappreciated. I think that a lot of those women should, if they are not going to participate in meetings or join an organization, at least support them by sending them money, or something--for the future of their own children, I think. Like I said, a lot of women are trying to balance being a wife, a mother, and having a career. It's really tough for women to get totally involved in the women's movement because of that.
- B: What does the women's movement mean to you?
- G: You would have to ask me that question. I haven't even thought about it. I think that it's important. A lot of their issues I don't agree with, like divorce, custody of children.
- B: What do you mean by that?
- G: Well, NOW organization. National Organization for Women basically pushed bills for women like: Equal rights, civil rights, things in law, legislative movements, bills for joint custody, mothers who aren't getting checks from fathers.
- B: You don't agree with joint custody?
- G: Yes. I do. They are against joint custody.

They are all for the Equal Rights Amendment. They are more a legislative-type organization. There are other women's organizations that don't have anything to do with that like Executive Link, which is a professional women's business organization, networking. It's a different type of women's organization. I'm all for women organizing, but, like I said, some of the things that they do I don't agree with.

B: So, for you, the part that is appealing would be the equal rights and the right to have the kind of job you want, and all that sort of stuff?

G: Right.

B: What about a family? Are you just pretty much set on a career?

G: No. I want to have a family. I'm in no hurry, though.

B: Do you still want to try and have it all?

G: I'm going to try. Up until now, I never had to really make a decision that would ruin or change my life drastically. I've been happy with everything that I've done up until now. I'm sure that when you get married and start having kids, that's not something you can go back on once you start, but you have to take a chance like that. Yes, I do. I want to.

B: What do you think will happen to your career then?

G: I don't know. I think I'm young enough to have children, get them into school, and still be young enough to have a career.

B: How old are you?

G: Thirty.

B: Do you consider what you have now as your career?

G: No. I don't want to do that for the rest of my life.

B: What is your goal for a career?

G: I want to get into project work or personnel management or quality of work life management or somewhere in between engineering and working with people on the floor. They really don't have jobs like that yet, but they're changing--too slow I might add.

B: Do they have them in other places, in bigger plants?

G: I don't know. I've never been on a job interview in another GM plant before.

B: I mean, like in other plants, in general.

G: I don't know. I think the company needs to reorganize and change a lot of their priorities and a lot of their organization; they don't move quickly enough. GM is a dinosaur. Things don't change that fast; it takes years and years, but you have to get rid of the people that management had previously created, and the rest of them aren't going to change; they have to get rid of them and that takes a long time. Things just don't change that quickly.

B: Then you're still working on preparing yourself for it, right?

G: If I'm disappointed right now it's because things don't look good at GM. Like I said, I don't want to work there much longer. I'm saving my money for a business. I'm at the point now where I can make a decision about that, but I'm waiting for the right opportunity.

B: To start your own business?

G: Right.

B: Do you have any idea of what you want to go into?

G: Mail order.

B: Some specialty item or . . .

G: I would like to get into sports equipment, because you should like what you are doing and know your product; but I'm not so sure now. I'll have to check into it.

B: Does that tie back into . . . Didn't you tell me before that originally, you thought about going into physical education when you first started school, right?

G: Yes.

B: And you changed because there were no jobs?

G: No money. There is no money in physical education.

B: You couldn't get a job that would pay anything?

G: Right. You would be going to school for five years and have to fight for fair wages. They also told me that they had a stack of applications for a physical education instructor, from Youngstown State, that were four point averages that couldn't get jobs; I thought, "If those are four point averages, I know I'm not going to be getting a four point average, so I may as well forget it."

B: Did your practical father help you make that decision, or did you get good advice when you were being advised at the university?

G: My second choice was electrical engineering, only because I knew nothing about electricity and I wanted to learn about it. So I chose it also because my mother kind of pushed me in that direction. She studied drafting and mechanical engineering at Ohio State. She didn't graduate, though. She came back to get married.

B: Your mother was in a nontraditional field at a time that it was probably more nontraditional?

G: Right. I don't know how many guys were in her class; there were only three women.

B: I don't know your mother. She must be a spunky person.

G: Oh, she's intelligent. She's spunky. She never pursued the career, though. She became a housewife and a mother. She's sorry for that, not finishing school that is, and I'm kind of living out that career for her. I think that she's living it out through me. She was never pushy or anything. She just kind of steered me in that direction, you know. "If you don't want to be a physical education teacher, go into engineering; you'll definitely get a good job."

B: She must be very proud of you then?

G: I think so.

B: That's interesting. We didn't get to that. We hadn't gotten around to that before.

G: Well, you didn't ask me.

B: How has the rest of your family reacted to the type of profession you chose?

G: Well, my dad's real proud. He's not a great one for telling you to your face, but he does it when I'm not around. He talks about me. He's really proud of me, but he's not one to tell me all the time, "Oh Sandy, I think you're really great at this, and I'm really proud of you." He feels uncomfortable doing that, but I know that it's there. As for my brother and my sister, I think they are really proud of me, but they really don't care. They have their own lives, and they don't worry about me or what I'm doing.

B: How about your sister? Is she in a nontraditional field?

- G: No, she has been living out in Texas for about seven years now. She just recently moved to San Francisco. How do I explain her? She studied being a blacksmith, for about ten weeks, when she was in Virginia. She has a cosmetology degree, doing hair, and she doesn't like doing that anymore. She studied welding at one of the trade schools. But she doesn't like doing that anymore, either. She went to Texas and worked for a steel company down there. She has had several different jobs. Now, she's in San Francisco doing some kind of financing for a brokerage firm. She has had a whole series of non-traditional jobs. She's wild. She moves around. She gets around. She always gets a job. I would be a little more leery of doing something like that.
- B: Do you think you're more conservative?
- G: Oh, definitely. I couldn't just blow off a job here and move over there tomorrow. I can't do that. But she can. She's kind of a maverick. Some people are like that. She's been there eight years and she's never had any problems. I kind of envy her in a way, but then again, I still wouldn't do what she did.
- B: Is she sort of the wild child of the family?
- G: Yes, I think so. She grew up in the sixties with the moccasin footwear fad and the hippies.
- B: She's older than you?
- G: Yes, she's six years older than I.
- B: She's out there living some fantasies too?
- G: (Laughter) I think so.
- B: Do you feel that you've lived some of your dreams that you had when you were first starting out?
- G: Have I lived some of my dreams? Like what?
- B: I don't know. What were your dreams?
- G: What were my dreams? Well, I always wanted to make enough money-- I didn't want to be filthy rich--where I could do what I want. If I want to take a month off work to go somewhere, I want to always be able to say, "Yes, I can do it. I have enough money. I can do this," and not ever have to say, "I can't afford it." I'm not big on running around to beaches all over the country and partying and things like that. I enjoy going on vacation. I enjoy doing sports, skiing, playing soccer, going to lectures, playing the piano, reading. I enjoy doing things like that. I'm really no big partier like I said. I make enough money now where I can do just about anything that I want. I would like



to go to Lake Tahoe. I have a girl friend who lives there. I would like to take a month off and go out there. She likes to bike ride and camp, and I love to do that. I would love to go out there for a month, just bike ride and camp. And I can do it. I could probably go this summer.

B: You could do that? Do you get that much vacation?

G: I'll take a leave of absence from work.

B: And you're secure. You can just do that, right?

G: Oh sure. That's all I ever really wanted out of life. Like I said, I don't want to be filthy rich, but I always want to be able to do what I want.

B: What would that be, independence, to have enough money to have that independence?

G: I suppose. You know, you can't be doing those kind of things after you have a family; so I would like to do it before, because it's something that you'll never get around to after you have kids.

B: Sort of a loss of freedom?

G: For a while anyway.

B: It sounds like your freedom is pretty important to you.

G: Oh yes. I don't think I would like someone telling me what to do, or to belong to somebody like a piece of property. I established my relationship with Thom years ago, that I never want it to be that way even after we're married. It is important to me though. I can accept responsibility when I have a family, but then when they're gone, I want that freedom back. Yes, it is important to me.

B: It sounds like you feel that a family would tie you down now.

G: Sure, I know that, but I want to be ready for it. I know it will.

B: How about your friends? How do they react to the kind of work you do? Or when you meet somebody new, how do they react to the kind of work you do?

G: They think it's a real big thing, "Oh, you're an electrician." It's a really big thing because they don't know any women who are electricians. It's a "shock"--no pun intended--to them because they've never heard of any. It doesn't take muscles to be one. It's just traditional; when they think of an electrician, they think of a man. So, it kind of "shocks" them.

B: Are they supportive?

G: Yes.

B: It sounds like you have a lot of different sides to you, not just that you go and get dirty, and you do this job, but you have a lot of other parts that people might not think, what with being an electrician, if you were to stereotype.

G: Right. They stereotype you. The first thing they picture is a big woman, who might be overweight.

B: And you're not big. How tall are you?

G: Five feet, five inches tall. They might be overweight and have a deep voice, look like a man, and act like one, which I think is kind of ridiculous, although there are a lot of women who might think that they have to act like that. Or there just might be companies that hire women like that, because they think that they have to be that way in order to make it through the day every day, so that the men won't bother them-- sexually harass them or anything. And then when men treat them that way, they begin to act that way. You've heard that before. I'm sure you have. Women truck drivers, they hang around people like that and begin to act like them, instead of being themselves. You know, they start talking shoptalk and things like that. Instead of keeping their independence from that and being the person that they are, they start acting like those people to be part of the group. They feel they must act this way to be accepted.

B: Do you think that sort of worked against you, not fitting into that stereotype, I mean, being what some people might call feminine?

G: Right. Yes, I think it has in a lot of ways.

B: How about sexual harassment, dirty jokes?

G: I've never had that problem.

B: Dirty jokes, dirty pictures, none of that?

G: Oh, gosh, yes, when I first worked there, somebody put a picture of a nude woman on my toolbox that sort of looked like me. I just left it on there and pushed my toolbox around with this nude woman on there. Two days later, they tore it off. It didn't bother me. If I would have made a big deal about it, then they just would have done it all the more. It didn't bother me. In fact, I kind of thought it was a compliment. I mean, I don't know why men, or even some women, get offended by that, because I'm a woman. I know what a nude woman looks

like. I've seen more nude women than they have, and it doesn't bother me. A lot of women, it might have, I think.

B: So they didn't get a reaction and that was the end of it?

G: Yes. Well, I got some obscene notes on my toolbox--really juvenile, obscene notes, something you might write when you're in fourth or fifth grade and you don't know what a word means, or something; but that was just a couple of times, no big deal.

B: What I just wanted to ask you was even though I hear a lot of frustration about not getting where you thought you would probably be by this time, and maybe getting passed over for a promotion when you know you've got the experience and you know you're qualified and you know you've been doing the work, but still I hear that you're going on to get the degree; that you're staying in that field, and it sounds like that is still kind of a dream for you. I mean, that that is still something that you're working for?

G: I like working in manufacturing. I do. Just because I hate what I'm doing now, or I hate the way that I'm being treated, I don't want to lose sight of the fact that I still like working in manufacturing. It could be great somewhere else. I've already gone this far; I'm not going to start doing something else. I should have been a veterinarian, because I love animals. That's what I think I should have been doing when I . . .

B: Okay, here we go now, with a different dream. Did you really think about that?

G: No, it would take too long. I would have to go back and get chemistry and biology, and then go three years on to medical school I would be about forty-five years old when I got done, or forty years old, and I would be burned out. I don't want to go to school anymore. I mean, I like school, but I hate the pressure of having to get homework done, having to take tests, and things like that, you know, time periods. I just enjoy reading and learning, but I don't like the pressure.

B: At some point there, did you have that as a dream, to be a vet some day? I mean, somewhere when you branched off, was that an early idea, that you might want to do something like that?

G: No, I really didn't get into the animals and animal rights organization until a few years ago. I've always liked animals. The thought just never crossed my mind when I was entering college to do something like that, because we don't have veterinarian medical schools around here. We just don't have them. I was more or less ignorant; I didn't know.

B: How did the thought cross your mind to go into engineering?

- G: That was my second choice. I didn't know a thing about electricity, and I wanted to know what it was all about. So I took electrical engineering technology.
- B: That was your second choice. What was your first choice?
- G: Physical education.
- B: Oh, and there weren't any jobs, that's right.
- G: I entered that first, and then I found out that it would be tough to get a job.
- B: And then you went into engineering?
- G: Right.
- B: It sounds like you're just going to keep trying for that management position, right?
- G: Yes. I'm writing to Packard right now.
- B: That's what I was going to ask you before. Have you thought about going somewhere else?
- G: Yes. See, I have nine years in, in August. When you have ten years in, you get a pension. Ten years and on, you get pensions.
- B: What does that mean?
- G: When you're 65, they pay you a certain amount of money from pension.
- B: Okay.
- G: Once you hit ten years, you'll get a pension when you're 65. The longer you are with the company, the bigger the pension is when you're 65. Now, I am not going to quit GM now, because that would be throwing nine years away. I may as well stay and get my pension. Now that I am in this Master's degree program, I may as well stay and get my Master's degree, then quit. Hopefully, by the time I get done with this Master's degree, I will be in management, somewhere, hopefully. If I'm not, I'm going to keep applying at Packard. I'm writing to a . . . Through the grapevine, I found out a gentleman's name over there, who is head of the maintenance department, so I write a letter about once every two months. I want my name to be a household word when the first job comes up there. He does not know that I'm a woman.
- B: What are you signing?

- G: I wrote S. L. Groza at the top of my paper, and I wrote at the bottom--I have all these credentials--that I play golf, which I do, snow skiing, soccer, and piano. Now if you were looking at that and if you didn't know if it was male or female, you would think it was male. I'm hoping that he will give me an interview. I have this feeling that when they find out you're a female and see all those credentials, they kind of put you aside. They're afraid. I really do think men are threatened by that. When he sent a response letter to me saying that they don't have any job openings right now, he wrote, "Mr. Groza." He assumes I am a man.
- B: What kind of reaction do you think you'll get when you turn up on the doorstep?
- G: He's probably going to be mad. (Laughter)
- B: How about the wives? What do you think the reaction is to having an attractive woman work with their husbands?
- G: The guys who I was really close to, working with, I became close to their families and their wives, and they were decent people. There was only one gentleman who I worked with--who was back when I started working there. He was the only one who would work with me. He thought it was great that a woman was working there, and he is respected and probably considered one of the best electricians in the game. But he took me on, took me under his wing, and taught me almost everything I know. He was good, smart, and he was great to work with. We had a lot in common. I could talk to him about anything. We became quite close. But what I didn't know was that his marriage was "on the rocks" and he kind of looked to me as someone to talk to about these problems and things. What I didn't know was . . . I went to the dance that year--the first year I worked there--and I met his wife. She was very nice to me, acted like my buddy. Then the problems began, just after that. People were calling me up on the phone, calling me "heathen" names that I don't want to repeat. It was ridiculous. It was totally ridiculous. I couldn't believe the way these people were acting. One woman came up to my car one day, at six o'clock in the morning, and told me to stay away from her husband. I had never seen her before in my life. I thought, "Well, who is your husband?" She said, "Oh, never mind that, you know who he is . . . blankety-blankety-blank." I copied down her license plate and called a police officer who I knew to find out who she was and who her husband was in the plant. I found out his name from a friend of mine and when I saw this guy, I almost died. I couldn't believe it. I thought, "My God, I'm having an affair with this . . . animal!" This guy was huge. He looked like an animal.
- B: But it was somebody you didn't even know?
- G: Right, somebody I had never met before in my life, I mean,

stuff like that. He was either telling her stories and using me or . . .

B: Rumors?

G: Yes, or she got some word from someone else. I found out all about all this talking that was going on behind my back for a year! I didn't even know it was going on, until the guy who I was working with tried to commit suicide. And all these people were talking, and no one was talking to me. And I thought, "What's going on here? Why is no one talking to me? Why is everyone ignoring me?" So I walked right up to two guys who were talking and I saw my name mentioned--I read his lips so I knew that they were talking about me--and I said, "What is going on? Are you talking about me, Frank?" And the one, his name was Joe, said, "Sandy, did you know that so-and-so tried to commit suicide?" I said, "Now why would he want to do something like that?" I didn't know that he was having problems. I didn't know that any of this was going on! And all these people had been talking about me for a year! Like I was the problem, I was the reason why he was having trouble. Well, he was having trouble before he started working with me. Then I found out all this stuff. Then I started getting phone calls and all kinds of crazy stuff. The way it ended was that this woman was telling everybody, on the phone--she would call people up everybody's wife from the plant--and tell them all kinds of stories that I was trying to take their son away from them, and her husband. You know, I didn't know this was going on. She was making up all these crazy stories. She was a mentally ill person. And I mean that in the sense of the word; she was mentally ill. She is right now. He's not married to her anymore. But, she had caused all this trouble, and she had told everyone that she was in the hospital having surgery, that her husband beat her up. So all these people ran up there to see her, with flowers, and there wasn't a mark on her. She made the whole thing up. When everyone found out that she made everything up, that's when they knew that I wasn't the problem. So everybody just kind of started talking to me again, and they knew I wasn't the problem. Nobody formally apologized to me for treating me that way, but we just kind of forgot about it. It went on for a year.

B: How did that feel?

G: Well, I didn't know what was going on. All these people were talking about me and I didn't know any of this stuff was going on. I mean, nobody told me until one day I found out when I was still getting all those phone calls, that was from her and her friends who she had called up to tell them to call me up. I didn't know it was her. What had happened was that I had tape-recorded one of her friends on the phone. She called me on the phone, and I had one of those little tape recorders and I kept her on the phone and kept taping her voice while she was

talking to me. I played this tape back to the guy who I worked with. He looked at me and said, "Oh, my God, Sandy, that sounds like my mother-in-law."

B: Did you suspect that that was . . .

G: No, I had no idea who this person was. I had no idea.

B: So her mother was involved in it too?

G: Her mother, yes. That was her mother who was calling me up and saying juvenile, adolescent things to me that I can't even begin to repeat. I would be embarrassed just to repeat them. It was ridiculous, very childish. That's when it stopped; I tape-recorded her and played it back to him and we found out who it was. But that's all in the past. That happened eight years ago. And then, after that, it was over. There weren't any more problems. That was just in the very beginning. His wife was . . . I was a threat to her. The marriage was on the rocks anyway, and I was just making it worse, to her. I didn't know what he was telling her.

B: But people have pretty much just gotten used to having you there now?

G: Yes, they accept me, pretty much. I work alone. I don't work with anybody because I'm tired of being treated like an assistant and a helper. This way, I don't have anyone to argue with. When I make my mistakes, I make them on my own. I don't have anyone there to point them out to me and say, "You made a mistake, you dummy." Everyone makes them, but most people cover them up before anyone else sees them. Mine, everyone is always looking for, so I can't get away with them as easily.

B: How is your reputation there now?

G: I have no idea. I don't really care. (Laughter) I don't even think about it.

B: I was thinking, work-wise.

G: I hear from the grapevine that a lot of foremen have nice things to say about me. But, you know, that's just hearsay. Somebody could just be telling me that just to try to be nice to me or something.

B: If you had the opportunity to give advice to young women who are entering school now and are getting ready to start a career or to make decisions, what kind of advice would you give?

G: I would tell them to go into a field that is something that they like to do combined with something where they'll have an opportunity to make decent money and be promoted. Some people

like to study history, things like that, and are just happy with just studying and then teaching later, which is what you should do if that's what you like to do. If you want to make money, you have to go into a nontraditional field for women, like chemical engineering, some sort of engineering. It's tough, but you have to really want to do it. You have to really put some effort into it.

As far as going into the working field itself, I think women should remain acting feminine, even in a job where they are not supposed to, like digging ditches. Why can't you go out there and put your gloves on and your boots and dig ditches and be strong, then come home, take a shower, and put on a dress? I mean a lot of women can't draw that line; they have to be either one way or the other. I think you know what I mean. I'm not going to go into that, but there are a lot of women who can't do that. There really are, and I think it's a shame. I don't think that they should fit that stereotype that if you're going to go into a nontraditional field for women, you have to act like a man. I don't think you do. I really don't.

B: Do you think that you can carry that over into work?

G: Yes.

B: Do you think there is a difference in ideas?

G: Between men and women? Depending on what the ideas are. I think women are more sensitive to people's feelings. I really do. Women have always been that way, not all women, there are exceptions to every rule. But I think women are usually sensitive to other people's feelings. I don't know whether that has to do with being the "giver of life" or what; they have said that before. And if you look, you find that women are always the ones who do volunteer, charity work, whereas men as a rule, usually don't, even though they have careers too. Men always used the excuse before, that they had to work for a living and provide for the family. Well, women work too, and a lot of them make just as much money, but they still try to balance that part of their life, giving to charity and volunteer work.

B: What about problem solving? Do you think you problem solve differently than the men on the job?

G: Do you mean attack it from different angles?

B: I don't know.

G: Yes, I think so. It really doesn't apply to the type of work that I do.

B: No?



G: Because I don't work with people. It's problem solving. You're working with math now.

B: And it's either/or?

G: Right. Math is either/or. There are no human concepts involved that way.

B: The fields that I hear you wanting to move towards, though, would be working with people, personnel, and project work, right?

G: Possibly. Project work, engineering, working with skilled trades people, that's the next step I would like to take. And then I would like to get into management of a department.

B: Of maintenance?

G: Maintenance up to assistant management of a plant, an organization, where you make your major decisions.

B: Or your own business?

G: Right.

B: Total freedom.

G: Right.

B: Anything else we didn't touch on?

G: I don't think so. Is there anything else you would like to know?

B: Any other messages for working women of the world?

G: Working women of the world? Just what I said before. I think that women should still be feminine. I don't think they have to be a man. I don't think it takes muscles to think. They should be able to draw the line there. You know, you act accordingly. When you're on the job, you get tough, you think tough. When you're on the field playing soccer or football, you play tough. When you're out at night with you fiancé or your boy friend, you become that inner person that you really are, emotional, feminine human beings that we are.

Did you read that book, On A Clear Day You Can See General Motors?

B: No, I never heard of it.

G: It was written by John Delorean. You should read that book. A lot of it's true. A lot of it is very true.

See, being a woman, I can't make friends with the men in management--they're all men--or the guys I work with. I can't say,

"Hey, let's go out for a beer after work, and play a game of golf." I can't do that, and even if I got in management, I couldn't do that. Those guys can do it. They can socialize together, make close friends, and take care of each other when it comes to promotions, but I can't do that. I've got to be careful. Some of them may have crazy wives. Would you approve of your husband going out for a beer with another woman? The only thing I can do is go on credentials alone.

B: And your skill.

G: Yes, and that doesn't seem to work. That doesn't make the grade. There are not enough women where I could say, "Hey, let's go out for a game of tennis, " or something, with another women. It's not that easy for women, but men don't see it that way.

END OF INTERVIEW