

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Women in Labor Unions

Personal Experience

O.H. 1870

SUSAN AULIZIA-STRAWN

Interviewed

by

Erin Holmes

on

May 29, 1997

Susan Aulizia-Strawn

Susan Aulizia-Strawn has been working at Delphi Packard for 29 years and she intends to continue to be active in her union even after she retires. She graduated from Warren G. Harding High School in 1968 and began working in the factory three months later. She raised four children, two of her own from her first marriage, and two-step children from her second marriage, but she considers her step children to be her own children. Her husband, Carl, is her best friend, and a great supporter of her efforts in the union. Sue's oldest two children, Ken and Kelly, reside in Utah, and her youngest two (step) children , Buddy and Sherry, still live in Warren.

Sue is currently the chair-person for the Women's Committee in the union and she takes an active role in encouraging young women in the factory to become active in the union. Sue also recently ran for the position of Floor Guard in the union. Though she lost the election, she has remained very active with the recent contract negotiations. Sue did not attend college in a traditional sense, but through the union she has become educated about many issues that concern those people who work at Packard.

H: This is an interview for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program with Susan Aulizia-Strawn on Women in Labor Unions, by Erin Holmes, at Susan's home, on May 29, 1997, at 2:15 pm.

Why do you not start off telling me a little bit about growing up in the Warren area?

S: I lived in Warren, Ohio all my life. I did move to Youngstown for about two years. When I was first married, we moved to Youngstown and I had to come back to Warren. I had to come back toward work. Actually, Warren, at one time, was a very quiet town. I guess it is still quiet. I do not know, I do not want to leave it. My husband wants to, but I do not.

H: When did you begin working at Delphi Packard? Was that your first job?

S: Yes, my first major job. When I was 16 I worked in a pizza shop one summer. Other than that, I graduated from high school in 1968 and in August I got hired at Packard -- August 12, 1968. I have been working there ever since.

H: What were your expectations when you first began working in the factory?

S: I do not think anybody has any expectations. You go to work and you are there to make money. That is the bottom line. I did not expect anything, I just wanted to find a job. In this area, the only jobs there are is Delphi or Packard. At the time, you graduated from school and you go to Packard, that is how it was then.

H: How do you think it is different for kids coming out of high school in the Warren area now? Do they have the same opportunity to get hired at Packard that you did?

S: No, not at all. When I got hired in 1968, they hired three thousand people and that is probably a low number. When you got out of school at that time, there were jobs everywhere. Of course, that was the middle of the Vietnam War and, like I said, jobs everywhere. Now, you come out of high school and there is nothing. Chances of going to Packard are slim to none. I have tried to get my daughter in there probably for the past five years. All my kids, probably for the past 15 years. There are no jobs there.

H: You have four children, right?

S: Yes. Four children.

H: How was it trying to raise for children and work?

S: I had two children to my first husband. Then I got divorced and then I remarried my husband that I am married to now. He had two children, so actually the four children are not mine. I accumulated a family in 1983. It is hard. As you get older and you look back, you cannot really figure out how you did. You just find the time and you do it. It is all in what you want to do.

H: How is your role as a wife and a mother been affected by your job?

S: If I had things to do all over again I would do a lot of things different, especially when it comes to my children and my family. I would never have quit. We could not have the things that we have. Not that I live in a mansion, but we have an okay home. Anything that anybody has ever wanted, we have been able to provide that. Everybody has been well taken care of. There are things that I would have changed. I would have forced myself to go on day turn, even if it had to be the worst job there, so I could have been home with the kids. The kids suffer from a mother working.

I have been divorced once; I should tell you this. I am my husbands' fifth wife. But he have custody of his children. He was married to his first wife three years and had two children. They got divorced and he had custody of his kids. Well, naturally, he had to work as a father raising children and he was looking for someone to help him take care of the kids so he could work and take care of families. Back in those days when you worked, especially for a women, when you work to raise children and work in a family, take care of a home and everything, it is not easy. If they would do a study on the women and the men that worked in Packard and their families, we were one of the highest divorce rates. Trumbull County was probably, I would say, in the top ten throughout the country.

H: Does your involvement in the union encourage any kind of community activity or political activity?

S: Our union is very, very active in the community and the political aspects, as far as government. We have political action groups, we have very many committees. Women's Committee is very active in all the community things. Our local does all kinds of fundraisers. As a committee, at the end of the year we do donations to many battered women. I could give you a list of things. We give money to the battered women. We give money to Someplace Safe, Terry's Kitchen. Every year we do. I am the chairperson of the Women's Committee and normally a term is three years and it all depends if it is an appointed job. So if the president wins who I am working under right now, I probably would have a choice if I wanted to stay or if I would decide to step down and somebody take over my appointment. At the end of the three years whatever money

we have left we split up. Three years ago we split it between five different agencies.

H: How did you first get involved in your union?

S: My father, he worked at Copper Weld. He was a weigh master there. I have heard unions all my life. All my family worked in the steel mills so I actually grew up union, union, union. Plus, as a child, I guess I was just the kind of person that liked the underdog. You see a stray cat you bring it home. You see a person that you do not feel that is being taken care of the way they should be, you bring them home and take care of them. I did that as a child all the time I grew up. I kind of like to take people under my wing. Basically, that is really what a union concept is, taking care of everybody equally. I guess maybe just the way I grew up made me think more union. I think our children have lost all of that. Most of them are not raised to believe in taking care of each other.

I probably got really involved with the local, more involvement as in spending a lot of time in the local, when I got divorced. That was 1979. And probably about three months when my divorce was final was when I really started getting involved. I was going to meetings every month. Before that, I would go to meetings maybe two months in a row, and then I would miss a few, and then I would start going back. I was always active with the union, as far as working in the plant. As far as really getting in to being involved with the union, that was about 1979.

H: Are many women active in the union in your shop?

S: No.

H: Why?

S: Because they have families, they have children, they have other things. The majority of the people at Packard want to come to work, put their 40 hours in and go home and forget about it. They do not want to think about their jobs. It is real hard. We are programmed. Women are programmed and we have been programmed as a child.

H: How so?

S: When you are raised, your mother and your father tell you that, for example, your job is to do kitchen work and your brother's job is to take out the garbage and cut the grass. So you are raised to believe that when you grow up, you should be taking care of a house and taking care of a family. Yes, if there has to be two incomes, you should maybe get some kind of a job to take care of the help. Really, your job is to take care of the family. That is the way you are raised. So

basically, you are programmed that way.

H: What would you do to try and encourage women to become more active?

S: I wish I knew that answer. Charlotte Ingalls, she is my best friend, she is recording secretary. She was the first women that I worked under. She was chairperson of the Women's Committee. I have learned an awful lot from her, a lot. All of us, we try to get the women involved. Not everybody is union minded. To try to get women involved, they are so busy taking care their families, taking care of their home, they do not have time to get involved with the union. With the Women's Committee, as far as myself, I would say 50% of the women on the committee right now have been involved for many, many years. When my committee started, I asked them to go out and find other women, younger women that would like to be involved with it and to bring them, bring names, send names in to get people involved in going. It is hard. I hate to say it, [but] women just do not want to get involved. And women are jealous, they are caddy. It is terrible.

H: What is the relationship between the women on the floor in the plant?

S: It is tough for women to get along. You can put two women together just fine. You put three women together, it is a fight. You probably know from growing up as children. You put three little girls together, they fight. You put two together and they get along real well. It is not any different as you get older. People still fight.

As far as at Packard, as the women are getting older, I think they get along better now because we are all older, we have all raised our children. We are sick and tired of putting up with everybody else's crap. And truthfully, I think we are more grouping now, then when we did 10, 15, and 20 years ago. Now it is like, if there is an issue that needs to be talked about and settled, we can all work together real well with it. 10, 15 years ago you would not get that. Everybody would have been fighting and screaming. It is a lot better now because we have all grown up. We are older.

H: Are the women working now to elect women into positions of power in the union?

S: Yes. I can honestly say that after all these years we finally, I think, can get it together. But we are also old now, we are ready to retire. [Laughter] Truthfully, we are trying to bring some young women into this. We want them to get involved, we want them to do things, because we want to retire. We do not want to leave and we do not want the women to have to fall backwards and have to crawl back up again. We are trying, and it is not easy. It is really not easy, but we are trying.

H: How are the relationships between the women and the men in the factory?

S: Much, much better now. I could tell you all kinds of stories from the time I started at Packard until now. I think as you are younger, you do not respect each other the way you do when you get older. Your priorities change and things change. Right now, I think we get along fairly well. A lot better then we did then.

Many, many years ago, it was like 1970, when equal rights came out, the women's movement, bra burners time, we want our rights. At that time it used to be men's jobs and women's jobs. Women did the conveyor work and the air-press work, which they put terminals. Those were the women's jobs. And then there were men's jobs; service jobs, cutter jobs. Well, back in 1970, the federal law said, "You cannot do this anymore." You put in for this job, especially at Packard, if you have the seniority to hold this job then it does not matter what sex you were, you got that job.

I was one of the first women that went on a cutter. Believe me, men hated it. They put lighter fluid in my flux pots. They put acid on our coats. I would come in every day [and] I would turn my cutter on. The machine was supposed to run a certain way. I would come in and the machine would be running the opposite way. Everything would fall apart. All the knives would fall out. Everyday you would come in to sabotage. Everyday, they would cut wires, they would cut terminals, you would turn your machine on and things would fall apart. And this went on for quite a long time. It took them quite a long time to accept the fact that we were equal. It is not that we are women and men -- we are people. We are human, just like everybody else. It is a lot better now.

H: It sounds real dangerous.

S: It was.

H: How did management react to that?

S: Management did not want us there either. Way back in the 1960's and the 1970's, that was crazy time. 1960's and 1970's at Packard were unbelievable. You could find more alcohol in the plant than you could find out of the plant. There were bars set up everywhere, and they knew they were there. Management turned their backs on it; they did not want to see and they did not care. They would make marijuana brownies on sauter pots.

When you worked in a men's area, they were quoted a man's area, and when you took a job that was their job. Believe me, you had to learn to work with them, not against them. They thought we were going to go in there and change the job. They had their own way of working and that was it. If you went in there and you tried to do something different, it was even worse. We did not want to ruin the job. We felt that we should be able to do the same jobs as they did.

They had schedules. You would go into work and you would start at 4:00 and you never started your cutter up until 4:30. At 4:30 you would go until 6:00. 6:00 you would shut off. If you worked one minute passed 6:00, man they were

pissed. 6:00 to 6:30, that was break. One-half hour break, and you did not go away from that. Lunch hour was an hour. You were really only allowed a half hour, but the guys took an hour. Which was fine with me, I did not care. I was not going to go in and ruin their schedule. I would take a break as much as they would. It did not make any difference. Back in the 1960's and the 1970's, it was amazing. It is a wonder Packard is still here. They had to change our work ethics and they did not have a choice. We probably had a lot to do with work not staying in Warren, Ohio.

H: Did the union do anything to promote this change in work ethic? Did they support the women that were trying to break in the men's jobs?

S: Oh no. No, no, no, not back then. They were men. Women were not supposed to be involved in anything. Women were not supposed to be involved in the union. Women were not supposed to be involved in jobs. Men quote jobs as being their jobs. Our place was where they wanted us to be, wherever they wanted us to be. It is still that way. That part has not changed, maybe a little bit. They have learned to accept us. Way back then, no way, they did not care. They would do everything in their power to make it worse for us so we would not ever consider trying to go to any union positions.

At one time, when I started, there were women that were actually in the union. I do not wanted to say any union; everybody is in the union. Actively involved in the union. They had women committee people, a lot of them. What happened was, back in the mid 1960's and the early 1970's, we called them young Turks, but it was like the mafia. They knew the money was there and their heart was in making things right, do things, and giving us a good working environment. I do believe their hearts were all there. But there was also money put into it, so the bottom line to a lot of them was that, "We could make a lot of money so let us group together." Women were never involved in that and they never will be. They still believe that we have our boys. It is wherever they allow us to be. It is changing though. It is really changing.

H: I am sorry, I asked you two questions at once earlier. My other question was how did the union become involved in changing the work ethic in the factory?

S: Probably you have heard quality work life, team work, let us all get together, let us all make it work. That is probably where it all started. Also, way back, they took work away from us. See, they programed us all along, too. But they have taken work away from us. They took work and put it in Mississippi. Many, many, many years ago they opened up a plant down there. It was like the same situation of Mexico. It was organized. It was going to be an organized IUE plant. It did not start out that way. It took them quite a long time to get the IUE Union in there, but they did. That is basically where it all started. I forget where this is going and what the question was. Do you remember?

H: Yes. How did the union work to change the work ethic in the factory?

S: It was so crazy at one time, things had to change. I cannot really say how the union got them; I think they saw work leaving and that is basically when they said, "We have got to start getting a handle on this because if we continue to let all of this go on, we are going to lose it all." I think, probably, quality work-wise.

When we started seeing jobs leaving is when we got scared. The company was probably smart enough to show us that if we could not get it done here, they were going to take it somewhere else. We did not have a choice. We have all created our own monsters. I really hate to say that, but the women also have created their own monsters. It is real tough for everybody to get along.

H: You are going through elections right now in the union?

S: Yes.

H: How does that work?

S: A lot of campaigning. I got involved in an election. My first election I ran for executive board, which was six years ago. I did not really know how an election was, and this was a major election too. This was the big election. I had never been involved. I have campaigned for many, many, through many elections. I have never actually run for one. Six years ago I ran for executive board and I will tell you what, it is like running for the president of the United States. The politics at Packard and IUE Local #717. It is amazing. It is not little. We figured we had 8,800 people there which is a large amount of votes. During a general election they probably get about 6,000 people to vote. That is a small town, almost. It is very political. It is amazing.

H: Is there a lot of tension in the plant?

S: Oh, yes. There has been tension at our plant for the last 15 years, since Mexico. Basically, I look at it as a three-ring circus. And actually, there is normally three rings. There is always three groupings. There is a group that is in office already. There are two groups that are out of office. And normally one of the groups is very anti. The other group is basically "fence riders" because they pretend that they support both groups. If you look at every general election in our plant, that is about how it works. You have the in's, the out's, and the wannabe's. [Laughter] It is funny to look at it that way and it is very strange.

Our elections have almost gotten to the point where we can call them. We can say who is going to write what and we can actually look at a leaf-let and we can tell you who wrote it. The majority of the people that run for elections pay

for people to write their papers, they do not pay for their own papers. Nobody knows that. They do not publicize that they hired this person to write their papers. The majority of them do not write their own. It is very professional. The first election I ran for I wrote mine. The second election, I basically wrote mine, but I had help.

H: Do you get the mud-slinging, too? Do people get flyers trashing people?

S: I have a full box of it. If you want it, you can have it. [Laughter] Yes, mud-slinging is not the word for it. I wish I had the leaflets that just came out for this last election. I just read some last night and it is amazing. Most are not nice. Have you read any of them?

H: No.

S: You have not seen any of them?

H: No.

S: Have you heard about it?

H: No. You are the first person from Packard that I have interviewed.

S: Oh really? I did not know that. I thought you had interviewed other people.

H: I have, but from the fabricating plant and the assembly plant in General Motors.

S: Our elections run basically like they do. I am sure that their elections are very mud-slinging. Ours are the same. Did you see any of their literature?

H: No.

S: No. I wish I had it. I do have some here.

H: I have this one.

S: Oh. I did not throw too much mud in that one. [Laughter] I did not. Truthfully, the reason is, when I wrote that, I was very angry. I do not know if you read it or not. I was angry at the shop chairman that was in office at that time. He is a very obnoxious person. I have never had anybody talk to me the way he talked to me. I will never, never support that man because all he cares about is himself.

H: And he is no longer the shop chairman?

S: No. He has done a lot of damage to our local. In fact, that is why we were in such a bad position and really why we had to go on strike this time, because of three years of him. He will never win another thing, never. And as a retiree when I retire, if he every runs for anything I am going back, even if I have to stand out there and hand out leaflets myself. I will write it and put it out as a retiree. So you can see just where I am at.

H: I heard a little bit about the strikes on television, but not a lot. What caused the strike?

S: Out-sourcing of jobs. I hate saying this on tape but we are greedy and we want a lot. But the majority of people at Packard want the community to stay here. If Packard leaves, Delphi Packard moves all their work out of this community, you will see Warren, Ohio, Youngstown, Sharon -- they have already fallen down because of the steel mills leaving. If we leave, there is nothing here, nothing. We do not only lose our jobs, everybody else is going to lose their job, too. Nobody is going to be able to buy food. Nobody is going to be buying clothes. Nobody is going to buy gas because they are not going to be able to buy cars. It is terrible.

The majority of the people that work in this community work at Lordstown or at Delphi Packard in Warren. The highest amount of people I have seen at Packard is 15,000. We are down to 8,800 people. We are losing 2,000 more jobs, which makes that 6,800. In the next three years or longer you are going to see a couple thousand people retire. They are basically going to go down to 3,000 people. I do not say jobs because they can move jobs in and out by a computer. That does not mean they are going to pick up a machine. We want more machines and more work in Warren, Ohio, and that is the bottom line.

My daughter needs a job. If you lived here in Warren, you would need a job. Not only a factory job, you might want to work in an office or you might want to do some kind of computer work. It is not just factory work that is leaving here, it is all leaving. We get paid well. We have good benefits, really good benefits. We make very good money. I do not believe it is the greed for money. We were not asking for any more money. We have good health care.

We also have a three tier hiring system. I make \$20 an hour. The second tier makes 55% of my wage. Each year they get a raise. So it might go from 55 to 60, to 65 to 70. It takes them ten years to reach parity to make my \$20 an hour. The third tier makes \$9.50 an hour for the rest of their lives, or until three people retire so one person can move up. The ones that got hired at the bottom of the hiring, that only maybe have a year seniority, they can be there for the next 20 years making \$9.50 an hour. That is not what we want. We can retire and move on and not worry about it and say "The hell with you." But that is not what we are there for. My feeling, as far as being a union person, we are there for all. If I had my way, it would be equal work for equal pay. That is the

bottom line. We fought for that for 20 years and then gave it up six years ago.

At least when they got hired in the second tier, they had 10 years to come up to parity. Then John Haldie -- I am going to mention his name, I do not care -- comes in, negotiates a contract, and we get a third tier. Our concern is that they will never see parity. That is basically why we struck. We have got to keep jobs here. We were only out on strike for one day. When they came back with an agreement, anybody that works at Delphi Packard Electric will have a life time job. That is in the lifetime agreement. They could choose to never ever negotiate that part ever again and the ones that work there are guaranteed that they will be there until they retire. The least youngest employee that may only have a year, he will have the next 30, 40, 50 years to work if that is what he wants, as long as Delphi Packard Warren, Ohio, is still here. There has got to be language there that is going to keep them here. If the company wants to sell it off and leave Warren, Ohio there is nothing we can do about that.

Everybody has to stay active. The women have to get involved. Women -- I do not want to call them lazy because they are far from being lazy; men can be very lazy because they expect us to do our work and their work too -- it is not that the women are lazy, it is just that they have so many other things and responsibilities that they have in their lives that they do not want to take the time to get involved with the union either.

H: That is too bad.

S: Well we have got to figure out a way how to get them involved because their life their families and their children, it all depends on it. It really does. Somehow we have got to do something. How old are you?

H: 21 years old.

S: That is why you are going to be going for three months. Finally our upper union has decided that we have got to get these kids involved. It is too late for us. We are ready to retire. I am going to continue on. When I retire I am going to stay involved somewhere. I do not know how I am going to do it or what I am going to do, but I will stay involved. We have got to get the younger generation to do the same. We have got to get them involved somehow because if we do not -- it is their futures, not our future. When I retire, I am going to retire \$2,400 a month.

H: That is pretty good.

S: I have a good pension, but I want you to be able to retire \$2,400 a month when your are ready to retire.

H: So how do you feel about this contract? Do you have a positive feeling about it?

S: Oh, I think it is a very good contract, absolutely. They have held it over our heads for the last 20 years that they are going to take the jobs to Mexico. My true feelings are, take them to Mexico, if that is what you are going to do. We can not compete at \$1 an hour. We cannot compete with that. There is no way we can compete with that. But if General Motors moves to Mexico and takes all their jobs there, they are not going to have anybody from here to buy their product. They are going to have to keep something here somewhere or they cannot make the money either.

Mexico is not the real one that scares me, as far as Warren, Ohio and Delphi. Not at all. The less money that they make, they can afford to give us more money. If they can pay them \$1 an hour, they can pay us \$20 an hour. That sounds terrible. We are producing component parts and they may be building it down there, but that is why they went there, so they can continue to pay us the benefits and the kind of money that they pay us. It is not just us, either. They are reaping for money. And it is not just us either, upper management as well. General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, their wages do not come from us but really from Mexico. Paying them \$1 an hour, they can afford to pay Mr. Smith millions and millions and millions and millions of profits a year. That is why. But they could not afford to do that if they kept the work in the United States.

My concern is that they are either going to have to either bring work back or somehow, if they want to continue to make those profits and continue, work has got to come into the United States because we are not going to buy their product anymore. I am going to retire, my husband is going to retire. We are only going to need one car, we are not going to need two cars. Somebody has got to buy that product and it is not going to be the Mexicans. So somehow they have got to kept work here in the United States even if it is on a computer. They may pay somebody to stay here and do office work so it can be built down there, but they are going to have to pay people here somehow. I know we are getting off the women issue.

H: No. You as a women in the union, that is your voice.

S: See they do not want to listen to us. They think women are dumb. I am serious, they really do. And, truthfully, we are more calm, we observe more, we can take things in and think about it before we make some wild decisions. Like I said, 20 years ago they absolutely did not want anything to do with us. Now, as far as our union here, they are seeing that there is a women's movement going through IUE Local #717 and that is really true. As we have gotten older, the older women now are saying, "Why the hell did we listen to these guys all these years? We need more women involved." If they would have thought about that 15 years ago, things might have been a little different. Now the men, I can say, are using us now. You know what I mean?

H: Yes.

S: Now, it is like "Now, it is okay. Let us get them involved because they will bring us votes." It is not because they really think we are smart and they want to help us. It is because they need us now.

H: As far as your involvement with the Women's Committee, what are your duties as a chairperson?

S: I do not want to be a boss and I am far from being a boss. Basically, the Women's Committee is just really -- I do not know how I want to put this -- it is not something that really has to be. You do not have to be on the Women's Committee. I was asked if I would like to chair it. Actually, our Constitution is mandated, it says there has to be a Women's Committee. Truthfully, I think if they could get away without having one, they would. We do not get paid for this. It is all volunteer work. The Women's Committee is there to educate other women and to try to get other women involved. We are self-supportive. We have to make our own money. We are not supported by any union dues. So basically, your first year you are out there trying to make money to be able to do something.

There are quite a few functions of the Women's Committee. I am not a boss, I do not want to be a boss. And I do not want to tell them what to do. Right now, we have about 25 members. I would like it to be as large as it wants to be. Most committees try to hold it down. I do not care, I would take 100 women. I do not want to control anybody. I guess, being a chairperson, sometimes you have to. Whatever the women decide to do, it has to be a decision amongst the committee. I try real hard not to make any decisions.

There is one thing that we do every year. We take over the Spring Fling. Every year our union has a union picnic called the Spring Fling and it is out at Geauga Lake. We take care of all of that. The executive board of membership this year gave us \$3,000. We bought all the gifts. There is a gift drawing for any member that goes to Geauga Lake that day, it is June 22. We are like the gophers stuffing in, but that is okay. We like doing that. Bottom line for the Women's Committee is to really educate the women and to get children involved. We are very family-oriented. This Spring Fling we have clowns and face painters. We have raised the money all year and now we are going to try to spend the money. We are going to spend some of it there. We paid for a professional clown. We bought balloons. We bought them little stickers that say, "I am a cute union kid."

Really, that is where it starts. We are too old. Try to bring someone my age into being involved with the union now. Forget it. It is not going to happen. If they never did, they are not going to. The younger kids, the new hires that have just come in that have two or three years, even the ones that were hired in 1985 through 1988, those are the ones who need to get involved. We have to try to get them involved and try to get them educated.

And that is basically really what the Women's Committee is all about, to get women educated. We send people to school. Every year in January and July the Women's Committee sends as many women that want to go to Michigan. There is a Michigan summer school for women. And there is also the winter labor studies school in Michigan. We have gone to both of those. Every year we send women to them. There is also a Kenyon College coming up. The unions themselves send people to other schools, the AFL-CIO. We encourage women to write letters to the executive board that they would like to go to this school, please send me, please pay my way. Most of them are tuition refundable. But a lot of people cannot afford to lose a days work or lose four days or five days work. Sometimes you can write a letter to the executive board, which goes to the membership. Once a month we have a union meeting and an executive board that meets Fridays before. We encourage women to write letters asking them to pay them lost time so they can to the school. This just started within the last three years, as far as letters. Naturally, it was the women that started it. [Laughter] We got them going. I mean it is the only way we can do it. A lot of women cannot afford it. A lot of women are single, they have gotten divorced or they had children and they are trying to take care of themselves and their kids and work. You got to do what you got to do.

H: You mentioned that you know John Russo, head of Labor Studies at Youngstown State. Does the union and Youngstown State University have any kind of a partnership to educate?

S: No. At one time, and this was many years ago, when Charlotte was chairperson of the Women's Committee, there was some kind of classes. I did not go to them, but I have heard that they had set up some kind of classes where you could come to the union hall. It was Labor Studies courses. Really, we have not worked with Youngstown State University to set up any kind of classes or anything like that. Once, since I was a chairperson, have I gotten some kind of flyer on -- it was not classes, but it was like a seminar that you could go to. They had something like once a week and we posted those up to tell people when they were. As far as any classes or anything put together with Youngstown State University, no.

H: Have you been discriminated against because you are a women?

S: Absolutely, yes. That will never stop and there is no way of stopping it. There is always discrimination. There is discrimination between two men, if they do not like you. It is always going to be there. I do not really call it discrimination but I do.

Like I said before, if you put two women together they get along. Three women will never got along. They might not like how you think. Women especially. They have always discriminated against women, but they

discriminated against blacks. Or they discriminate -- I am saying they because I am thinking of men, naturally -- but they discriminated against each other, too. One politician just does not like the other politician so they are against each other. One group is in and the other group is out. I guess that is a part of discrimination. It is a part of life. It is just how it is going to be. That is like discrimination for blacks and whites. It is going to be.

I am not a prejudice person, at least I say I am not. Everybody has a little bit in them. You cannot help it. It is just there. You are not born with it. You are not born with discrimination and you are not born with prejudice. You learn those. I do not know if there is ever going to be an answer.

I think there have been points were it has gotten better. Discrimination, at one point in time, was really horrible and then it got a little better. It is like the wheel. Everything goes around the wheel and then starts all over again. I think it is coming back again. I think discrimination is coming back. I do not think we are going to let it happen again. I think they are going to try to, but I think we are finally going to give them a fight. And we have raised our children to be a little more self-sufficient and to be better fighters.

H: Sexual harassment has been a big thing in the media in the past few years. How does your company and your union handle sexual harassment on the job?

S: Years ago, [with] sexual harassment, you had to be really strong. When I went on this men's job years ago, sexual harassment -- believe me, you learned how to talk just like them. You had to be just as rough as they are. As time goes on, that part has ended. You could embarrass them just as much as they tried to embarrass you. You learn to be tough. I did not think sexual harassment was really a big thing until, probably, about eight months ago. I am old and I have gained weight. Sexual harassment to me, they are not going to harass me sexually. Twenty years ago they did, but they are not now. We all walk around with blinders at times, so you do not see.

And then I started working with the younger girls. I hate to say girls because I do not like that word, but I call my daughters girls. But the younger women, maybe a little longer, a year ago or so, I did not work in an area with mostly all of us old ones. But then I went into an area where there were a lot of new, young hires that came in. Young girls my daughter's age. And then I started seeing what was happening and I did not like it. I really do not like it. And actually, sexual harassment has probably gotten worse in the last year or two because of the younger ones that have come in and gotten hired. They have been hired within three years. Like I said, sexual harassment to us is nothing. We joke it off and probably harass them. But it is different now. We have a younger generation that is at work now and it is not even just hourly work. The younger ones are coming in. It has actually turned that wheel. It is back 20 years ago. We are seeing things we saw 20 years ago that we had to put up with. They do not have to put up with it now.

The company and the union have worked together and basically, the training program that they put on was a training program for representatives. I saw it because myself and Charlotte, we went to Labor Relations, and through the Women's Committee, Labor Relations, and we have an employee involvement person, they had a program. So they came in and did the program with the Women's Committee as far as sexual harassment, what you have to put up with, what the Labor Relations stand is, and what the Union's stand is, as far as what you do not have to put up with, how to go about it, who to go to and what you have to do. That was basically what the program was all about. I thought it was really good, but they are not training the people on the floor. They are training the representatives on how to deal with it.

They are training us, as far as appointed committee people, on how to deal with it and what to do. They are training their Labor Relations people in what to do. But they are not telling the people on the floor, "Look, you do not have to put up with this." Basically, that is what they probably want us to do as committee people, to be out there and say, if somebody harassed you, I could come to you and say, "You do not have to put up with this. This is what you need to do. I can help you." Or a committeeman, as a worker, you call in a committee person and you say, "Your supervisor is sexually harassing me." They give you the steps or the options as to where to go.

Truthfully, they need to do some type of training to tell everybody, "You do not have to put up with this." And if you are an abuser and you are the person that is doing the sexual harassment, this is what is going to happen to you because we are not going to put up with it anymore. They have not done that yet. We are hoping they do. In fact, as the Women's Committee, as we get through this Spring Fling, that is probably going to be my next issue. We have got to start doing something about it. The AFL-CIO -- I do not know if you saw the brochure and I do not have one -- but they are doing a survey right now on women's issues. I think it is in September or October they are having some kind of women's convention in Washington; I am hoping to go to. They did a survey. You have not seen the paper?

H: No.

S: I can get a hold of one and I will send you it. You will have to leave me your address. I know you did not get to interview Charlotte. I am trying to think who interviewed her.

H: Holly.

S: Holly, yes. Anyway, she is the recording secretary and she is the one that took over that project. She put boxes throughout the plant with these survey papers for people to fill out. I do not know how many surveys that she got filled out, but the ones we saw, one of the highest complaints was sexual harassment.

H: Wow.

S: Yes. I was shocked. I have heard stories of things happening and I have seen some. There are certain supervisors that are known for their sexual harassment. Truthfully, if I know of any women that have gone into that area, if I know them or even if I do not know them, if I know somebody in the area, we try to warn them, "Watch out for this guy." I really did not realize how much until I saw those surveys. There was a lot of it. As soon as we get done with this Spring Fling, I think my next article, and I think we are going to start working real hard on doing something with sexual harassment. I really did not realize how bad it was. Like I said, we walk around with blinders on where you do not see.

H: What are some of the important issues that women are concerned with in the union or in the plant?

S: Sexual harassment was one of the highest, and also child care. See I am past the child care part, so I did not really realize that. Also another thing that we have seen is the younger generation, they do not have anyone to take care of their kids, so they need help. I do not really know how to address that issue either. Those are some of the things I think nationally and in a national contract are what they should look at as far as child care.

H: Also, how does your union address family issues like child care leave?

S: Our union does not. Our union basically does not address anything as far as children. That is why we have the Women's Committee. We have the Education Committee, they are trying to get the younger generation involved and to try and get them educated. We want to retire and we want to leave. We want to stay home and take care of our grandchildren because we were not here to take care of our kids. As far as I am concerned, as a women in the Women's Committee, we need to get these kids involved somehow, and I do not know how to do it. We need to get some young kids to tell us how to do it. It is like things have been turned around. You do not want to listen to your parents. You grow up and we tell you we think you should do it this way. You do not like it so you rebel, and you do not want to hear it. Well as adults, we do not want to hear, "You know, you could start doing it a little different yourself." We have to start listening. We hear, but we do not listen. That is one thing. Women have got to start doing it for themselves. They have got to start thinking. The younger generation does that. The young men should watch out because the young women are definitely very independent. They better watch out because they are going to get walked over.

H: Good.

S: It is going to happen. I know. I can see it. My daughters, I feel sorry for the

poor guys that they get. [Laughter] My two daughters are very independent, very independent. I have taught, them, "You have got to take care of yourself. You are number one. You take care of yourself. You go out there and you do it yourself. You do not need any man to tell you how to do it or when to do it."

H: Good. I have taken quite a bit of your time here so we can start to wrap up. Do you feel that the strength of your union has grown or declined over the last ten years?

S: Believe me, I am going to say that I think we were a very, very strong union in the 1960's and the 1970's. Then the 1980's came in. It is not that we were a weak union. It was just that the bottom fell out. And it is not that the union was not strong. It is just that everything left, the steel mills. It was just a different time and a different thing. Things are coming around now. It is like that wheel. I do not believe that we are weak, but I do believe that we are getting stronger. I think we have hit a weak point in the last 10 years, but I do believe things are coming up now.

We have become lax. We have become complacent, women do and workers do. And it is not that we do not care. It is just that we are so involved in so many other things that we just do not have time to care. We live in a very fast living. We do not know how to slow down. It is just rush and does this. Rush and do that. Most of the time, everything is done half-assed. We do not stay focused for very long. That is another thing that women have a problem. That is we do not focus because we have to do it fast. We are programmed to do that. We have got to hurry up and get it done because we have got something else to do. On our agenda, we have an agenda 10 miles long. Men only have, I hate to say that because the women take up half of their agenda, we are taking care of half of their work, so they can stay focused on one thing or two things. We have got 10 things.

H: So really, it would help to educate the men to get more involved at home?

S: I am not sure about educating them. I think we just have to make them do it. We have to say, "No, I am not going to do that anymore. I do not have time to do this. You take part in this." You know, this is a 50/50 world. It should be. When you get a divorce they take everything 50/50. You know what I am saying?

H: Yes.

S: And not even just in a divorce. Anywhere you go, it should be that way. Everybody needs to learn to work together. We should just be tired of them taking advantage of us. Everything is equal. We want treated equal. The men want treated equal. Everybody wants to be treated equal. There is no reason why they cannot treat us the same way.

H: What has been your most positive experience as a woman in the union?

S: That is a tough one. I have worked under many administrations. The president that we have right now, I like him. We have had two very good presidents because they know what they want. If I go to him for an answer, he is going to tell me. I may not like his answer. He is a very good leader. Ed Fire was our president. He is also president of the international. He also was a very, very good president. I may not have liked what he said, but he was strong. You have got to be really strong. If you want to be a good union person you have got to be a strong union person. I think I am kind of lost on the question again. Give it back to me again.

H: Your most positive experience as a woman in the union.

S: For 10 years I was a trainer in the school development center and that was a union appointment. I was asked if I would like to take this training job. I do not know if I want to say experience, but it was probably the best thing in being an active union member that I loved. I loved it. I trained for nine years. That is probably why I did not like John Haldie because he did remove me. He removed me for political reasons. Did not have anything to do with me being an effective trainer. I hate saying this and I do not hate saying this. It is the truth. I was the best trainer in there. I had 20 years experience at what I did because I had been on a cutter, and on that type of job for 20 years. I knew the job. I knew it better than anybody. Well, there was another woman that was there before me and her name was Marla. She was the first trainer that was put on. I did it for nine years. Every week, I met six new union people. I was a union trainer. I trained union people for these jobs. I worked with them and trained them for one week. It was like going to school. I was like the teacher. And it is not that I did not teach them. I taught them the knowledge that I knew.

A lot of people that work in the union do not understand what it is all about. They go to work, they work their 40 hours, and then they go home. Women, they really do not understand. They do not know. I tried to put that in my training also. I loved training people. That was my thing. I loved it. I loved meeting new people every week. Women, I loved working with women. A lot of women are very backward. They are afraid. That was one thing I wanted to prove to them, that just because you are woman does not mean that you cannot do this. And truthfully, the majority of the women were smarter than the men. [Laughter] I am not saying that because I am a woman. They are because we are more patient. They see and they listen.

H: On the reverse side of that, what has been the most negative?

S: The most negative, being a woman. I hate saying that. Like I said, they think we are stupid. It is a dog eat dog out there. You will see that. When you are out helping campaign, trying to organize. You are going to see how ruthless the

companies can be. They can really be ruthless. I have not talked really positive about the union. The union is the best thing that has ever happened. And so is equal rights. Like I said, I grew up in a good Christian family. You are supposed to take care of your neighbor. You are supposed to take care of your friend. Everybody is your friend. You are my friend, my neighbor is my friend, it does not make any difference what color you are or who you are, if you are a man or a woman. That is not how it is supposed to be. That is not how the world was put together. That is not why we are all here. We are all here to get along. You do not find that. I do not know. Maybe we all need to go back to church. I am not a practicing Christian. I should be and I am not, but things have fallen apart. I think we need to put the prayer back in school. And I think we need to pledge allegiance to the flag again. Something has gone wrong. We have lost our loyalties. We do not have any loyalty to our country, we do not have any loyalty to our neighbors, we do not have any loyalty at all. It is terrible. That is probably the negative part. I am not saying negative about the union. It is just negative about the people.

The politics at our local has been the ruination of our union. That is the negative side because that is the truth. If it had not been for the politics, we probably would have had a heck of a lot more. It is just too bad. The ones that are in and the ones that are out. Politics has been absolutely horrible. That is what is wrong with our union. It is time to get rid of all the politics and go back to what union is all about. Truthfully, how can you go out there and preach it if you do not practice it? That is what has happened. I do not know where else to go with this. I feel like I have been so negative. It has not always been negative. It has been hard. It is hard for woman. And it is not just women at Packard Electric or IUE Local #717. It is hard everywhere. Is it not hard for you?

H: Yes.

S: They look at women different. I bet your professors look at you different.

H: Probably, sometimes.

S: Yes. Like my husband looks at me different. I hate to say that. I love my husband with all my heart. He looks at me as his wife, but we also look at me as his maid. He is my best friend and I am his best friend, but I am also, "Hey, go do this. Hey go do that." I am taking the garbage out now. [Laughter] I let him do that. Women let people do it to them. My children do not. My girls do not. And I bet you do not either.

H: No.

S: No. The younger generation I think is a lot stronger. It is kind of scary though. I can tell you are a hard worker. Where I am at, the younger hires, our third tier, and even our second tier, they look at us and see how

much money we have made. We make \$20 an hour. They are making \$9.50 an hour. They want \$20 an hour and I understand that they want that. It took us 20 or 30 years to get to where we are at. They have been there 3 years. They have to learn how to fight. They have to learn that and you cannot get it all at once. It is like bargaining. You can go out there and march those picket lines and you can say, "I want this." You are going to get part of what you want. You are not going to get all of it. It is a long, hard struggle, and it is the same thing for women. We cannot get it all at once, but keep fighting. You are going to get a little bit at a time. It is going to come to you. You just have to work hard to get it, that is all. And women definitely know how to work hard.

H: They do. One last question to finish up. Is there any message you would like people to know about you, anything that you want to say that maybe I have not asked?

S: No, I do not think so. The bottom line is, you have to work for what you want. That is it. And if you want it bad enough, you will work as hard as you can to get there. That is just everything in life. Just stay focused. That is really about it.

H: Thank you very much for your time.

End of Interview