

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

OEA- Union History Project

O.H. 2230

Jeff Bauer

Interviewed by

Heidi Scott

On

April 27, 2005

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

OEA- Union History Project

INTERVIEWEE: Jeff Bauer

INTERVIEWER: Heidi L. Scott

SUBJECT: OEA- Union History Project

DATE: April 27, 2005

HS: This is an interview with Jeff Bauer, interviewed by Heidi Scott for the Ohio Education Association Union History Project. It is being conducted at Shawnee State University on April 27, 2005 at approximately 10:00 in the morning.

HS: Good morning.

JB: Good morning.

HS: Thank you for doing the interview.

JB: My pleasure.

HS: Today we are going to discuss your involvement in the Shawnee Education Association. First, though, I'd like to get some background information. First, you could you tell me where and when were you born?

JB: I was born in Lorain, OH, July 13, 1959. I was raised in Lorain, I went to school in Lorain public school system, then I went on to Bowling Green State University. I received a bachelor's degree in 1981 in Business Administration and Geology. I went from there to the Ohio State University and I got a master's degree and a Ph.D. in geology. From tht point, I got the degree in

summer of 1987 and I came directly to Shawnee State University. This is my first position and only position so far.

HS: You had an interesting combination, business administration and geology.

JB: Yea, I was one of those folks that went to undergraduate, his undergraduate education doing what other people thought I'd be good at. I was told in high school, I took one of these aptitude tests and they said I'd be a good accountant or undertaker, some strange combination. I felt that accounting was a bit more uplifting, so I did that for two and a half years and by the time I realized geology was what I wanted to do, I had already accumulated so many hours in business that I figured I may as well just do a double-major and get both of them. So here I am, but I never really did much with the business. Yeah, I suppose maybe at tax time it came in handy because I'm sort of familiar with some of that, I certainly wasn't insecure about filling out tax forms, but other than that, nothing really.

HS: Could you tell me something about your family?

JB: Yes, I'm married, I have three children. My wife's name is Jeril and boy don't ask me, we were married in 1983 and you can do the math. I guess this will make 22 years! I have a 20-year old daughter, Jeanette, who is going to school here at Shawnee State. I have a 16-year old son, Robert, who is a sophomore in high school. And I have a 12-year old daughter, Katherine, who's finishing up 6th grade this year.

HS: Do you have siblings?

JB: Yes, I have two brothers, two older brothers. They both attended college at Baldwin-Wallace up in the Cleveland area and they both, well my oldest brother is now retired, he was a teacher in the Elyria school system for many years; and my middle brother, the one that's just a little bit older than me, he's now teaching at North Olmstead.

HS: And what did your parents do when you were growing up?

JB: My father was a sign contractor but he was a designer too. He's a very, very talented artist; he does watercolors, those kinds of things. But, for most of his life, he did sign work. He retired; it's been some time. My mother was a stay-at-home mom and they are both still alive and kicking in Lorain, OH. Both in their middle-to-late '80s now. I think my father turned 85 in January; my mother will turn 85 in November.

HS: That's wonderful. So once you got your Ph.D., you came here as an instructor?

JB: Yeah, Assistant Professor is the terminology used. We do have an Instructor level, too. Yeah, we have Senior Instructors, those are hired in at, often times, masters degree levels we'll hire in people as Senior Instructors, as least in the past we have.

HS: OK, but you've been teaching this whole time?

JB: Yes, few other little things along the way. I did serve as chairperson for three years somewhere in the middle there actually, two years at one point and another year later on. But even during that time our chairpersons are also faculty and teach, so its been continuous teaching throughout.

HS: From what I've heard, being chair isn't anything that people jump up and say, "I want to do that."

JB: No, we have an interesting system. Its unfortunately in a way because we, in terms of our salary system, at least as it stands now, I can teach during the summer several classes and make the equivalent of what I would make being a chairperson and teaching on a 12-month contract. So, if you ask most people whether they would rather teach a couple of courses in the summer versus doing the chair duty throughout the year, that's a no-brainer. It's a great deal of responsibility you have as chair. So it's not the best, but in science, at least, we've done a pretty good job. We've had what you might consider a rotating chair, so we've, at least half the people in the Science department have served as chairperson at least for a few years. That's a great situation because when you do take over as chair, you have other chairs in the department and-

HS: They can help you out.

JB: Well, if nothing else, they understand. You know, sometimes if you've never done it, you say, "How could he do something like that, how could he?" Well, if you have half of your faculty who have done it before, they know how you could do it because they probably have been put in the same position.

HS: Very good point. OK, now, moving on to the union. Just first, why do you consider unions important in higher education?

JB: You know, I can't answer that for all schools, but the SEA has been particularly important to Shawnee State. When I came here in the fall of '87, we had just turned into a University; we

were coming out of a community college and technical school, that change took place in '86. And so we were still left with a lot of the community college artifacts, in terms of contracts, in terms of how you treat people, and I think it was so very important during those early days especially to have one voice, one powerful voice that you could use to encourage change. And change, it's just not salary, either. Change is concerned with how you treat people, how you treat people in the workplace. I can go on record here though, as I've said this many, many times. When I came here, I'd been in a union before; I was in the retail clerk's union, worked at Revco drug store for a number of years. But I was not necessarily sold on unions, especially in higher education. When I came here I, along with about a dozen other faculty, came in in the fall of '87 and almost immediately, a week or so after we started teaching here in the fall, the SEA decided that they were going to go out on strike. And we were faced with that proposition of, first of all, joining and then if you join you go on right on strike. If you don't join, you are going to be crossing the picket line and so it was a very, very difficult decision. I guess I finally came to grips with it probably over a few beers and a lot of discussion but it seemed to most of us, I think there may have been a few that actually didn't, but I think most of us understood it was much more important to fall in line with the union. Because the other faculty were going to be the people we were going to have to work with. The administrators come and go, board of trustees members come and go, but the people you work with on a daily basis are very important. So we joined, we went on strike. That was a picnic that year, it was a three-day strike or a two-day strike, it was over a weekend. I don't know if you probably heard this already. A little bit scary, but we went out, I think we went out on a Friday, and if you want to see what happens here on a Friday, stick around until the end of the week. What you'll find is there are virtually no classes on Friday. The science department is one of the few areas that actually has lab courses that we run on Fridays, but most of the rest of campus doesn't do. We don't have any classes. So by striking on Friday, you were striking on a day when nobody was here anyways. And then I think it probably extended through Monday and I'm not sure when it ended, whether it was maybe we came back in on Tuesday. And it was, I hate to say this, but it was a really good event for the campus because it was a wake-up call for everybody on the importance of getting things in line with universities in this state and adjacent states. And it really wasn't all that taxing because you had, you got a little bit of organization, you had a little bit of free food, you got to hold signs. They even have a picture, this is, you can't see this on camera but I wanted to. This is one of my favorites, in fact, I not only have the paper but I have been sent a photocopy of this several times. That's me in 1987 and we had-

HS: I'll need to get a copy of this.

JB: You know, obviously any kind of strike there's some pain involved but this was not too bad. And we were, we really came out, I think, more so than just winning on contractual issues, we

came out unified. I think its very difficult on a diverse campus when you have people teaching in different areas from different backgrounds to come together but we had central issues there that did. And with the leadership in the SEA I think we accomplished some remarkable things over those early years.

HS: So that, how did you feel about that? I mean, I know you, I could see why it took a few beers and some long thinking, you just got hired-

JB: Oh yeah, I'll tell you, we had a meeting, the new faculty that year, and I can rattle off a few names; there was Ginnie Hamilton and Hank Nixt, Frank Burns, Julia Cole. This was the first wave of new faculty since Shawnee State had become a university; there was a large group of new faculty. And I can remember after, just after a few days of getting wind of this impending strike that we did have a meeting. We were down in the old cafeteria in Massie Hall and we were just shaking our heads, you know, what do you do? What are you going to do, you know, what are our options? And for most of us, in fact all of us, we had never, ever been in a situation like that. And so, you know, we talked it out. I don't know if we came to any unanimous decisions on what we were going to do. Everybody went their own way. But it was important to at least talk it out a little bit.

HS: You walked into a quagmire.

JB: Yeah, and it was interesting just a month or so before that, the division head in math and science who hired me- great guy, still here, associate provost now, Dave Todt- he was head of math and science and when he hired me, when he told me that I was hired and we talked about the position, I had mentioned, I said, "Well I understand that you don't have a contract yet, that you are in negotiations." And he goes, "Oh, yea, but that'll all be settled before you get here to campus."

HS: Famous last words.

JB: So that's the early stuff.

HS: Now, do you know, this has been since I've gotten here I've been asking everyone, do you know the year SEA was founded?

JB: Well, it was before me, obviously. No, I don't know the year. I do have some, I have documents. I might be able to get back to you on that. I have some old documents that I kept that were passed on from one to another and there might be some indication. I'm not sure. The

people, though, who would have some insight there would be the folks like Gary Gammer, I don't know if you're meeting with him or not. Ed Minor, you're going to meet, have you met with Ed yet?

HS: No, I have you and Larry Essman?

JB: Essman would probably know. I'm almost certain.

HS: We've been able to pinpoint it to, I think, mid-70's, because I know it was after YSU and way before the collective bargaining law. But no one, everyone has all the recollection of events-

JB: Yea, that was way before my time.

HS: But then dates just slip, so. But now, the SEA is associated with the OEA. Do you know why they chose OEA?

JB: You know, I can only guess, but my guess is because we came from a community college and a large majority of the faculty that were at the community college in the '70s, '80s, were actually people who taught in the school systems here, the K through the 12 school systems. I have to guess that's probably, was probably because of that. I might, if this would have been a university with a university faculty and then they formed a union, it may have been different. They may have selected one of the other groups, the American Federation, is it AFTA, American Federation of Teachers, or AA, what is it, AAUP?

HS: There's Teamsters and AAUP, I believe.

JB: Yeah, it could have been one of those, but as it stands, we not only have that, but even some of the terminology we have in our contract is kind of a throwback to that group that really started it all, that were largely teachers in the local school systems. Like, for instance, we still have the term "continuing contract," rather than "tenure." Now there's been some controversy of whether we're going to be talking about a tenure system, that continuing contract is not really the same as tenure. But the continuing contract is a K through 12 term that's used and that's been pulled through these years, we still have it. It's not so bad either; by the way, it's just a little difficult when you are hiring a faculty member to explain to them what continuing contract is, because it's foreign to higher education.

HS: Now, how well do you think the SEA fits with the OEA since it is thought of, you know, primarily as a K through 12 organization by many people?

JB: By the way, I don't think, although they have a higher education group within the OEA, I don't think we get, we don't get the kind of attention, and with good reason. I mean, most of their members are K through 12 teachers. The good thing about it is the support we get, the legal support, the negotiating support we get. I don't think that we could get any finer support with any other group. I've been associated with several strikes now, I've been president of the SEA on several occasions, I can tell you first hand, Jane Currey is, has been, everything to us. She's one of the finest people I've been around and she's helped us through some very difficult times. She, along with her folks at OEA, have been very, very good to us and I'm not sure that we would have been able to get that kind of support. Because the OEA really is a large, powerful group. I mean, they have a lot of money backing them; they have a lot of other resources available to them that you probably wouldn't have with other groups.

HS: So you think that, while the fit may not be perfect, the OEA is putting forth a good effort, it's supporting?

JB: Yeah, you now I'm not sure about the, you know, when it gets down to the issues like negotiations and strikes and arbitrations, you're really not dealing with the OEA in total, you're dealing with a small group of people who are OEA people. And that small group of people up in our uni-serve office here have been really great; they've done, I can't imagine we could get any better service from anybody.

HS: Jane is retiring.

JB: That's what I understand.

HS: That's what I've heard. Now, you've discussed the strike in '87. There was one, was it a couple of years after?

JB: 1990, and that was scary.

HS: Tell me about that.

JB: I was on the negotiating team in 1990 and I'm trying to remember who was on the team that year. Of course, Ed Minor was president that year; Larry Essman, who you'll be talking to, was on the negotiating team. John Shupert was on the negotiating team, and I'm not sure if Gary Gammer was or not, may not have been, I'm not sure. But we had some real serious issues, we had insurance issues and our salaries, here again, throwbacks to community college

days, our salaries really were not in line, anywhere near in line with what university faculty were being paid at other institutions. And so we really had a lot of work to do. As it turned out, the insurance issue became the most prominent of the two. Now the good thing about that is if you're looking to bring people together, those two issues are easy. What becomes difficult is when you have other issues that affect one group but maybe don't affect another group on campus. So there was universal agreement amongst faculty that we weren't getting paid anywhere near what we should be, and there was universal agreement that if we were going to get some type of salary increase, we didn't want it all sucked in to insurance costs. And so we had great support. There was still faculty that crossed the picket line and it was a very scary thing because it wasn't the picnic of 1987, that was, I would guess it lasted over two weeks, I mean.

HS: That's what I've heard, that it was a couple weeks long. I haven't gotten any dates.

JB: The evolution during that few weeks, we were down at the electrician's union down here, that's where we had our base at. And you know, the first few days, people were bringing food in, the people who were on picket duty would walk from the electrical union down there down to Shawnee State. We had pretty tight coverage, and there was a lot of support and that support continued throughout, but the demeanor of people changed through that two weeks. The first few days everybody was very hopeful and optimistic and by the time we got into the second week, you start to feel a real heavy burden and maybe the worst thing is the rumors that were circulated. You start to hear that, you know, this is exactly what the board of trustees wanted, they wanted us out on strike because they are already taking steps to replace all of us and bust the union. And I think that's pretty typical that you hear that in most strikes that these things are going to happen. And, of course, after two weeks, or two and a half weeks, you start to think, "Well maybe there's some truth, maybe they really want us to continue this, maybe they will shut the university down and we'll be out on the street and they'll hire a whole new group of faculty next year." So that was a tough one and when we finally got down to it, we did get some concessions and, you know, I think everybody was relieved when that was over.

HS: So how did it end? I mean did they come to you, did you guys come to them or was it through constant negotiations that they finally-?

JB: Negotiations, you know, they started and they stopped and we had a lot of pounding on the table and it was just a terrible situation. We had a new president who had come in, Clive Veri, and he's what we found in most of the negotiations the presidents have just stayed out, and that's what Clive did, he just kept his nose out of it. But I do remember one real emotional event; there was a board meeting that they had on campus, I think during the second week.

And I got a chance to talk to the board. You know, we were just beat. We were doing picket duty for a while and we were tired. It was cold out. And I explained to the board that this was just not good for anybody. That we needed to get something accomplished. That didn't have a lot of impact but I think there was a little bit of movement from both sides. I think a lot of times when you get into those situations, you get to the point where you say, "Well, we don't like what we have here, but unless we want to give it all up or we want to take that risk, we better get this done." And it did. I think, when we came in, I think everyone was relieved and I think everybody was reasonably happy that we had gotten all that we could.

HS: Now, how are the salaries now compared to statewide? I understand that there's a difference between, you know, a larger university, but-

JB: Right, there's a difference in what we do. You know, I think that if you were a faculty member at Ohio State when you step in the door; your expectations are very different from here at Shawnee State. I think they'd expect that you're going to be generating grant monies, in most departments; and that you are going to be publishing, and certain things that are not part of our contract. You can do it here, but it's not something you have to do to be promoted or to continue on here at the university. So as far as institutions of similar size, similar expectation, I think that we have a mix because we have a single contract that covers everybody. You'll find some areas on campus that are very close to or maybe at the same levels that you would get at other institutions of similar size. And then you have other areas, certain areas that are really in great demand where other institutions have flexibility; they can pay somebody a lot more coming in the door. We can't do that, we have a maximum level you can pay. And so in those areas we're probably still seriously below the average level.

HS: Do you know what the average starting salary is here?

JB: For a person with a Ph.D. and no experience its probably \$34,000 to \$35,000, I think. Which is great, because when I came in here in '87, I think I started out in the low 20s, like \$20,000, \$21,000. It was interesting because at that time my brother, the middle brother, the one's just a little older than me, just a few years after that, he started at North Olmsted and his salary with a Bachelor's degree was considerably higher than mine down here at Shawnee with a Ph.D. So, we've made some really great strides in that area. Now the biggest problem for SEA with all of this, even though we might be a little bit behind in some areas, maybe not so bad in other areas, you start to take salary off the table as a unifying factor. So when you are negotiating, which I've been involved with on several occasions, in '87 and '90 it was easy, you know. Everybody was paid horribly low and everybody could get together over that. Now some

people on campus say, "You know, I'm okay. I'd like to get more but the salary's not that bad." So you no longer have that unifying factor.

HS: That's interesting. I wouldn't have thought of that, but yeah. Because I imagine, I mean, my limited knowledge, people in the sciences, biology and chemistry probably, typically get paid more than the liberal arts.

JB: Right, the humanities are usually very low, certain areas it can be high, but most areas are pretty low. So we are in pretty good shape there and science we're not too far off, we are a little bit low; but there's some areas, for instance I mentioned accounting, I was in accounting. If you want to hire a Ph.D. accountant right out of grad school, the average salary is about twice what we can pay them here. And really, we don't have any chance then, unless you have a special situation.

HS: Yeah, no one will take that if they can get paid double.

JB: Right, so those are tough things to do. But let me mention the flip side of that, that's a market-run system and we love this market-run system, you know, the market dictates what you pay people and what you get for products and so on and so forth. But here it's very difficult to reconcile. If you take, let's say you take somebody, a faculty member in finance and a faculty member in accounting, they're sitting in offices right next to each other. And you're paying the accountant twice as much as the finance professor, when you look at their responsibilities there at Shawnee State they're exactly the same. They teach the same number of courses, they're expected to do the same things, so why is this person getting so much more than the other person? Well, he's just, he's lucky because he's in an area that's in great demand. Now, at other institutions it may be a little different. Maybe if you are going to pay somebody that amount of money, your expectation is that they are going to generate a lot of grant money, they're going to have a large number of graduate students, and so on. But we don't have that here, so I think that becomes very difficult to reconcile, the contract just allowing indiscriminate pay or salary for different professors.

HS: When you came here, you obviously joined the union right away. Did you become, take an active role in it? Obviously, you did because you supported it with the strike, but after that, you know, did you-

JB: The active role really started in '90. I was asked by Ed Miner to serve on the negotiating team and those are always great eye-openers. I would suggest everybody do it at least once because I think some of us have this little rosy idea that everybody really love you and really

wants to pay you a lot more than what you are getting but can't because they are constrained. But when get down to negotiations you find out that they don't really like you that much, they don't think that much of you, they'd love to pay you a lot less if they could. And so you get a much better sense of how the world really works through these negotiations, and that's probably the turning point for me. Up until that time I was supportive of the faculty unit because it was faculty unit, but I didn't understand why it was here until I went through negotiations in '90. And that was, of course, the one that ended in the long strike. And then in '91, I decided to run for vice-president on the urging of the guy who was running for president, John Shupert. Little did I know that John had already decided to retire. So what happened, a couple of months after we ran I was the vice-president, John submitted his retirement papers and I became president for the rest of that year. And that was not a bad year because that was right after a contract, you had no, there was nothing really to do with any negotiating, organizing for negotiations, which is the big thing. The only big problem the year after a contract is, all those little things that were completely clear to the negotiators, once it gets put into writing and you put into action, it's not so clear. So there are a lot of points where you have to clarify. I don't know if I had any side letters, I don't think so, but we did have a lot of clarifications that had to go through that year.

HS: So you've been on the negotiations team and served as vice-president and president.

JB: And that happened again by the way, I'm the only person in this, at this institution, maybe ever in the history of all faculty unions who served as president twice but was never elected as president. In '93 the same thing happened. In '93 I had the vice-president's role, again Bill Hanlon was the president. In the spring, and this was a negotiating year too, in the spring Bill got deathly sick, was taken to the hospital. We visited him there, we thought he was dead. I mean, he looked blue and we thought he was gone. It was very fortunate; his daughter was a physician and she came in to see him. He wasn't getting good care here and she looked at his chart and she immediately sent him up to Columbus and within a very short period of time they figured out what his problem was and they were able to bring him back to life. Yeah, it was crazy too, because his physician here who had no idea what was wrong with him really fought the extradition, if you will. He didn't want him to leave, this was his patient and she had to really put her foot down and say, "Well, this is my dad."

HS: Well, what was it?

JB: He had a little, I think it was a bleeding ulcer, but it was in a position where it was very difficult to diagnose and so he was just kind of laying there. They weren't doing anything for it, but when he got up to Columbus, they were able to figure out what it was very quickly. Well, he

was really out of it for quite a while there and so we had to have somebody else. I moved up into the president's position and I served that position through the rest of that year, and through the negotiations up until January. And that was a real interesting one. We'd already gone through the previous two strikes in '93. We were once again running into a real stonewall. There was no movement by the other group and we, I don't recollect all the details, but we had a meeting. They university delivered something that became known as "Lafo", it was their last and final offer- LAFO. So we called it Lafo and it was a laugh because it just wasn't giving us anything and we were going to have to pay a great deal of insurance. We were giving up a group of people, which is the worst. We had chairs, chairpersons were in the unit and they were asking for those people to be removed from the unit. And I know I got into arguments with some of the other people about this. I think the one thing you can't do is sell anybody out in your membership. I think you lose your integrity at that point. So we kind of dug our heels in on that issue and on the insurance issue. Salary, although it was important, wasn't of the most importance during that negotiations. We got Lafo and I remember talking to Clive Veri. I called him in. He was the president at that time still, and I wanted to talk to him face to face. And we talked about a proposal and I told him, I said we might be able to endorse this but we need the board of trustees to endorse it also. We have to know that this is going to fly, because this was just one of these creative brainstorming sessions. Well he'd indicated that they would, but then it came out that the president of the board, I think his name was Winters (he was a real butt-hole), anyways, he didn't want any part of that. So we pulled back, they pulled back. They slapped us with this Lafo, last and final offer. We presented it to our membership. The problem though, by this time in '93, at least in my mind and other people have other opinions, but we had lost a lot of our steam. We no longer had those real great, unifying points and when it was just over insurance and the chairs, a lot of people didn't want to have anything to do with a strike. We did take a vot on Lafo, not on going out on strike; and it turned out the vote was very, very close, which really scared the heck out of us because this was a lousy offer and we had almost half the faculty who were willing to adopt a real lousy offer. So what we did at that point, we decided on something that was halfway between rather than pulling everybody out on strike, which we wouldn't have had nearly the support that we had in '90 or in '87. We went to a partial strike format. And we carried out, we didn't do extra things, we continued to work so we had a paycheck coming, but it was really a dismal place to be for the next few months. It went through September, October, November, December, and then in December we had to select a new president, or me. I didn't run. Ed Miner figured he could get it done so he ran and I think we still held out until April. I mean, it was deep into the spring before we were actually able to resolve the contract and I don't know if I should go into great detail but it was crazy the way it was done. I don't know if anybody else has described this, but-

HS: No I haven't heard.

JB: It was, first of all, I don't know if you've heard of Vern Riffe before.

HS: Prominent politician-

JB: Yeah, he's responsible for Shawnee State being a university. He brought a lot of money down here; he was speaker of the house for several decades. Ralph Nader came to campus here at one point and it was a terrible event because he didn't like Vern Riffe and it was mutual. Somehow somebody got their wires crossed and invited him to speak here on campus and most of us think that's the reason why Robert Ewigleben was dismissed as president because he allowed it to happen. Well, Ralph Nader called Vern Riffe, at that point in time, the most powerful state politician in the country. He had a lot of favors that people owed him and a lot of political careers that he was responsible for. So he could get just about anything done that he wanted to. When I came here I had heard about him, and I had this idea that this real dynamic guy who was a powerful speaker. I heard him speak the first time, I was so disappointed because he wasn't. Physically, he wasn't very imposing and his speaking was just awful. He was a terrible speaker. He would never get by today, with politics and the media being so closely intertwined. But back in those days it was backroom deals, you know. You say, "Well I got money in my coffer. I can help support your campaign but you are going to help me out at some point." And so he ran unopposed so many years. He had lots of money that he could give to other campaigns. The reason I mention it is because during '93 we were embroiled in this negotiations and I get a call. It was midnight on a Saturday night. And I said "Hello" and he said "Hi, this is Vern Riffe." And I say, "No, it isn't." And he said "Yes, it is." And I say, "No, who is this really?" and he said "No, this is Vern Riffe." And then after a few minutes I started to recognize the voice and I said, "OK, what do you need?" and he had a long heart-to-heart with me on what I should be doing as president and what I should be telling my membership to do. And he asked if he could meet with me and so we had this clandestine meeting over in his insurance building over in New Boston. It was a cordial meeting. He just, he didn't really tell me I had to do anything. He just talked about the importance of Shawnee State and how, you know, this would be a terrible blow and he didn't know if could hold the dogs off if we went on strike this time and that there were a lot of politicians who didn't like all this money going down to Shawnee State. He laid it on pretty heavy and at the end he said he just needed to know whether we were going to go on strike. And I said "No, we're not going to go on strike, at least not now." And he said "OK, well that makes me feel better." The next day we took a vote. We didn't go on strike. We took a partial strike vote and that's what I meant. I didn't really explain it to him, but, of course he got the message and I heard through the grapevine that my name was dirt now, forevermore, because I screwed him. And I didn't really. I told him, I said we weren't going to go. We wouldn't be picketing. We weren't going on strike

like we had the last few times. And I even explained it to him, I remember, that we were probably going to take a vote on a partial strike, and I think he was old and I just don't think he understood very well what I was talking about. So he was not on board. He didn't like us much anymore. And as it turned out the whole thing ended. I think it was, I'm not sure if it was in April, it was deep into the spring. Ed Miner was the president. I remember him calling me one night... This is going to be, is it going to be broadcast to anybody who wants to hear it?

HS: It's going to be, this will be thorough, it'll be edited down. No, tell me, this is interesting.

JB: I'd like to tell you the whole story. What happened is I remember getting a call from Ed in the evening. He said he thinks he has a deal that we, and he wasn't supposed to be negotiating on his own anyways. This was all supposed to be up front, but he apparently talked to some people and he thought he had a deal. Mind you, I had already had it out with the board president, we almost, you know, we almost really physically had it out. It was in Ed's office, too. So he called me over his house. And I remember, I think Jane was there, I'm not sure if Gary Gemmer may have been there also. There were a couple people there and Ed had a new proposal that was done somewhere on the side. We'd never seen it before. So we were looking at it and one of the big things was the chairs were out of the unit. I looked it at it. I said, "Ed, you can't do this." And Jane said, "Ed, you can't do this," and we all told him the same thing. Well, he had struck the deal to get the other stuff that we were working for in lieu of getting the chairs out. Well, as it turned out, we reneged on our end. We put the chairs back in the proposal. We told them we would sign it if-

HS: The chairs were in.

JB: Yea, and it put him in a bad situation at that point because they had proposed something and I think the worlds of the board chairperson was, at least I had heard it through the grapevine that "We'll get the chairs out anyways. We'll go through legal." Some legal means to get the chairs out. And they did. They tried thereafter and there was a lot of business that occurred with that. But, in essence, Ed got the deal for us that we were looking for- but in a strange, convoluted way.

HS: Now, so this went on through April, you said?

JB: You know, I really don't recollect. In fact, maybe I have the contract-

HS: Well I was just wondering how long was that partial strike? Was that like that whole time from fall?

JB: From August 31st through April 1st. April 1st, that's April Fool's Day. That's when the contract took effect. So we must have hit the deal sometime in March.

HS: And now the chairs are currently out, aren't they?

JB: Some are and some aren't. They went through legal means and what transpired was that the ones, the chairs in Arts & Sciences are all can-be SEA. They are all fair-share SEA. In fact, I think they are all members of SEA this year. The biggest problem, and the chairs, the chairs in business and the chair in engineering tech are also SEA, but the biggest area was health science because they had these people that were really vaguely defined and they had different duties than what the other chairs had. They had programs that they had to have accredited on a yearly basis. They had other problems and some of these directors, as they refer to them over there, some of them, you know they were directing a unit of two. It was just them and another faculty member and so the final part of this is, I think those folks were taken out of the unit. Actually, I don't even know if there ever in and that's something I'm not real sure of. They may have been for a very short while and were out, or maybe they were never in. I'm not sure.

HS: What was it like to serve as president?

JB: It was very stressful, especially the second time with negotiations. I'll probably die ten years earlier than what I would have if I hadn't served as president. Well, it's a very important position but, as you might guess, it's a real thankless position. You're doing things that nobody's going to like, especially when you are in negotiations. You know, you are negotiating contracts and most contracts have some things that people like and some things people don't like. And so, you don't make any friends with the administration or the board. And you don't even make a whole lot of friends in your won faculty doing it. I think most people who are involved in the union activities; they have a lot of respect. And by the way, even with Ed Miner, even though I said that maybe he went a little bit outside the law to get the contract, he's probably the single-most important member of the SEA through the years. I mean, he came in during a pivotal time and it was through his personality and work that we got a lot of things that we have today that we wouldn't have had.

HS: Lonely at the top then, as president?

JB: Yeah, he has more of the personality for it than I do. Now Ed, I don't know if maybe deep down there is a soul, but Ed just seems to let things roll off. And he's a very emotional guy. I mean he's the guy that you want pounding the table and everything's black and white to him.

You know, this is right and this wrong. Whereas with me, I spend way too much time after a decision is made thinking whether it was right or wrong and I think that's what really makes it a difficult position.

HS: Now, on average, when you served as president, how many hours a week would you say that you devoted to union activities?

JB: Well, during the first time, after the contract, just a probably a few hours a week you had. When you had new faculty were hired you had to sign off on those, you had to check and make sure they were being brought in at the correct salary. There were at least at certain times, certain spurts where you would have meetings for a couple of arbitrations here and there that would take some time but I don't think more than five hours a week, on average. During negotiations, I can't even begin to tell you how many hours. I mean, you probably put in hundreds of hours during that negotiating season and you are constantly, even when you're not working on it, you are thinking about new angles, new ways to get things done, new people you want to bring into the process. And so I think during that one year, especially during those months of negotiations, you are putting in a full-time job just-

HS: You are married to the union then?

JB: Oh yeah.

HS: It takes up a lot of time. Its unpaid, right?

JB: Well we do get something for it: you get course load reductions, and I'm not exactly sure how much it is now. It used to be just one course per year. So we would teach, on average, either nine or ten courses. For the SEA president, you would have one less course.

HS: Are you on semesters or quarters?

JB: Quarters. It may be now, this time around that during a negotiating year we may have a two-course reduction. That's still not enough, but its at least something.

HS: It helps, but yeah it seems like it wouldn't be enough. So why would you? What makes you-

JB: Somebody's got to do it. It's your contract as well as everybody else's and somebody's got to step up and do it. We've had problems getting people to run for president. I don't think we've ever, I can't remember a contested election. You get one person to run, he runs. We had

a few times... We had a faculty member that runs for everything. Puts his name in on everything but he's not really a serious candidate. Not counting that, I don't think we've ever had much opposition.

HS: Now, the support staff is unionized. Were you, when you came here in '87, were they already unionized? Do you know?

JB: If they weren't, it was soon after.

HS: You had no-

JB: I think they were, but they did change who they were affiliated with once over the years.

HS: Do you know who they are affiliated with now?

JB: I think its CWA.

HS: Which stands for?

JB: Communication Workers of- ?

HS: America?

JB: Or Association. I'm not sure. Its CWA though.

HS: So you had no active role in them organizing, helping them out or anything like that?

JB: No, no. Now we've had, you know, we have some discussions that occur during negotiations on both sides and I know we've had some discussions even surrounding whether maybe we should try to align our contracts so they're being negotiated at the same time, but nothing has really come to fruition.

HS: Now, the professional staff isn't unionized. Do you know why?

JB: There have been several occasions where they've had talks. And I can tell you, honestly, they it is, because they haven't had to suffer the pain. What happens, invariably, is the faculty negotiate a contract and the benefits of that contract are extended to other people on campus.

HS: Kind of a “me too” thing?

JB: Right, so for instance, one year we got a real, real large faculty raise. We fought hard for it and it was necessary. It was 9.9%, which is formidable. Well a month later all the professional staff, not the CWA, not the secretaries, but the administrators all go the same thing. They got the same insurance benefits that we fought for. So when you look at it, they got the best of both worlds in a way. They don't have to pay the union dues; they don't have to go through the organizing and all. I think they do have a structure. They have a little governance structure for them. But as far as salaries and insurance, they just grab on to our coattails and it's been very good for them. In fact, there are a lot of the professional staff, the mid-level administrators who hate us, they don't like the SEA because of some of the things that have happened in the past. But I've also heard from several of them, they've said, “You know, we don't really like you folks, but we also are happy that you are there because our salaries wouldn't be nearly as high. You know, our benefits wouldn't be nearly as good if it wasn't for you folks.”

HS: Now, could you tell me, well I guess I didn't ask. Do you hold any official position right now?

JB: No. I do things for the SEA from time to time. For instance, right now this week, we are running a constitution amendment vote. We have four proposals that are on the table to change our constitution still has a lot of archaic terminology and some other things that have been problematic. For instance, we have term limits. We had term limits before term limits were in vogue. But unfortunately if you have a two-year term limit for a president and you don't have a lot of people that want to run, you're kind of cutting your own throat on that. Because you have somebody who is experienced, who is willing to do it, and yet he's not or she's not going to be allowed to run because they've already done it for two years. Now they can sit out a year and come back, but sometimes, like this year, for instance, our president has served for two years. He's a good guy. I think he does a good job. But if we don't get an amendment passed to eliminate the term limits, he won't be able to run during a negotiating year. We'll have to find somebody else to do it. So, that's one of the issues and I do things for the SEA like that. And like the last negotiations, I was on the crisis committee, which is literally the henchmen that does all the mean, nasty things which I love doing. We put together t-shirts, you know, the mean green t-shirts. It's safety green. I'm not sure what color the color is.

HS: Jane Currey told me about those.

JB: I have one if you'd like it. I'll give. I have some extra ones. That says something like, “Don't make us strike again,” something of that sort.

HS: She told me, I think that's what it was, she said.

JB: And we've had, I organize rallies for the faculty and I don't mind doing things like that. And it's important because it's my contract. The more I can do on that end, and as it sood, the last negotiations, I've done three of them already. I didn't serve on the negotiating team, but at the end when things were getting difficult, they did bring me in. I sat in on a few of the negotiating sessions just to offer my two cents.

HS: OK, I have a few more questions and we'll wrap up, which we may need to switch to another tape just to prepare.

JB: You're still rolling.

HS: OK, so if you had to pinpoint one thing, what would you say the major role that the SEA fulfills for its members?

JB: The major role of the SEA is to provide a single, powerful voice for faculty. On many campuses that have no unions, its everybody for themselves. And some people do very lgood in that environment and many others don't. For instance, I got a job offer a few years back. I interviewed for the job. They wanted me. They were going to hire me, and they were going to give me a little bit of a raise from what I would be paid here. At other institutions, I could slap that offer on the table to the dean and say "Hey, I'm going to get \$2,000 more at this institution. You know, if you can match it, I'll stay. If not, or if you can give me an extra thousand above that, I'll stay. If not, I'm hitting the road." And some people can play that game and do it pretty effectively. We don't have that and I don't think that's the best of things, either.

HS: Now, could you discuss how you think the union is doing right now? What's it's current state?

JB: I don't like to be overly pessimistic about anything, but I think we have changed considerably, and I think I've mentioned already why I think that is. You're getting, we still continue to add faculty to the unit, many of the newer faculty really don't understand where we've come from. They don't understand how difficult it was to get those salaries that they have right now. And in addition, because of the salaries, I'm not saying I'm completely happy with what I'm getting paid, but they are close enough to the norm that people are going to say, "Why should we hold out? Why should we risk everything for this? You know the insurance. We got good insurance. So what if we do have to pay a few bucks for it?" Well, those are crucial

principles. I was willing to strike last time over that principle, but most of the other faculty were not. Why? Well, because I remember how hard we had to fight to keep the insurance where it was on two or three occasions. And I just didn't feel, in principle, that I wanted to give it up. Even if I'm paying five dollars I didn't want to give that issue up. Whereas a lot of faculty now looked at that and they say, "Well, you know, if I'm going to pay \$20 or \$30 a month, that's no hardship. So let's just give in." So I think because we have lived up, we've been our own worst enemy in that way. Because the more you get as a union, the more comfortable your membership gets, and they start to think, "Well, why do we need this? Why do we need that situation?"

HS: What do you consider to be SEA's greatest achievement for its members?

JB: SEA has been responsible for creating an environment here on campus for faculty that's more like that of our sister institutions. We were so, so way off base when we became a university. Shawnee State, or the SEA has been responsible for moving us, and I'll say not just on the economic issues, but also, I think, in terms of how faculty are treated here on campus. It's been responsible for achieving something more close to the norm. In future negotiations I hope that we are able to stay strong. That we continue to have the same support that we've had in the past. And I hope that we continue to work on those issues that are important to the faculty, including economic issues, but also those issues surrounding the classroom. I think you see little references in the news now to schools that are going to be maybe looking at their tenure system. You know, faculty members who have said really outlandish things are now being asked to leave institutions. There are many issues, academic freedom issues; for instance, that I think the union can be very helpful in continuing a good situation or a good environment here. We are the, outside of negotiating contracts, we are also the group that protects faculty when certain things are being abused, when maybe faculty are being treated unfairly. We're the group that steps up and helps them out. So those are good things. I hope we continue to do that in the future.

HS: Well, that ends my questions. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

JB: No.

HS: OK, thank you so much for your time. It's been a pleasure and this concludes the interview.