

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Women in Labor Unions

Personal Experience

O H 1864

CHARLOTTE INGALLS

Interviewed

by

Holly Hanni

on

May 8, 1997

CHARLOTTE INGALLS

Ms Charlotte Ingalls was born in Liberty, Ohio on May 14, 1944 She is a single parent with one son and a grandchild Charlotte was hired at Delphi Packard Electric in 1964, but quit for two years to raise her son She went back to Packard in 1971 and has worked there ever since Charlotte had difficulty being a working mother because her son suffered from asthma. She had to take off without pay to be with her son when he was ill. She said it was very difficult because she needed to work for the money but did not want to leave her son when he was sick Over the years, she has been harassed by her male co-workers and has stood up to them She feels that she has earned their respect because she did not take their "shit "

Charlotte became involved with the Women's Committee of Local 717 and with CLUW (Coalition of Labor Union Women) Recently, she was elected Recording Secretary for Local 717 She says she believes in demonstrating a strong work ethic to set an example as a Union representative. She has seen a problem of women in the Union using sexual favors to obtain favors and positions. She has fought for women to be treated equally by the men in the Union She has seen women harassed as they took on male dominated jobs in the plant Men would call women filthy names and even put dead rodents on the equipment Charlotte feels women are making inroads towards leadership positions and need to stick together.

-- Holly Hanni

H: This is an interview with Charlotte "Red" Ingalls for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Women in Labor Unions, by Holly Hanni, on May 8, 1997 at 1 00

I see from your history sheet that you were born in Liberty Can you tell me what it was like growing up in Liberty, Ohio?

I Liberty was very structured, class-wise They had the middle class, they had the very well-to-do, which were the Jewish faction and the lawyers' and doctors' kids And the workers' children, which I was one of them My father worked in a steel mill We lived toward Vienna, so, the country kids

H What was your childhood like? Did you have a happy childhood?

I Pretty much so. [I] did not know any better [Laughter]

H. Country bumpkin.

I. Somewhat, yes

H You said your father worked in the steel mill?

I Yes, he had 32 years in at US Steel That was my first involvement with the union He went to a meeting and did not come home for three days He got arrested [Laughter]

H Was it during a strike, or just because of the union?

I No, he was out partying [Laughter]

H Oh What kind of student were you, would you say?

I I was probably one of the students at the time, because I graduated in 1962, my main goal was because I wanted to be a policewoman But that was not socially acceptable, so you did the next best thing. If you did not go to college, you got married and had kids So student-wise, I did the home ec thing and I was academically challenged in some of the teachers' eyes [I] did not find out I could think until after I got older

H Like us all

I Yeah, probably

H What did you do right after you graduated? Is that when you got married?

I Well, I thought wanted to go into nursing, so I worked at Northside Hospital and the Atlantic Mills, which is was discount store at the time I worked two jobs to save my money.

H So you got married shortly after?

I Right

H Okay How did you get your job at Packard?

I My best friend from high school was working at Atlantic Mills She got a job, so I followed her up there And that was the year right after I got married, the early 1960's

H Were you already starting your family, too, at the time?

I No, I had not started my family My husband was in the service, so he was gone for most of the time. I was nineteen when I worked for Packard Did not know what a union hall was, did not know you could take a personal leave. I quit after I had my child, or my time would still be running and I would be retired I could not look at anybody I could not look at a man, when I was that age, without turning red I was like, very docile I did not awaken until just about the year and a half before I got divorced, about social problems in the country, Vietnam War, all of that stuff

H How long were you married, then?

I I got divorced in 1971 Not quite 10 years.

H So, you already had your son?

I My son, who is now 30

H So, you raised him as a single parent?

I Yes

H What was that like?

I Child care was difficult for us I had some difficult years with him when he was a late teenager Mostly the fact he had asthma and he never got to do too much So when he became a teenager and he was able to get around And he got around. [Laughter] But it is an on-going problem with everybody at Packard, the age and what is going on in the world today I called his teenage years an entrepreneurial life-style

H How did you handle when there were problems with him You know, rebellious teen-age years? What was your shift? Did you have to adjust your work schedule because of home life?

I No I could not adjust my work schedule because it was the only job I could hold on day-turn, except the conveyor, and I was only willing to do so much for money. I was not going to conveyor once I got off of it, because I spent 14 years on it

H So you worked the 3 00 to 11 00 shift?

I: Right

H. So was he under care of relatives?

I My mother took care of him most of the time I had one year we had us a live-in sitter, which was a friend of the family's She had been abused at home, sexually, and so she stayed with me for a year. But she had so many problems of her own that it, not caused problems for my son as far as physical danger, but the atmosphere was not correct, so she had to go

H So then what did you do? How old was he then?

I I think he was about 10 or 11

H So then did he go back to the care of your mother?

I. Yeah

H Over the years, what types of problems have you encountered in trying to balance work and family responsibilities?

I I will give you a primary example We now have a federal law that is the Family Leave Act When my son was little, you would have so many vacation days, and he had asthma. The doctor wrote a letter stating that I had to be with him And I made this comment at the time, "I could paper the shithouse walls with doctor's

excuses because of my son's medical problems " But there was not a way, besides using vacation, you know, take off when he was sick, and then I would get into an emotional downturn because I was the primary care-giver of my child I had to work You know, you are not working, you are not getting the money. It was just like a round robin, continually

H Did you find that there was a lack of support?

I Oh, shit, yes My foreman's child had asthma and he knew all the problems but there was nothing he could do because there are rules and we have to follow the rules.

H So there was no other . . .

I Avenue of getting out of work? No And it was a financial struggle because there was so much time missed I would get behind on my bills You know, after a while, you just say, "What the hell "

H. What did you feel was the hardest part of being a working mother?

I Not being able to have the time to do the PTA and the things that take your child into the social structure of the school and the community

H How did your son react?

I Probably, he took it a little hard when he was younger, because I was not there, but once he got older and has gotten into the workforce himself, he understands better now He realizes that you are tired when you come home from work You just were not out there sitting on a chair somewhere

H Right

I He is actually in a brick-layer union, which is physically demanding

H Do you feel that he has been supportive? Was it hard to explain to him?

I No, it was not, because when I went to the union hall to do work for a campaign, stuffing envelopes, he went with me, he went to the university, went to labor classes at Kent State, sat in the back of the room, made paper airplanes that fly I feel that if you have to do something as a working mother, you should try to involve the children as much as you can, as long as you are not going to disrupt the class or whatever activity they are doing, because it is a learning process

H So he probably has strong union ethics

I Yes, he is going to run for vice president of his local, hopefully, very soon

H. How did your duties at home affect your union participation?

I. Duties at home, so far as housekeeping and that type of thing?

H Have there been times when you wanted to do certain things with the union but you could not because of things like his asthma problem?

I Right I was kind of restricted when he was younger because of his health problems I could only do so much Yes

H What is your job duty at the plant? How has changed over the years from what you are doing now?

I Well, I have got the seniority so I have got one of those jobs that they call -- it is not the sleeping job, but it is close to it, which is service I give the material to people to make the product.

H So you go around the plant?

I Around my department

H How long have you been in this?

I I have been in this classification about five years. It has been my goal One, because you are not required to do a rate, two, you have mobility. You can get to this group or that group, to get what you want to do across And you can make time in your job, by working like an animal for an hour and then taking twenty minutes to go do whatever you want to do and come back

H What did you do before that?

I I worked the conveyors, or production jobs Which limited you to that board, you were tied to that job for the eight hours you were there

H How long did you do that for?

I Fourteen years I was on the line

H Was that very monotonous?

I We would play games; we would put food on the conveyors, it would go around I mean, in the 1970's, we would go out to lunch and forget to come back. I mean, it was much more of a community thing then and people stuck together

H Do you feel there is a lack of that now?

I Yes, because of quality of work life, quality circles The corporations have tried to make the employees "involved in their job and have a say-so " Which means, a union person, which is an NTBU, Non-Traditional Bargaining Unit person, a clip-board carrier and makes them important

H It is taking strength away from the union.

I. And they put social groups in each plant where the union used to be involved with the fires, somebody having had a problem in their family Now each plant has a little social group where they raise money and give out, which is broken up in the concept of family in the union.

H So they have taken that away from the union

I Right

H How has your involvement with the union changed over the years?

I In the 1970's , I wrote a letter to the international saying that I was going to have more women involved and that was going to be my goal, not knowing, because it was really lengthy and a little nasty letter, but anytime you send a letter to international, a copy is made and sent back to your local That was my first political lesson

H And what was the response, by your local, to that?

I Oh, well, I was not anybody They did not really give a shit at the time, they did not know what they were dealing with in the long-run

H How did you come about your activity increase in the union? How did it evolve for you?

I: How did it evolve? Asking questions, just being there If you did not get included, legally, by being appointed to something, if you would just volunteer your time, you can know the contract I probably do not know the contract as well as a lot of people do, but it is a matter of being socially involved, being recognizable, and being trusted for the general membership of ours I am not

talking about the structure of the union local itself, the structure in any union as big as ours is, and as Lordstown, you have to have some political savvy, or you will get eaten alive. You have to know how to play, and that came through, just teaching myself. No one sat down and said, "You have to do this."

One time, someone said, "You cannot talk to that person because they are not in our group." I said, "That person has been my friend for a long time. If there is something you do not want me to say, I will keep that to myself. But that person is my friend, and they will continue to be my friend. And I will talk to them, whether you like it or not." So I have a wide range of different people, different lifestyles, different nationalities, different races.

H Why did you decide to run for union office?

I To try to effect a change, at least from the moral sense. From the last person that held my job, so far as getting things correctly, the way they were said, and not changing it, because this recording secretary has the responsibility to record motions the way they were made, and the president has the right to edit the paper. They do not have a right to edit motions. I have already had to go to the president once when he tried to change something. Since he has been in office, I have to say, he has been good about that.

H. What were some of the problems that you wanted to address?

I One of the kind of unions as a whole, their social responsibility, they have become less responsible, they have become, to use an old phrase, hi-faluting. Money is the root of all evil, of course it is at everything. The money is there, so that is why a lot of them are there in office.

H What has it been like for you, as a woman, in a leadership position in the IUE?

I It is really kind of hard to put a finger on it, because you are always on point when you are an officer. You are supposed to know everything, and the bargaining committee will not tell you shit sometimes, because they do not know. Repeat the question again.

H What has it been like for you, as a woman, in a leadership position?

I When you call me in a leadership position, that has only happened in the last year and a half, so far as getting elected. And I got elected as an independent, I did not run with any group. I cannot run with a group for the mere fact that there are such political hard feelings with some of the people that are on the ticket that I would not, maybe, help them off the street if they were laying there. So I very well could not put my money and my support behind something and someone.

that I have no respect for. So I took 30 days off, unpaid, to run my election, because I do not think you should campaign and get paid by the company; I think that is wrong, and that is something that is a norm in our local, instead of an exception

H How has it been for you? You know, you won. Now you are working for some of the people that were running also

I My basic thing is, most people, not all of them, that are involved in the local, tend to become a little lackadaisical in the job responsibilities. So I make it a point of doing my job correctly or fully, is because maybe doing it a little quicker, a little more thorough, because you carry a stigma because you are involved in a local, that you do not have to do anything because you are one of them. I try to erase that, I could not dress up. I wear jeans, I wear tee shirts. I schlep around, just like the average worker. So the average person can say, "Well, she is just like me. She did not do her hair today. She looks like hell. But I can relate to her."

H Do you feel response from that?

I Oh, definitely

H Now, how is that accepted by your fellow union leaders?

I Well the hardest nut to crack at Packard are the trades. We had an episode where a tow motor driver was trying to move something the other day, I was trying to move on my machine to deliver some material, and three of the new-hired skilled-trades were on their little carts -- because they have access to mobility on private carts -- and they were in both of our ways. The tow motor driver was a guy and I am a woman. I said, "Okay, guys, your choices are either move it or lose it." Jokingly. I mean I adopted three young people with that because now they smile and they laugh and it was just a feeling of comraderie that you have to establish at each group, each age. Each classification has a different way of doing that.

I found the secret to the older men at Packard because in the 1970's we were very liberated, our lifestyles were very wild and crazy. But there is a stage in a man's life that hugging and kissing do not last, but cooking does. I mean, at Thanksgiving we used to have parties which were all homemade Thanksgiving dinners, each employee brought a homemade dish in. People would come from all over the place just to admire our group, which was like 30 or 50 people. When you are in a department, you have to adopt the department as your family, you will find some lasting relationships and some that are just, you know, very surface. But you are on point all of the time.

- H: Do you feel that the feeling of family, is that increasing or decreasing?
- I: So far as the local as a whole?
- H: Yeah.
- I: The local as a whole, they do not have the union thought that they used to have. They do not come out for union functions because they feel the union is not them. They feel the union is the people that are in office, the ones that are elected.
- H: So there is alienation?
- I: Separation, there is a definite separation. Social separation.
- H: What type of competition have you encountered from other female union members?
- I: As I said in our private conversation, there is different ways of getting involved. At one time, there were some women that felt the personal relationships with someone in power was the way to go. That was twenty-some years ago. I was in charge of the Women's Committee at the time, and my first speech was, when we have a function when we all dress up, we will all get dressed up. When we had a function we were all going to scrub the toilets, we will all scrub the toilets. I am no better than you, you are no better than me. And I told them all, also, that if you get somewhere by having a sexual, intimate relationship with someone in power, that you will not last. So if you want to go that route, go ahead, but you will go when they go, and they have.
- H: So do you think that it is a phenomenon within the union or within the plant that women use sex to get ahead?
- I: Oh, they used it, and vice versa. I mean, in the seventies, when I was really in my bra-burning stages, I said, "I want to be a rep, too, so I can trade sexual favors for grievances." This was a common thing for the men to do. It was a joke, as far as I was concerned. That would not have been my policy. But to get the point across and try to make light of it, that is one of the things I said. That has really gone by the wayside now.
- H: I was going to say, with sexual discrimination.
- I: Not so much that. As I told the guys many years ago, I said, "The young filly's are going to become old mares. They are going to become smarter, they are

going to become tired of your ass ” Having the younger people come in, because of the generational changes, the lifestyle changes, the women are not as easily molded or used as they were in the 1970's

H. That was a form of sexual harassment. Do you think that there is still that type of atmosphere?

I. It is really hard to deal with sexual harassment at Packard, personally, is from the fact that, it is a factory, and to get along with, to work with somebody closely, what you perceive as sexual harassment from somebody who worked in an office, is just shop talk. If you have got so very closely structured on what the interpretation of sexual harassment is, nobody would talk to anybody. So we are a little more liberal, I would say, in the factory workplace system.

H. Do you feel that there is solidarity amongst female workers on the whole towards women in the union, or is there a lack?

I. We, as women, I found out over the last year, will not ban together as a unit, because you could not survive. But there is a “closet sisterhood,” because in the last election for shop chairman, off-year election, a woman had never sat as assistant to the shop chairman, because that is a powerful position. Or as a safety rep. So we had one girl, who is a graduate nurse who works at Packard, who is an alternate committee person. I said, “Elsie, we should try to get you in one of those jobs, because you are more qualified than any man in this local.” So we did that, indirectly tried to foist her upon all the candidates. Of course, nobody would fight, but since the election has been over, in history, the first time for a local, on a temporary basis, they are rotating two women through the assistants jobs, to see if one of them will get it.

H. Is Elsie one?

I. No. She is not on that political team.

H. I saw that you were a trustee for CLUW, the Coalition of Labor Union Women. What have you done with CLUW?

I. I helped Mariann Cook and several other people start CLUW. When we started out, Carol Catlon who is community services rep for LCI in Warren, Mariann Cook was recording secretary at the time. [I] jumped on that because I thought it might be something to support women. We had a large faction, the female steelworkers, they were there, but they were kind of “ify.” This was one of the fun times of my life. This was the years in the 1970's, I forget the date now. We had a young lady who, we could not figure out why she was involved. She was the

junior-league-type You know, something was wrong here I talked to Mariann Cook because she was the strongest woman at our local at the time "What is going on?" Nobody would know I said, "Look, I know one place I am going " I said, "This is going to sound stupid and crazy, but there is something wrong and no one is talking "

So I went to the FBI. They said, the individual and her husband were members of the Communist party and they were under constant surveillance But it was off the record, and of course, they would deny every saying it Well knowing politics, and the national politics of Nixon at the time, they could have been lying just as well as telling the truth So Beth and I had the young lady over to her house and we asked her, "Have you been or are you?" And of course she said, "I was, but I am not anymore " I said, "You have no right to do that to the rest of us, as stupid as we are, without coming up front and telling us." And I think if she had, we probably would not have gotten rid of her, because we were so radical at the time But we all thought politics in our sleep She was subversive as far as we were concerned

So we had an election -- I never ran one before in my whole life -- at the carpenter's hall The TV cameras were there, the organizations split, and it never survived or was as strong as it was in the beginning, because of that split. It was pretty good for about five years, and then I was told I was going to get blown up and killed over this whole thing by the opposing faction I mean, it was ugly And I said, "Go ahead " I just did not give a shit

H. And this is all women?

I Yeah Oh they can get ugly Oh yes

H I see that you were on the Labor Advisory Committee at Youngstown State University

I Local appointment, yeah

H What did you do?

I Had lunch and chatted for awhile, about twice a year

H What did they discuss?

I June Lucas was there and myself June was at Trumbull County Federation of Labor at the time Just discuss what was going on That was when the Labor Department was first being established at Youngstown State The support was to make sure it was established That is what it amounted to Harold Nicholas got me thrown off of it right after her got into office because he and I were

fighting

H. Harold?

I. Nichols And we have a love-hate relationship. We are both stubborn and red heads

H. What is his position?

I. He went from Shop Chairman of Local 717 to Conference Board Chairman, which makes him above all of the locals in the GM IUE Conference Board.

H Are you politically active outside of the union?

I No One, the time frame because I work afternoon turn, and two, we have to go by the state endorsements But I do admire June Lucas She is a strong person

H How has being a woman affected your role in work place?

I So far as work itself, or the political structure?

H. Probably political structure

I. Women have to work harder and be better It is harder to survive, whether it be in the work place or the political structure or local

H What are the positive and negative issues?

I Jesus This is the question we talked about when we got this thing?

H Yes

I Positive? You can do some good Positive, you can get some things done, but you cannot, not only just go lay it on the table, you have to be almost subversive about it. We have got a long-range plan for the next -- well, I should not say we - - I, because the girls have not been told And girls -- that is a terrible thing to use -- the other women have not been told yet, because they have to watch it develop, watch it happen In the next six to nine months, we want to put something together. Not a woman-only ticket, because they are all close, but some people that can be trusted and can have an effective change on the executive board because we are the strongest executive board because of the diversity we have not had in a long time A lot of independents on it.

H What are the negative issues?

I The vandalism to my car I had an Opel GT, which is a GM product, foreign made. Tires were flattened, the exhaust system was cut off with a hacksaw I had my representative, after this happened, and I opened up my purse -- this was back in the 1970's -- and I said, "I have had it I am not taking anymore You can see what kind of a shot I am " I closed my purse and went back to work. He could have gotten me fired, thrown me out of the plant, and I could have been done. He did not do that But they stopped vandalizing my car That is back in the bra-burning stages when I was very adamant and very ugly

H Do you think it was mostly male workers that were doing that to your car, or do you think that it was both?

I Oh, no I tried to flatten a tire with a knife one time, I could not get it in I do not know how a woman could do it [Laughter]

H So it was the men

I It was the guys

H How has womens' acceptance in the union changed since you have joined?

I some women are getting more respect because they are getting there on their own -- qualifications and not because of friendship or relationship

H How has your union encouraged political activism amongst female members?

I They have not

H How has your unions' attitude toward women changed since you have joined?

I Because we are able to get elected on our own, they are dealing with us because they have to, not because they want to

H What kind of leadership positions have women achieved in your union?

I We had one woman go as far as vice president

H Who was that?

I Barbara Gleason You could not get her interview, for the mere fact that she is political non grata She went with the company

H She is not here anymore?

I She is here locally

H Oh, she got hired. That is right She is with management now

I She is with management, right I met -- and I hate to say anything bad about women, but they are not all perfect either -- when she first came, and got involved with the local, I said, "What are your goals?" at a union meeting She said, "I intend to be the boss, so far as propagating other women in the local now" It was not her goal Nor did she support other women. That has been my main goal, to get more women involved, regardless of whether it is going to do me good or bad But I prefer the quality of woman that is going to do what is right, not just do for herself, like the guys do.

H Have you ever been discriminated against because you are a woman If so, in what way?

I Yes For the union or for the company?

H Either or both

I I wanted to inquire, several years ago, about going to the power-house, which you have to have a license to do So I called the company to inquire to how to get the tuition refund for the course, and to apply for the job And Rose, who takes care of job placement for the company, said, "You cannot get the job, because you do not have the education But you cannot get the education because you do not have the job."

H So that is closed off to women?

I Well, yes It is traditionally a man's job I do not know of any woman who is in that job.

H What do they do?

I They take care of the steam boilers It is called the power-house, but it is not the job classification They, more or less, control the power source to the factory

H. So you do not know of any women?

I No

H Have you ever encountered problems of equal work for equal pay?

I No Title 7 totally took care of that. It was totally Title 7

H Have you ever, or other women you know, confronted or dealt with injustices that they have encountered?

I I had an episode most recently. We had a foreman that is in his 30's, fairly decent-looking His behavior would have been in the category of sexual harassment I was sitting at my table -- 53 and I am not, what I call, sexually attractive He came on the thing and he laid a lip-lock on me I said, "What are you doing?" The next day I brought him in and I sat down like his mother and said, with sexual harassment leaflets, I said, "You are going to get yourself into some major trouble What in the hell are you up to?" And his quote was, "I do not pick on anybody I know I cannot get away with it " Now, knowing this man is just getting divorced, is raising two daughters, I found this totally unacceptable

[I] let it ride for awhile, and I went to see head of Labor Relations on another issue, and I said, "Oh, by the way, you may want to address this issue before you get yourself a major lawsuit " I said, "I am not looking to get him fired I am not looking for him to be reduced or anything He needs some help There is something wrong with the young man." He has been changed jobs now. He has been put into an almost all-male department But the whole thing has not been addressed, because I did not file charges and I did not want to do that He is not a bad guy He just needs to be re-educated [Laughter]

H. How is your union at addressing family issues?

I They are not Typically, men think the family and the wives of our local should stay at home and take care of their kids or shove it

H So what about the Family Leave Act? Have they been very motivated behind it?

I No I was just at the district meeting in January GM, as a whole, has the worst set-up for family leave, so far as accruing your hours In fact, I tried to use the Family Leave Act and I did not have the hours because of my union involvement, and the Family Leave Act does not allow you to put the hours from the union together with the hours from the work place, er go, I could not use it My 86-year-old mother has congestive heart failure and I had to take my vacation days, which now it is the middle of the year and I have only a week left

H So it has done no good for you because you are a union representative.

I Because the hours cannot be combined That is by federal law that it is 1250

hours. There is only a small sector that would come under those guidelines. Now the company was going to give it to me because they did not want a stink. They know when I had trouble with my son when he had asthma, I said, "Fine, I will be at work tomorrow. I will have my son, his TV, his books, his blankets. And the fucking TV station is right after him. Go for it guys."

H: And what did they do?

I: They backed off. This is the company.

H: You had to fight them on your own then?

I: Yes. There is one thing every corporation hates, it is bad publicity. And God, a mother and a child. What more bad publicity could they get?

H: What problems do women face in your union that men do not experience?

I: If you are too attractive, which we have one woman here in Hubbard, Patty Baker. She has got the personality. She is able to overcome her attractiveness. Because usually, when you are attractive, people will look at the shell and not the brain or the heart. Where she is able to overcome this through her personality. I mean, she is just a little cutie. She is cute, but she is smart, but she does not come across as being cute and smart. She is just a nice person.

H: What are some of the issues that you feel your union still needs to address?

I: Child care, I would like to see a flexible work schedule, which I know will never happen, for parents, not just women. Those type of issues. When I had the Women's Committee, we had child care at the union meetings. Very few people came. We had a registered nurse, we just did not have a child care person. We had cookies, we had art work. Only had five or six people show up. People are not that involved in the union. That is the sad part.

H: How well do women get along with each other in the union and in the workplace?

I: They do not know how to set aside, once the elections are over, and go forward, anymore than some of the men. They are not any different, they are the same. Women have a stigma. Women have a horrible time for the fact, if they are any type attractive, they are perceived that they got there one way, and that is unfortunate, because that is not always the case. Sometimes it is, but the majority of the time it is not.

H: Because there is not a policy that forbids co-workers to date, have you seen

problems?

I Thirty years ago, there was a non-fraternization policy between the company and the women in the local That is gone

H Are there problems in the workplace because of that? Like the woman in the UAW, the woman had a stalking problem, she had to go to the outside court and the guy kept on following her on her different shifts because he had more seniority Are there any problems like that?

I. We had an episode one time. There was a man and woman They had an affair When it was over, she had a pregnancy, parenting suit They ended up sticking them both in the same department, which was very difficult I had to go down and go to the representatives I had to go to the company and get one of them moved for the mere fact that it was very uncomfortable for both of them It was emotionally draining for both of them, working in the same department next to each other

H What kind of union activities have you attended or participated in?

I I made it a point, since I was able to get in with the first inner circle when I was really young and did not know anything, to only go to one thing a year And in the last 25 years, I have gone to one thing a year

H Different conferences?

I Yes, and schools To build my background up

H What was the most interesting conference that you have attended?

I The most interesting, to watch the political change in the United States, was the International Women's Conference in Columbus, Ohio at the fairground When the far right, which were the church groups at the time, had their women outside the buses and the male ministers talking to the female congregation, to tell them what to do at the different things, like the cloning and in vitro fertilization -- this was back a long time ago, you must admit -- to call division of the house with 3000 women And I came back to the union hall and said, "The Democrats, the left, the liberals, are in deep shit They have adopted our tactics and they are bringing it back and they have beaten the shit out of us with it ever since All across the board "

H What union committees have you participated in?

I. PAC.

H What is that?

I Political Action Committee That is the COPE, in the Lordstown van plant. Ours is UAW

H What did you do on the committee?

I. Stuffed envelopes, sold tickets, campaigned, went out and worked the precincts, that type of thing

H What other committees?

I The Women's Committee. I have chaired that and I have been on it several times The Women's Committee at Packard is different than other locals' We are more politically active We have a little more power at Packard than most locals because of the number of women We take care of the Spring Fling -- we do a lot of social activities and we try to keep those up because, as far as I am concerned, that is what we should be doing as a local, is taking care of the membership and keeping them together as a family unit to some degree

H What kind of events do you have?

I We have the Spring Fling, I am re-introducing family bus trips for parents and children or grandparents and children I have one woman who is now on the Women's Committee who went on these trips 20 years ago and she remembers it fondly That is how she first met me That was her introduction, besides her father working at Packard, to a union, was a family activity So you do affect children

H How has the role of women changed where you work?

I I do not know that it has changed that much, so far as, I do not know, respectability or power

H Has it increased, do you think?

I The power increased? Somewhat, somewhat The jobs, because the workforce is getting older, more women are in non-traditional jobs Non-traditional are what, in the late 1960's, were considered men' jobs There was a whole catharsis when that happened Sue, my girlfriend, was one of the first people to go on a tow motor

H. What is a tow motor?

I That is a big machine that moves heavy stuff around the plants and takes it to the shipping docks or puts it on trucks She was one of the first females into that She had to stand up, and she is little She is a little chunky now But anyway, she was threatened Literally, the machines and that type of thing They put in the molds, to take another issue, they put dead rodents

H In the plastic molds

I Yeah So when you went up to work your machine, when you first came in, there would be a dead rodent there They would jerk around with the machines so they would get hurt I mean, it was ugly during the 1960's when women were going to traditionally men's jobs

H How did women cope?

I My girlfriend said, "I am going to do this job," to herself, "even if I have to become a drunk, or whatever they are doing play cards I will become one of the guys " That is what it amounted to. If you cannot survive, they will eat you alive If you were going to survive, you had to play the game

H. How long do you think that that went on for?

I I would probably say, maybe 15 years Before the guys got a little more acceptable. Well, you have to realize, their good jobs are being threatened They have the jobs where you did not have to work and they did not want to share Which you cannot blame them. It is all in human nature to protect yourself

H And now there is no sexual segregation amongst the job classifications

I: Amongst the job classifications? No I feel if you are a woman and you cannot do the job, or a man that is slightly built and cannot do the job, you should get the hell off of it. But that is my feeling

H How does management act towards women?

I In the 1970's, they were used and abused by the company just as much as the union Now that we have younger managers, because of their upbringing, they treat you a little more equally I am to the stage now where I treat the foreman they are some of my fellow employee's kids Last night I said, "Oh, your baby is with the old folk's tonight " NBU, which is a non-bargaining unit, cannot give you

a direct order, so he has no power over me as an employee. He cannot tell me I have to do that. He can ask me.

I told you about the episode with the foreman and the lip-lock. He was feeling one girl up, she just retired, this was her way of not doing her job. It got so bad, one midnight turn person said they were sitting at the table and the girl, she was giving her favors out not to do her job, he had his shoe off and his foot up in her crotch. I mean, it gets real graphic.

H: Is this recently?

I: Oh, a few months ago. And we are talking women that are into their 50's. We are not talking about somebody who is young and is really hormonal. She just got off lunch, she said it was totally disgusting.

H: How do women respond to the other women that participate in sexual favors?

I: They just ignore it. They bitch about it.

H: They do not become hostile towards them?

I: No. This girl had paper anyway. She was a mental case. So she used, between her sexual favors and her paper, what we call at Packard within the system. See, they have papers, so they can get away with that. So she used it to her advantage.

H: What is your definition of middle and working class? Where do you fall?

I: I would say working class. My nephew Doug, my brother's son, Doug falls into upper-middle class, but he works for a living. He is an entrepreneur and he has his own business on the side, besides his regular job. And he is financially independent in his early 30's. I have not saved that much for retirement. I have what GM gives me plus my PSP savings.

H: Have you ever filed any grievances? If so, what for?

I: Getting removed from a job when I should not have. Yes, I have filed grievances. Not very many. I never file a grievance unless I know I have got it, because I am not wasting the committeeman's time, or my time, or the company's time.

H: I have found that most grievances almost all the time over money issues.

I: Because they are very clearly defined in the contract, what can be filed on and

what cannot. That does not mean you are going to get paid. They will trade you off for somebody else.

H: What activities have you engaged in to help support other unions?

I: We worked on an organizing campaign, most recently, probably about six months ago, over in Erie. Trying to get a plant organized. We do networking when we go to different district meetings. I do it mostly with women because usually, women as a whole are not politically astute as men, so we try to give them what we are doing, what we have done, how to go about it. You know, go with the flow. Just because you are a woman, does not mean you do not have good ideas. It is just that you have been held back and looked down upon or fluffed off, because it was not their idea. They will accept your idea as long as they can put their name on it.

H: What are the major problems confronting your union in 1997?

I: Loss of jobs, loss of power. Unions as a whole -- I should not say as a whole because I can only speak of my own -- are becoming, I will compare it with a horse's ass. And it is unfortunate. But everybody in the country wants to be an elitist. They want to drive the Cadillac. They want to have the big house. When you die, the car is going to stay, the house is going to stay. And if you have not done anything good, the damn thing stinks. It is what you have done to help society, your family, whatever you are involved in.

H: Why do you think the unions are losing power?

I: Because they have become part of the system instead of what they were originally conceived for -- was for the people.

H: How do you think that that can be corrected?

I: I do not even know if it can be corrected. It has gone on for too long. It would take a major wiping the slates clean. I mean, politics, in unions and the country, has become a job for some people. You have to be able to negotiate, you have to be able to be the PR (public relations) man for yourself. You have to be very diversified to be able to survive or get your point across. And those skills, people go to college for. We learn them by hard knocks. And some can learn it and some cannot. And you have to know the laws when you are doing this because you have to work within that framework.

H: What has been your role within the union during strikes? Have you ever been on strike?

I: I only had one episode and that was when Joe Fioreno was the president at the time. He has passed away now. It was at Plant 10 gate and there was a fight between him and one of the other employees. And the one guy was going to take a 2 x 4 and smack Joe upside the head. And I got in between, stupid as I was, and said, "You know, we are all in this together. You cannot be doing this to each other. If you are going to get the 2 x 4, you are going to use it on them, not on us, each other." We had a short strike, where the chicken soup stock was not even done and the strike was over. That was the last one I was involved in.

H: Do you think there is going to be a strike this time?

I: No. I guess it is only my gut feeling. I have no factual knowledge to back it up. Because of how the national played out. Sue and I sat and talked, the time-frame that this was going to happen on this day, and so far, everything that has happened we have time framed it out and it has happened exactly like it, up to this person coming to the meeting, this -- almost -- speech being given. I mean, they are just so obvious.

H: Predictable.

I: Yes, predictable, thank you.

H: What are the major road-blocks that women face in your union?

I: Their own lack of self-confidence. Their own will to survive. Their own will to keep their nose to the grindstone and look at the issues that they feel are important and keep at them. Do not become dissuaded by getting sent here, getting this appointed job. The obstacles are, as a whole for women, not keeping a narrow focus and working at that issue. They become too defused.

H: How about in the workplace?

I: Major issues?

H: Major road blocks.

I: We do not golf enough, and we do not fish. [Laughter] There is a social structure within management that come over to the men golf together and the men fish together, from the company and the union. The women do not have that bind.

H: What are the different demands placed on women and on men in the union?

I: Different demands? You can be a real stupid jerk and be vice president of a

local And a woman can have all the talents in the world and they have to be 10 times as good and still cannot get where they are supposed to be

H: There is a glass ceiling

I: Yes Definitely

H: Why do you think that is?

I: You have 4000 women They come from a variety of economic and social backgrounds Some are never going to get past, I have a husband and I do what he says I should We have a large gay population -- male and female -- at Packard They are very hidden, because they are not socially acceptable, but I find that I get a lot of support from that community A lot of support from normal, hard-working Americans that have a good moral upbringing And I have had my flings, in the 1970's, but I have always been divorced I am going on

H: That is okay Different demands on women than on men in the union.

I: They just have to be so much better and they almost, in a sense, have to stand on their own, because they do not know who they can trust I have a close friend, and she knows everything I know and I know everything she knows You do not get told a specific thing that is happening You have to get your different sources You have to get the information, throw out the bull shit, and finally come up with what is going to happen And we have been around long enough, we have no hard time doing that to anyone

I think a lack of support for, not women for women, but just a lack of good people, who have not been tainted I keep coming back to that I sound like a poor little retch who never gotten over that deprived childhood

H: No Well, that is a true obstacle, though How can you change that?

I: Well, it is kind of hard A woman's role is, if she has a family -- I will use a very, very simple comparison I have a service job It was in a department that had a lot of over-time Okay, I had the one thing, that I was involved in the union, so that did take a lot of my free time You will take the three guys and myself They had wives to prepare their clothes for work They had wives to put their meals in front of their tables. They did not have to take care of the kids So they were able to work more overtime and have more disposable income than I had because I had to do my own laundry, clean my own house, prepare my own meals, and work. And the other one they did not have was being involved in the union So a woman, as a whole, has more responsibilities, physically, than the average guy in the plants, because they play so many roles Is that what you

are looking for?

H Yeah How do you think women can better attain leadership roles in your union?

I In our local itself, the only way to attain a leadership role, the only power in our local is if you cannot deliver the votes, you have no power If you can get the votes -- in this last election, I was first in the district The president was surprised. In fact, I was surprised too, but do not print that But it came from just being the person I am It was not because I could wave the magic wand and make the job better I just keep trying, keep trying, and keep trying And I will speak out, even if it would be better to keep quiet

H How do you influence or motivate fellow female union workers?

I Okay, this project here I made sure every woman that was involved, regardless of whether I found her politically acceptable or not, got the information, because everyone has added something May be small or large The survey for the AFL-CIO, that is going to be out to the whole membership, but it gives woman as a whole, whether they work at Packard or not, a voice. It may not be large, but it is something You have to do little things to build something big We are all going to do the telethon, which one, will give them a feeling of togetherness, doing a project together

H. Which telethon?

I Tod Children's Hospital on the first It will give a chance to do, maybe some public speaking, if they get the mike put in their face. I used to make it a point, on the Women's Committee, traditionally, the chairperson wrote the article in the paper I would request anybody to raise their hand to write the article for the paper, to get up and give the speech at the meeting, on what activities have been happening Public speaking is the most frightening thing for the average citizen in the United States, and women more so

We had one of our newspaper pulled from the shelves by the company because we did a thing on chemical exposure 15 years ago June Lucas had been up to the EPA in Twinsberg to do some research, and she said that chemical was used, was disposed by the company "I saw it in the records." I proved that to the president at the time. They went out and put the papers back in the racks It was trichlorethylene Each individual has their different ways of doing things, but that is acceptable to a certain group of people So you do what you can do with what you have to do with You might not be Einstein, you might not be Clara Barton. But you can do what you can do within the framework that you grew up in

H What do you think is the future of women in your union?

I I would say the next general election will tell whether we are going to succeed or just forget it, just gonna fade away. If they do not make the jump, are not able to make the jump for the good. And the independent movement keeps going forward. They will just be there.

H Within the union, are women represented on all of the committees?

I There are women on all of the committee's, yes. Except Bargaining.

H. We were discussing the tier system.

I Right. When the second tier came in, that was the first second-tier wage in the United States. I did not like it then, I do not like it now. I think it has brought the labor movement down. They sell it as saving jobs. Something is better than nothing.

H And now they are going to have a third one?

I. They have a third one now. Well, you have your traditional, your preferred hiring plan, and CHIP.

H. That is the lowest?

I Yes.

H. As they are hiring, is it equal representation of male and female?

I The hiring system is pulled by social security number and relatives.

H Oh, so they do not hire, like if they are going to hire somebody in management.

I Well, they still have to follow federal guidelines, as far as recommendations, so far as nationality, race -- not nationality -- male, female, veterans. We have gotten some female veterans. And that is it, structured so far as, they can be more focused. I personally feel that every male and female in the United States should serve, because these women get to get structure.

H Not so much any more, though.

I No. Well, my generation.

- H: With lay-off practices, that goes seniority? Is that how they operate?
- I: We have now, what they call inverse seniority, where the older seniority can take the lay-off
- H: They have the option.
- I: Right We have not had a lay-off in so long, I could not tell you how the system works
- H: Debra Erving, when I interviewed her, her son was pushed out, so she moved to midnights So some people must have gone elsewhere. They could not all have gone to midnights.
- I: They went to different jobs That was one of the big sell-points in the last administration We are going to keep your jobs The cutters are the high-paying jobs That is what is leaving They kept jobs for them, but probably had 30 or 40 cents less an hour
- H: So they had to take a pay cut
- I: Right
- H: Was it mostly women?
- I: No. Across the board The seniority thing People in their late 1960's, early 1970's seniority dates
- H: Is there anything you want to add that I did not ask?
- I: No I just hope everybody takes responsibility for their actions and does the right thing instead of the expedient thing in life
- H: Thank you

End of Interview