

Curtis R. Oliver: *Iron Working in Wheeling*

Curtis Oliver: You want my age and --

Michael Nobel Kline: Sure, whatever you feel like.

Carrie Nobel Kline: Yeah.

CO: And occupation?

MNK: Sure, whatever you feel like.

CNK: And we'll edit it later, so it doesn't matter.

CO: Okay, okay. My name is Curtis Oliver.

MNK: One more time please.

(004) CO: My name is Curtis Oliver. I'm age 59, retired member of Ironworkers Local Union number 549 in Wheeling, West Virginia.

MNK: Okay. And your date of birth is --

CO: My date of birth is June 23, 1935. If you want, I just --

MNK: Sure.

(008) CO: Okay. I was born in Woodruff, West Virginia, just south of Cameron, which is probably 25, 30 miles from the Wheeling area. I moved into, or my family did, we moved into South Wheeling at 48th Street in Wheeling at age five. I attended school in the Benwood area. And then I went to Union High School. Graduated from Union High School in 1953. I started to attend classes at West Virginia Northern Community, or I'm sorry, at West Virginia University. And I only completed my first semester. During that time I had gotten married and without the finances, I started to look for something else to do immediately. So I did get into the ironworkers trade working on what we call a permit in 1953. Then after that, I got into the apprenticeship training program. And that was in 1950, the latter part of 1953, and then I was accepted into the apprenticeship training program in 1954. I worked at the iron working trade for approximately 12 years. In the ironworker's local union, the members, what they do is they construct the, put together structural steel and

that on the steel buildings. Like the Wheeling Dollar Bank was a very nice project for us. They -- One of the better projects was the Suspension Bridge. Our people were very much involved in the renovation of that project. And then we do a lot of work in the steel mills. So basically, we all are a part of what we call the International Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Ironworkers. And they're housed in -- The offices are in Washington, D.C. Our office is located at the present time 2350 Main Street. We've been located there since 1966. Prior to that, we were in a, on a third floor of a building here on 15th Street right in Wheeling. And after that, we built our own building. We take care of our own pension plans there, medical plans. We're self insured. We have approximately, working members, 340. We have about 200 retirees. So we're made up of about 540 members. We have jurisdiction. We do work in 21 different counties, we have jurisdiction and the work that I've already talked about. In the state of Ohio, we have six counties there. We have 17 counties in the state of West Virginia. And then we also have parts of Pennsylvania, Washington County and part of Greene County also. And other locals take off from there. Our -- Again our local union number's 549. The international -- The Ironworkers International, there are approximately -- Again, in the ironworkers there are approximately 120 members. It's been decreasing, the numbers have, over the last 15 years. Probably at that time we had 170 members. We're just a part of the building trades. The building trades meaning that there are similar crafts, but they do different type work. There are 15 other crafts doing other type work. That's the electricians, millwright, carpenters, labors, and they all belong to their affiliations or their local unions. And they have international headquarter buildings also in different areas and that. I was started off in 1966 as the financial secretary treasurer after I was elected to that job. And I was financial secretary treasurer until 1960, I'm sorry, it would be 1985. So approximately 19 years, I was financial secretary treasurer. And due to funds being low, as everybody, we had to make some changes. So we consolidated the office of business manager and financial secretary treasurer. And so I had that title for the last nine years. And then retired at age 59. Our normal retirement in the ironworkers trade is age, age 58. So I just retired, and somebody else ran for the office then. I'd like to give a little

(034)

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(071) background maybe of the local union itself. We were chartered in 1935. Probably there are approximately 170 ironworker local unions all over the United States, Canada, Hawaii. And so we're a part of the Ironworkers International. Again, the numbers have been decreasing because of the economics, because of the problems out there today, as everybody is experiencing.

MNK: What is the difference between an ironworker and a steelworker?

(077) CO: I'm glad you asked that. It's -- Really, we get that a lot. A lot of people do not understand. The steelworkers belong to their own union. They do the manufacturing of the steel in the steel mills themselves. So then from that, then the iron structural steel is molded and then we're the people that erect that structural steel. Again, there are no ties at all except we both belong, the ironworkers local unions and also the steelworkers, belong to what we call the A F of L CIO. They normally in the past are the CIO. And then we're the A F of L. But again, a lot of people, you know, get us mixed up. There are no connections really between the two.

MNK: But, but the they're formally in this valley and in this city, was there not an iron industry?

(091) CO: Well, when you say iron industry --

MNK: Years ago, I mean very early on --

CO: Oh yes. Well, there still is.

MNK: ... foundries and so on.

(092) CO: Yes there still is. And again, you see a lot of those that are closed down now. There are still the Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steels, that is the steelworkers. And they belong to union. And then there is also Weirton Steel that we're all familiar with. They have what they call an independent union, a little bit different, but they have their own union. So these are also the steelworkers that we're talking about. You can just look back a few years in the Benwood area when they had a steel plant there. Now it is closed down. Martins Ferry is still going strong, the steel mill. And also the Yorkville plant, the Follansbee plant. And then also over in Steubenville. Those are all Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel plants, including the nail factory right down at 28th, 29th or 30th Street, right in that area. Those are steelworkers also.

MNK: So -- But, but iron work, does your union include foundry workers?

CO: No. They, they do not. Those would also be steelworkers.

MNK: Okay, now I'm getting it straight.

(105) CO: Foundry workers like Blaw-Knox, those are steelworkers.

MNK: Okay.

CO: All the people -- The way -- The best way to, to try to relate to it would be all the people that work, I want to say steady, on a payroll and work in a plant, those would be steelworkers. Our work is very seasonal. We have to work out in the weather, you know, constructing, putting together the structural steel. We also put in the rebar, or reinforcing rods they call it, in footer foundation for buildings that are to be erected. We do miscellaneous work. We work some in the steel mills, but only because it's contracted out to the various contractors that hire construction workers. And then we go in and it may be a four, five, six week job, or it could be as long as a, a year. But again, we are the people that build the plants themselves and do renovation work in the plants. If some of the plants, ... structural steel that needs changed. They have to put new structural steel in because of deterioration of that steel, the, the framework itself, also the roofing. We put on the roofing, meaning sheeting that goes on top of the building and that. All those things we do. And again, our work is very seasonal. Our people may only work approximately, oh, 14
(124) hundred hours out of a year's time. And that's a good year for a construction ironworker.

MNK: What -- When U.S. or when Wheeling Steel wants to replace a structural beam, are they forced to hire ironworkers to do that?

(128) CO: No, no they are not forced to -- Naturally they would take a look, the business people would, in the plant itself that are running the plant, and they would determine which would be best dollar wise to do this. Most generally with what you're just saying, right at present time they would do their own work. Some of the plants have construction crews. That is basically what they do. They would also go around and do renovation work, small jobs. But as far as building the, the additions to the plant, whenever a blast furnace would go down, that's the place where they do the molding of the iron and that, they would contract it out. Therefore, we may be only in there a month or two months, and then we're out working for

another job. Where naturally if they use their own people, there could be a difference there of whether the availability would be at the present time because they may be doing something else in that plant. And they can't spare those people for, to do the necessary that's going to take place. But, yes, they do quite a bit of work their self.

MNK: But any new construction -- What I'm trying to establish is what, if, if the union, if your union actually governs certain areas of, of construction as to who may or may not work on that job.

(146) CO: The -- Really it hasn't, doesn't have anything to do with that at all. Let's say anybody can contract work out to whoever they would want to. And I'm referring to the nonunions too. There, there are a lot of nonunion people out there. Those plants have the right to hire or contract out to whoever they want to. We do have certain type agreements that we want to say that are attractive to plants. Saying that if you give the work to our people, you contract it out to our contractors, we will do certain things to help you out also. Therefore, it makes us more competitive with the nonunion, meaning the dollar amount. But most generally, all the plants in the area such as, I'll start down the river a little bit, Miles Industry, the former Mobay, coming up, PPG. Moundsville or below Moundsville, there was an Aniline, National Aniline. Some other plants in there that are now closed down, Kammer Power Plant, the Mitchell Power Plant, and going over to the power plant over at the Cardinal powerhouse at Brilliant, Ohio. Those all hired union people or union construction workers because we have specific agreements that are attractive to them. It won't be our normal rate. It'll be like a 90 percent rate, some things like that just to help them out. And of course, it's beneficial to our people also. Steelworkers also do -- It's a
(166) little bit confusing, but steelworkers also do construction work. Not so much in the plants. I'm saying the union -- Again, we're talking about the construction steelworkers, not the people that work full time in the plants themselves on the production of the steel production. But there are construction crews, and it was something that started many years ago, what they called the old District 50. They did a lot of work in the mines, construction work. Also now, they formed something a little bit different because their work, the mines as we all know, all the mine work is kind of fizzling out, you know, in the

area. So naturally they have to feed their families too. So they started construction work. And a lot of the bridge work. We're talking about heavy highway work, the highway work, the construction of these bridges, a lot of that today is being performed by steelworkers. Of course we have a problem with that because it's taking work from our people, but that's competitiveness.

MNK: So in order to deal with that, you'll make a 10 percent concession?

(181) CO: Well, no. There, there we can't because we're talking about jobs that have, that are federally or state funded. Therefore, they have what they call prevailing wage law. The prevailing wage law means that whatever the standard amount to be paid or, or that has been worked, that -- I'm saying the year before. The following year then, it will govern what is to be paid. Is it the union rate or is it the nonunion rate. Or whatever rate again had been paid the preceding year. So most -- Again, most of the areas the prevailing rate is the union rate meaning that it kind of brings everybody's standard of living up to where they can afford to send their kids to college, buy automobiles, buy homes. If it wasn't for a prevailing wage law, which there are 20 states out of approximately 20 states that do not
(195) have a prevailing wage law. There are certain counties in our, in the state of West Virginia that the union rate is not prevailing because naturally most of the work was done by nonunion people. The problem with that is if you do not have a prevailing rate, then anything can be bid on that project. And if, if that happens, then people do not have health care coverage. They do not have pensions. They do not have anything like that. It's whatever that contractor wants to pay, whether it be four dollars, five or would have to be at least the minimum wage. But the -- Then most generally what happens there is they bring people out from wherever. If it's a contractor from South Carolina, he brings people up from South Carolina. Meaning then that we do not, the people living in the area do not get the benefit of the dollars that are made on that project.

MNK: The Stonewall Jackson Dam, I know, was a, in Lewis County, was a nonunion --

(211) CO: Yes. It -- And I don't want, I don't want you to misunderstand this. There are a lot of jobs that are paying prevailing rate, meaning the union rate, that nonunion people are doing that. But they're still getting, are supposed to still be getting, the same rate that I would be

getting if I was working on that project. But as we all know, you know, the world isn't perfect, and people cheat a little bit. And we know how they do that. If it's a union job, then everything is being paid on that project. Meaning that they're paying compensation. They're paying the unemployment tax. They're paying everything that they're supposed to because the unions make sure of that. But on a nonunion job, they do not pay what they're supposed to be paying. And there are people out there that they get involved in it to try to make sure that they do, but there's a lot of times they're gone from the area back to South Carolina or -- And I say South Carolina and Florida, places like that, because it's highly unorganized and a lot of nonunion contractors in those areas. And a lot of contractors what they'll do is they'll come into an area under a certain name. And then when that job is pretty much completed or when it's completed, because they haven't paid everything they're supposed to, they'll file for bankruptcy. And then they'll turn around, you know, a month or two or a year from that, and start back up again under another name. Do the same thing. And then repeatedly keep doing this. So all they're doing is hurting the state and hurting the people living in the area and keeping them from earning a decent living.

MNK: If there's a known prevailing wage on a, in a certain area and they want to build a new bridge, let's say, how can you contract -- How can you bid competitively for that if the, if the wage is already established?

(239) CO: Well -- And again, that is a good question. As we all know, there's such a thing as competitiveness, meaning that we feel that we can be competitive because are people are highly skilled. So if you take that same project and somebody that isn't highly skilled and they're bidding on that project, it may take them two weeks to work, it may only take us one week. So that again is called competitive. Not everybody works the same whether they're union or nonunion. We're not proud of all of our people either, but we do stress that we have to go out and do an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. And I'm not sure that happens with the nonunion even though there are a lot of good people. I've met a lot of good people. Some of my best friends are nonunion workers, nothing wrong with that. Yeah, unions aren't for everybody, but thank the good lord we have unions because it brings everybody's style of living up.

MNK: So that -- What you're offering is more skill per, per hour --

CO: Individual.

MNK: That your, your dollar per hour will ...

(256) CO: We have a apprenticeship training program that goes on for three and a half years. We take care of that. And all local unions do. All crafts, they all have training programs. They all go through a three, three and a half, some of them five years. Like the plumbers and steam fitters, I believe that theirs is a five years. I believe that the electricians are a five year program. So we go through extensive training period. And of course they're also learning on the job site. Normally the classes are held in the evenings, the apprenticeship training programs.

MNK: Can we back up a little bit?

CO: Sure.

MNK: And could I ask why your father moved to Wheeling in 1940, was it?

(268) CO: Yes. He moved, we moved into Wheeling in -- I was born in 1935, so it was around 1940. And he, his -- He used to work on the railroad and doing some other jobs out in the Woodruff area, or the Cameron area better known to a lot of people. And again, there was no work there. So he got a job welding at what they call City Welding in the Benwood area. And he did some work over in Martins Ferry in a plant. He wasn't a construction ironworker at that time. He was -- You could relate a little bit to the steelworkers trade. He belonged to what we call a, a different part of our international. We have also the shop local unions. They are the people that, that fabricate. I don't want to say they fabricate, but put together the structural steel. The length, the lugs, meaning the holes to make the connections. So that is what they do in the shops themselves. A little bit similar to steelworkers. They work steady. You know, they're under roof. They -- Again, just, just put together, do the things they have to do for the erection of the structural steel. Well, my
(290) father was doing that. Up till 1945 he worked in a shop putting the structural steel together. And then since we're affiliated with one another even though there is no similarity between the construction ironworker and the shop division ironworker, then he was able to transfer into Ironworkers Local Union Number 549. And so he's been a member

since 1945 of the local union. I've been a member since 1954. He was also on our executive board. He was also the assistant business manager. And so that brings up a, could be a question nepotism, you know. You hear a lot about nepotism. Most generally, fathers do not want their sons to be ironworkers. And the reason they don't is because it's tough to budget on that type of an income of not knowing where your next job is going to be. And again, the seasonality. You can imagine trying to work in the rain, climbing the structural steel, you know, up a hundred feet to a hundred and fifty feet. Well, you can't do that. You know, that's how people get killed. So you don't work those days. And then also the snow. Bad days in the wintertime. You don't work during those days. So naturally, I did not want any of my children to be ironworkers neither. But you have to do something. Even though they may go to college, when they come out of college, there is no job. But they do have to take a test, you know. Nobody else can take those tests for them. And we do not -- I'm saying the officers do not grade those scores and that. So they have to earn it on their own. They do have a good background. They know some of the answers to the test only because of hearing the lingo, so to speak, around the kitchen table or whatever would be. And that's where I learned a lot. When I was 12 years old or so I'd hear my dad talking, and I had a little bit of a background. But again, I did not intend to be an ironworker years ago. I wanted to be a civil engineer, but I just didn't have the money to continue with the college education, especially when I got married and had a family, you know, at an early age and everything. My son is, is an ironworker. I have two of them that are

(327) ironworkers. One of them lost his arm about seven years ago in an accident, and we -- Again, our work is very dangerous, and it was up at the Wheeling Nissan plant up in Follansbee, West Virginia. He got into 25 thousand volts and it come, you know, they had to amputate his left arm. And the electricity came out through his feet and so both of his feet, his insteps are gone. He's lost some toes and that. But I'm only pointing this out. He's doing very fine, but I'm pointing this out that our work is very dangerous. But getting back to the nepotism, if anybody relates to their own children, the only thing they can really help them with is what they're involved in. Other than if you have contacts. Take the, the theater, the movies, movie stars and that. A lot of their children are also movie stars. So

it's just because you know somebody and can help out.

MNK: So there's three generations of your family now are, are --

CO: Yes.

MNK: Ironworkers?

(343) CO: There are three generations. My father's retired. He's 83. And I am now retired at age 59. And my son is 40, the one that lost his arm. And the other son who put in four years at West Liberty College. And my first son, the one that lost his arm, he was what I call a true ironworker. That's what he wanted to be. It wasn't because there wasn't anything else to do. He definitely wanted to be an ironworker, and a very good ironworker. And he was tough enough, his mentality was tough enough that he could cope with what the ironworker has to go through. My younger son, the one that went to West Liberty College, he wanted to be a schoolteacher. And he graduated, and there's no jobs. So he had worked-- Prior to going to college, he worked, I'm going to say four to five years, at the trade. I don't know whether I want this ... later or not! No, that's okay! But I didn't want him to be an ironworker, but that's all there was. And he kind of thought that if he could, you know, go to college later. And I wanted to try to rush that up a little bit, so I sent him on the hardest jobs. It's my job to place people too. And I even would tell the foreman 'don't make it

(365) easy on him,' you know, make it hard and everything. So it worked. He quit iron working, and he went to college. This was like five years after he graduated from high school. He did quite well in college, his grades and everything because he learned some things the hard way. And -- But he graduated and again, he's still trying to be a schoolteacher. But in the meantime, he's still working at the ironworker trade.

MNK: Interesting. But your, your older son just had it in him?

(373) CO: Yes, yes. You have to have a mental toughness, I think, to be any type, not just an ironworker, but any type of a construction worker. It's a little harder being an ironworker because -- Again, we're out in the open with about all of our work, you know. In other words, we're building these buildings. And then after we build them, a lot of the work on the inside after it's covered over, the roof and everything like the electrical work, running the electric lines and that, the plumbing that takes place. So theirs isn't as much as a

seasonality as what the work of the ironworker. Carpenter's work pretty much basically the same way we do. They're out in the open a good bit. The laborers are out in the open a good bit. And then the millwrights, the people that work with the machinery and that, they're pretty much under cover.

MNK: How, how did things change from your father's day to your day?

(390) CO: It changed a lot really. There was a lot -- It would take a lot more people to do construction work back in those days. I don't want to take anything away from the younger people, but I, I think that the older people learned things more the hard way. Our children, we didn't want those things to happen. My father wanted it to be a little easier for me. And I wanted it to be a little easier for my children. So I don't think we appreciate things as much as what the older generations did. I think that it was very tough back during the Depression days and that. They never forgot that. Maybe we just feel, the younger generation, more so my generation I think, maybe you can just roll out of bed and everything's going to be okay. I think that the older people knew that when they were getting up in the morning, it was going to be a tough, hard day. And I, I think that we, the work itself, modern technology -- Back in my day even, which hasn't been that long ago, I'm going back 30, 35 years ago. When I worked out in the field, when you talk about a heavy lift, meaning from a crane, hydraulic crane or whatever type crane it would be, a 15, 20 ton lift was a very heavy lift. Now you're talking about equipment that's picking up 150, 200 tons, what takes less people to be involved because of modern technology. As I stated, we started -- I went back 15, 20 years, our membership in the Ironworkers International was 170. Now it's about 120. So that means that there's a lot more people out of work today than what there was before. Same thing in the steel mill. Same thing in any industry that we look at out there. There's a lot less people working in the steel mills or whatever it would be. A lot of

(423) places have closed down. There just isn't the availability of work out there today like there was in the past.

MNK: Is, is your dad pretty cogent in his time?

(428) CO: Yes, he -- Very much so. And again, I, I contribute that to that type of work that he did in the past. He was -- Again, we have to be in good shape, and our work is very strenuous. So

he continued with that trend later on in life, meaning that he couldn't just sit still. He would walk. He does his pushups. He has a bicycle that, a stay in place bicycle, that he does. We golf now together. He's age 83, and he beats me most of the time because he's been doing it a number of years! But he still golfs and --

MNK: And is very capable.

CO: Very capable and has a sharp mind.

MNK: Does he like to talk about the ironworkers?

(441) CO: Yes he does. I think that's what great. I, I still -- You know, getting back to what people call nepotism, I think the lord we have nepotism because my father and I -- Naturally, when I got married and have a family of my own, I have four children, I have 15 grandchildren. And we kind of, naturally, you drift apart because you have your own little world now that you're living. And we still get together on Monday evenings or we all had done that for a number of years. My sister, my wife and myself, we go out to fast food place here in Wheeling, and we eat and then we go back and play cards. And we have a great time, but still, you're not conversing one on one, you know, that type of relationship. So I, I feel now that when I'm with my father alone on the golf course and we're talking and he's talking about the good old times, I know about the good old times because I worked with my father. And I worked for my father a good bit. But I will say I had the kind of a father that he always told me if there was a problem out there and I didn't do what I was supposed to be doing, I didn't have to worry about the foreman or whoever I was working around, he'd take care of the problem. Meaning he would correct me! And he meant it. So we have always had that type of a relationship. I respect my father very much.

MNK: So you actually worked on jobs with him?

(465) CO: Oh, yes. My --

MNK: What was that like?

CO: It was very good. Now sometimes that doesn't work, you know. And I've seen that happen from me being the business manager. And since I have the authority to place people -- And again, we don't always place people for contractors because we, we do not have what we call a hiring hall or a list that you go by. Our work -- Again, we have to be very competitive

because we can solicit our own work. I could go -- If you were a foreman or you were a steward, I could call you up in the evening if you was on a job and say, 'Hey, you know, we worked together before and you know what kind of a worker I am. How about trying to get me a job on that project?' And that's how I got most of my jobs really. It wasn't so much through the union hall. When you have a list that you have to go by -- Again, you may not get what we call the cream of the crop. The cream of the crop are most generally always working providing there are some type of work out there. Some people may think that's unfair, but I don't. I think that we should be doing an honest day's work. If you don't do that, then it's your fault you're not working, not nobody else. No union hall or anything like that. So the days that I worked or years that I worked with my father, I

(490) knew I had to be more so a better worker or he would do whatever he felt to make that possible. But they were, they were very good. We -- He always taught me -- And here I'm going back to the older generation. He always taught me to try to take care of the older members, you know, always try to do a little more than what they would do. And -- But anytime I would try that, they would work that much harder because that young so and so's not going to outdo me. And many a day, because he was so skilled, how to do something -- I was doing everything the hard way, you know. I may be working twice as hard as what he was and not be getting as much done because he was so much more skilled than me. He knew every move to make. So when I'd go home in the evening after a job, I'd be so tired I'd be laying on the floor before I could even eat. And it was like he didn't even do a day's work. He'd just go shower and everything and go eat and everything. But I, I learned that you have to know the moves. There's -- You can't beat the education and that type of a training, I guess.

MNK: Never a wasted motion.

(512) CO: Never a wasted motion. Never! There was with me.

MNK: But that was all, that was all self taught to his generation, wasn't it? They didn't, they didn't go to school for that.

(516) CO: You're right. But I, I believe that generation -- And I'm going to say that generation. I can't go back any further than that. I, I believe they had a gift. It was entirely different.

Maybe they were more conscientious about everything. Maybe they were thinking all the time about their job. Because you can learn a lot just by thinking, you know, when you go home in the evenings, 'What did I do wrong that day.' I don't think -- And I don't want to, you know -- I'm not 30 or anything like that, so I can't think like a 30 year old person, but I think that they're so involved today in things other than their jobs. The job was -- My, my dad, that was his whole life. He never took vacations. He never did that much with his children, but everything that he did we remembered. Today, and there's nothing wrong with it, I guess, the younger people are, are more buddy-buddy with their children. And again, I respected my father, but he wasn't a buddy to me. He was my father. And I played with the children, you know, that's who I played with. But today the parents -- And most generally you have two working in the family. You have both mother and father. My mother never worked, and my wife never worked. They raised the children, you know, they were at home raising the children. So I, I think it's a whole different world today, and maybe even my generation than what there was in my father's generation.

(542)

MNK: That generation was more skilled did you say?

CO: No, I don't want to say -- I don't want to say they were more skilled. I want to say --

MNK: They had an attitude.

(549)

CO: That's good. I like that. I think they had a different attitude towards everything. That's good.

MNK: So your, your father's early background was, would have been in, in -- Did he come from a farming family, a family on the land or --

(556)

CO: Yes. Yeah, we lived in a farming -- There were no big farmers or --

MNK: I'm trying to understand what prepared --

CO: Yeah.

MNK: Your father --

(559)

CO: He was just born in that area, you know, I'm saying the Woodruff area. They had a lot of railroad work back in those days. And then now the railroad's pretty much gone. He -- I, I don't recall just a lot of what his background was, but I know that -- Again, it was -- The, the thing I remember most was the Depression days. And I think they started something,

Roosevelt, President Roosevelt did, like the CCC. But nobody was on welfare or anything. Everybody had to work for a living. So that makes a difference too. And he would go out, like for instance, on road work. I remember him talking about that. And he was paid so much from the state or county for doing this type work, being that there was no welfare. So that was more or less his background, school of hard knock, maybe. That would be the best way of explaining it.

MNK: Wow, this is, this is terrific. You, you -- So you were, you were saying more about the, the generations of your family and the experience you had. How old?

(585) CO: I, I think I was talking about maybe my job in general, about how tough it was to begin with. Because here they, they took somebody off the, I don't want to say street, but, you know, off the iron so to speak. And I had no office experience whatsoever or speaking in front of people. And I remember when I first got started -- Again, I wanted to do the very best that I could because of my father still being an ironworker and that. Now, here I'm going to be an officer of the local union. And so I remember the very first meeting that I attended. And it's what they call a legislative conference in Washington, D.C. Meaning that we were visiting with our congressmen and our senators and even the -- Sometimes the President of the United States would come to the legislative conference and then make a presentation. So I wanted to do the very best that I could to let the people know that were paying me my wages that the money spent was spent well. So -- And my father told me before I even took the job that, you know, 'That the years are going to be an educational process that you're going to be going through. And that'll be paid for by the local union. Don't let them down.' So what goes in you're head has to come out through the mouth so you can help educate them and go on with what, what you've been learning. So I made a --

(618) Again, I wasn't familiar. I did not know how to make a speech or a presentation. So I wrote everything out longhand that evening. And I had to be back the next evening. The flight was Friday, this was Thursday night. And I'm talking about staying up to two, three o'clock in the morning writing this all out longhand. And I was going to try to highlight. I knew I didn't want to read it because that just didn't seem right to me. You want to speak from your heart. So I caught the plane the next day, and rushed in just making it to the

meeting in time, Friday evening at eight o'clock. So I didn't really have time to think about a lot of things, you know, prior to the meeting. So I got up in front of everybody to make this, my first presentation to them of everything that I had learned at this meeting, and I froze. I mean I completely froze. I couldn't say a word. I started to say some things, and then -- Again, nothing would come out. So I was taught after that -- And that was hard to overcome. I mean it took me -- I knew I had to keep doing it, you know, every meeting to gradually get to where I felt comfortable. Now they tell me they can't shut me up! But you learn that, you know, over the years from experience. But I pointed out also that I was told someplace, whether it's true or not, that the number one fear in the world is getting up in front of a lot of people and making a presentation. And the second fear was death itself. I believe that. I don't fear death near as I did getting up in front of people.

MNK: What, what happened that night finally?

(654) CO: Well, a real good friend of mine, he was recording secretary, he was right behind me because there would be ... for the recording secretary and the president of the local and the vice president. And they're up on like a little platform. So I was standing pretty much in front of him when I was making this presentation. So he kind of helped me through. I did not, I did not give the presentation. He -- But he kind of made it a little bit easier because he kind of would poke me in the back and say, "Wake up, wake up. You're supposed to be saying something." You know, some things like that. So he made it a little bit easier. And I apologized to the people, but I, I just could not make that presentation!

MNK: Interesting.

CNK: Would you mind repeating what you had said earlier about that allegiance to your father and the distinction with your children. How they might take a day off, but you never would.

(676) CO: Yeah. I, I think I was more like my father than my children are like me. My father, I don't remember he missing work. I will have to say that my father would drink a little, you know, back in those days. But that never interfered with him going to work the next day because he felt an obligation to that job and to the foreman and to his family to go out and put in a day's work. Well, I, I think -- I don't think, I know that that's the way I always was. That I was to go to work and, you know, support my family and also take care of my job. My

children are, are not that way. And again, I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that. They were -- They are a lot closer to their children. They would miss work to take them to Kennywood Park or, or places like that. They may take off a couple days or three days. But I always felt we miss enough work anyway because of the seasonality of our work. So every opportunity that I could work, I had to take advantage of that. But it was almost like there's no tomorrow to my children. They don't worry near as much as I did. I probably worry more about them and their children, my grandchildren, than what they do. And again, I have no way of, you know, saying that's for sure or knowing that for sure. But it just seems like they have a more casual like lifestyle now, today, the younger people. I, I was thinking ahead all the time about my retirement. I

(719) wanted to be able -- The more I worked, the more money went into my pension plan. The more credits I earned, the better my pension plan was going to be. And therefore, I was able to retire at 59 because I was looking ahead. Today, it's almost like they're putting everything into doing what they can with their family and not thinking that, yes, I am going to retire one of these days. I've had, I've had a --

(side 2) CO: Yeah.

MNK: Look ahead maybe the way you did.

(002) CO: Yeah, I, I look at it that way. And I was also commenting on maybe the difference in the way that they're raising their children and the way I raised them. Again, I'm not saying I'm right or wrong. I know what the professors or the educated people would say today, but I raised my children like I was raised. And again, I felt that I was the parent and not a, not a buddy. And I would always tell them -- It isn't that we couldn't converse with one another, but if it got pretty heated, I would always tell them that 'I'll do the talking, and you do the listening.' And that's the way I was raised, and that's the way I raised my children. Today, I think that they -- Let's face it, I believe that there's a lot children running the homes today. And I think that's a problem that we have out there. I, I remember an old priest. I'm a Catholic. I, I'm a convert, but I'm a Catholic. But I remember an old priest getting up and saying that you shouldn't be able to talk until you're age 40. Meaning that you don't have enough knowledge put together, so how can you really educate your children or, or

things like that. You shouldn't expect, you know, a child of 12 or 15 or 18 to be telling the parents what they feel is right. I don't think they know what is right at that, that age. The parents should know.

MNK: So you had started to talk a little bit about your, what it was like to be an officer in, in --

CO: Yes.

MNK: In the union.

(021) CO: It was very hard. Number one, unions to a lot of people were not popular people. There are a lot of bad raps out there with union officials, justly so because there's corruption in everything. And -- But the media today, it seems like the only thing that they want to print is the bad things. Seems like it's better publicity. And so the corruption that goes on, not to pinpoint anyone in particular, but the Teamsters over the years, past years, have had problems. Corruption in their pension programs and things like that. Well, people remember that. They don't remember that it was a Teamster. They just remember that he was a union, union personnel. So it's hard to overcome that. I know that the mine work had been another serious problem in the past. Shooting people, getting killed and things of that nature. They knew that unions were involved in that. But there are a good, a lot of good union people. They're like you or I. You don't belong to the union, but you're a good person, you know. So it's value, that's all. It isn't whether you're a union person or not, it's just the values that you're grown, that you grow up with. From the education of your parents and things you learn in the outside world today. But I, I don't look at things. I don't put a value on whether somebody belongs to a union or whether he's a priest. You know you read some things about priests also. Well, not all priests are that way. So I think you just have to put value on the individual and not what he is or where he's from or anything like that.

(039)

MNK: So your responsibility as treasurer secretary --

CO: Financial secretary treasurer.

MNK: And then later --

CO: We combined the office.

MNK: Manager.

CO: Business manager.

MNK: Of the ...

CO: Of the finance ...

MNK: So your, your role in all of that was?

(045) CO: Well, the finance secretary treasurer, his role, naturally, would be to take care of the finances. He takes care of the money that comes in through what we call contractor contributions. Meaning the working assessment. You have to pay a working assessment to keep the office going, to pay your officers, your paid officers and that. So it's more or less the financial part of the local union. The business manager, his, his job is to meet with the contractors, supply people, when needed, to be on the projects to take care of the work. If there's any problems, any what we call jurisdictional disputes, because there are jurisdictional disputes. Maybe the carpenter or millwright may feel that this is his work, and the ironworker may feel that it's his. So the two agents then go out and they meet. They go through documents. As far as work assignments that have been made through the two internationals. And then they try to determine whose work it really is. If there, if that cannot be determined, which a lot of times it can't be because I still feel it's my work and he still feels it's his, then there should not be any work stoppages. Then the superintendent says, 'Okay, I've heard all the evidence. Here's who I'm making the assignment to.' So that is the work of the business, business manager. A lot of local unions today have gone

(062) to the consolidation of the two offices. Most of all your local unions -- And again, there are a 170, 172 of them, I'm going to say probably 85 or 90 percent of them have consolidated that office. Also, there have been consolidation of local unions because the work isn't there to sustain keeping that office open. So they combine local unions. There's just a lot of things happening today.

MNK: Have the ironworkers been affected by the strikes of, of the steelworkers and, and --

(071) CO: I'm glad you asked that. That's a very good question. We, we have what we call the Ohio Valley Construction Employers Council. That's the employers that belong to that. Now, we're the employees, and we belong to the local unions. And we negotiate with these people. They have an individual here in the Ohio Valley, his name's Tom Cerra. He -- I know he

was involved in the Italian Festival a good bit. And he has a good background about construction unions. So we have then labor management. And as long as you have labor management willing to converse with one another, then sometimes you don't need unions because that's what unions are all about. Just willingness to sit down and iron out your problems. He's very good at that. And we have a lot of respect for him. That doesn't mean we get our way every time, but he's good at his job. So during the years that I have been financial secretary treasurer, I'm going to go back at least 24 years. We have never had a strike. We were able to sit down and talk about our differences, and, and as long as you have that, I think that anything can be accomplished. The willingness to sit down and to understand one another. So we have not had a strike. There's been very, very few strikes in the building trades, just saying the building trades. And that is the 14 or 15 crafts that we're referring to. I don't remember too many strikes at all even with the other local unions.

MNK: What about, what about over the years and back into your father's time? Have there, have there been major strikes that would have affected the availability of materials for, for --

(096) CO: Again, my father hasn't been in too much longer than me. He started in 1945, and I started in '53. Then I went into office in 1966. I'm sure I remember those very clear from '66 on. During his time and my early days, I do not remember too many strikes. I know we've had strikes, but I don't remember too many strikes. If I had to just pick a number, I would say that when our contract terminated -- And a lot of them was a two or three year contract. Now most generally all of them are three year contracts or maybe even longer. And you can extend those. You don't even -- You may not do anything with it. You can extend it for another year and that. And we have done that in the past too because the economy was real bad in the area, and we didn't want to do anything to keep construction from being a part or taking place in the area. So I'm going to say that maybe over all the years that I can recall, maybe there was two or three strikes that we were involved in.

MNK: Then do you remember any of those specifically that you can talk about?

(110) CO: It seemed like one of them did go on for a couple of months, which is kind of a short time, but, again, the willingness to talk afterwards. I have a strong feeling that when a strike

happens, then tempers tend to flare. And that happens while you're negotiating too from time to time because you have two differences of opinion. Well, if you can't control that, you know, we're supposed to be able to become upset and everything and then that's what happened five minutes ago. But you're, you're supposed to be able to forget about that and then continue. Nothing wrong with getting mad, you know, that's all a part of life. But you're supposed to be able to control that. Well, I, I feel that once you go out on strike -- Now remember, again, you have people that they kind of enjoy strikes, you know, they don't have to work. There are people out there that are working that don't really like to work! So they could use this for a crutch or a reasoning not to have to go back to work right at the present time. Not knowing or thinking, 'Well, how long am I going to be out on strike.' They may, they may not be thinking of that at all. All they can think of is this week or two that they're going to be off work. So sometimes these people are in a minority, but they control the majority. And that's terrible, but those things do happen. So once that strike starts, which is bad to begin with, and once it reaches a certain period of time -- And I can't tell you what that would be. I know what it would be in my mind, but in other people's

(130) minds, once it gets to a month or two months, it's hard then for people then to really sit down and negotiate because now you have serious people that have been out of work for a while. Now you have people that have lost a lot of money, I'm talking about contractors and that. And then they get to, they get to the point to where 'I don't care if this thing's ever over with.' And then when that happens, then you have a very, very serious problem. And sometimes, and you see it happening too, the money isn't there and we as laymen, we don't understand that about the, the dollar amount that is needed for that owner to operate that plant. We don't understand all of that, so then we get to a point we gamble, and we gamble wrong sometimes. Meaning that we want a lot more than is available, you know, that can be paid to us. And then the company knows better that they can't afford that, so they do close their plants up because they have no other choice. And that has happened from time to time in the valley here even, which -- Blaw-Knox is a very good example.

MNK: So that the, the workers at Blaw-Knox essentially priced themselves out of the market? Is that what you're -- Is that how you would -- I've heard that said.

(147) CO: Yes. Well, in, in -- That would be one way of looking at it. But I, I would want to look at it another way. Maybe Blaw-Knox didn't have the market out there. In other words, meaning that they didn't have the production level that they needed to fulfill the wishes of the employees. So there's two ways to look at it. Naturally being a union person, I'm looking at it the other way! Right at the, right at the present time that I don't want to just fault individuals because they know what they need to keep up their household, you know, to pay their bills and also to send their children to college and buy automobiles. You know, things like that because naturally we want some of the little finer things of life too.

CNK: Do you ever wind up questioning -- You were saying, how do I say this, that the company needs to make a certain amount of money and you have to be aware of that.

CO: Yeah.

CNK: Do you ever, do you ever look at the owners and question the profits they're making versus the work you're doing and what you're taking home?

(161) CO: Well see, I, I wouldn't know. I would have no reason to do that. Now if I was in a plant working full time, yes, I would. I would have to take that all into consideration. But myself, I'm a construction worker. And just like this. We, we were involved, you know, in this project right here. But again, all they do is bid a project. Bid meaning that maybe they bid a hundred thousand dollars. Another contractor bid a hundred and twenty thousand. Well, my contractor that I'm working for, whoever that would be, then I knew that they only had to make, you know, a hundred thousand dollars. I had to be under, underneath that. So then all I would do is come out and work hard. That would be all. And he's going to make his hundred thousand, or he's going to make a profit, you know, something like that. So that's the only way I would gauge something like that as a construction worker.

CNK: Yeah. ...

MNK: Yeah, it's so interesting to think of all these, all these differences. You were, you're involved in, in doing what to this building?

(176) CO: Well, the renovation that had taken place here.

MNK: Of the ...

CO: Yeah, I don't recall -- See, I worked in the office when this was going on. And I would get

out of the office and visit the job sites and everything like that, but the contractor would be more involved. Like, like right here, these walls right here, the carpenters would have been putting this up. And, and they did. Because I don't know whether this was gutted, the whole interior of the building. And then all of the partitions, the walls, the ceilings, which the carpenter, that would be his jurisdiction. The lights would be the electrician's. And, you know, the plumbing, the pipe fitters. So there'd just be a lot of things in here that would take place. The doors, windows, which would be, some of it would be iron work, some of it would be carpenter's work, depending on the fastening, what type doors and everything and windows.

MNK: Interesting. Would you, would you sort of start that part again?

(189) CO: Yeah. I, I think we have all different kind of people out there. Some people can handle their jobs better than others, and some people really put more into their jobs. Even if it's mental. And I look at -- About everything I look at, if you can't handle a problem, it's because you can't handle it mentally. I, I believe in everything like that. Everything is based on your mental attitude. And so my mental attitude was that I felt, whether it happened or not, that my job was a 24 hour job. So everything revolved around my job. And I, just like reading the paper, I didn't want to read about bad things or anything because there was a lot of things I was going through was bad, even if it was just for me. So I would only read the sports page is the way it was. So I, I missed so many things over the years. I'm talking about the growing up of my children also. If I regret anything today, that would be the biggest regret that I would have. That I did not spend or converse with my children, even though I still had the mental attitude that if it came down to a debate, you're to listen and I'll do the talking. Maybe that's unfair, you know, to them, but that was my mental attitude. So I, I kind of buried myself because maybe if I would have had

(207) a better education, maybe if I was able to have completed college. Maybe if I had more confidence, you know, in myself, then I would have felt that I could have relaxed a little bit. But I was forever thinking that I wasn't doing good enough. So, therefore, you have to put more time in because that's the only way you can, you know, overcome or combat something is to put more time in it. So I geared myself that way to where even my weekends -- I

would do things on weekends, and if I didn't -- When the phone rang, because I'd get a lot of phone calls, it may be my children calling me, but I just thought it was somebody calling me that had a problem. Every time the phone rang, I felt it was a problem. And so mentally maybe I had a hard time, you know, handling my job. But there was so many things went on around in the area that people would be talking about, and I knew nothing about because all I thought about, again, was my job. It -- My job was,

(228) was a lot more complex than, than what, what I was just saying as far as the placing of people, the financial thing. We, we belonged to -- We have a pension program, and we have a medical fund. And it was taken care of up in the Cleveland area. There was, for instance, just to give you an example, our district council, just our district council we belong to, it would be what we call Ironworkers Local 3 out of Pittsburgh, PA; and then Local 17 out of Cleveland, Ohio; 207 out of Youngstown, Ohio; 348, Erie, Pennsylvania; 549, Wheeling; 550, Canton, Ohio; and 772, Clearfield, Pennsylvania. So that was our whole district council. And I was recording secretary of our district council, and we meet quarterly and go over everything. Try to help one another with problems and update one another on new laws and that. So anyway, I, I just felt that that was my, you know, my environment.

Everybody, you know, around me but ironworkers we were talking about. So it was just that I, I just felt then, after learning some of my job, that why should our funds, our medical funds and that, why should all that money be going up in the Cleveland area. And then we would go up as trustees and have a meeting, and we didn't have any

(240) control. And nothing against Cleveland or anything, but I believe in local autonomy. I believe that, you know, you take care of everything on a local level, then you spread yourself out, you know, from that. I always did believe that. So we pulled away from Cleveland and started our own funds here. Meaning the contributions coming in. Meaning the money would be going into the Wheeling banks and that, which is where we're from. And then Canton, Ohio, they came with us. They didn't want to stay in the Cleveland area even though Cleveland was closer. But they just felt that they would have a better relationship with the way that we intended to run our own funds. So we take care of their money also, but now they keep some of their own money in the Cleveland, I mean Canton area in the

banks. So that they can get to know the presidents of banks so that they can help their people, you know, just like we want to help our people. We're very much involved in our community. We want to -- Like the United Ways and things like that. We believe that we're, even though we're unions, you know, we're just as much a part of a community as anybody else. And we want to be, be active. But it worked out great for our people. We, we added on to our building. Meaning they can come in anytime they want to. They can check on their pensions. They know the people by first name basis, the girls that work in the office. So they feel more comfortable in dealing with that type of a relationship. Maybe they even have the feeling then since they're that close that

(260) everything's okay, you know. Again, you're talking about corruption, you're talking about embezzlement. You're talking about things like that that takes place in all offices. So people, kind of when they read something, they don't anybody. But there's more of a trust that takes place when it's in the local, you know, right in the area and that. So we've done quite well. We've done quite well with our pensions and our medicals. We have an annuity. We have a vacation fund. These are all things that, you know, are important to the working people.

(267) MNK: That sounds a little bit like descriptions of the, of that earlier organization called the Board of Trade. There's a long --

CO: Yeah.

MNK: ... of that sort of --

CO: Yeah, that goes back a lot of years.

MNK: Caring about the community, caring about the --

CO: Oh, oh, okay.

MNK: You know, the, the broad based interest of the, of the Board of Trade in, in working people.

(272) CO: Board of Trade or you just talking about board of directors? Were you talking about that or, or specific ... Board of Trade?

MNK: ... talking about specifically about the Ohio Valley Board, Board of --

CNK: ... board, assembly of trade and labor. I think that was one.

CO: How about the Ohio Valley Trades and Labor Assembly?

MNK: Yeah, that's who we're talking about.

(277) CO: Yeah. The Ohio Valley Trades and Labor Assembly what they are are all unions. Steelworkers, that's Linda, you know and those are the -- Teachers Associations. So all unions belong to the -- Not -- I mean they have the right to belong. There's dues, fees that have to be paid and that. But they, they belong to the Ohio Valley Trades and Labor Assembly, and that's in the Ohio Valley here. You may go on down the river some and you have the Marshall, Wetzel, Tyler County Trades and Labor Assembly. You may go up the river and there's another Trades and Labor Assembly up there. So all areas --

MNK: But Wheeling had the, had the first one if I'm not mistaken.

(287) CO: Yes, they have, they have the oldest one.

MNK: The oldest one.

CO: Ohio Valley Trades and Labor Assembly. Now then, we also belong to the Building Trades. Not them, but just the construction workers or the crafts that I talked about. The 14, 15 different crafts, they belong to the building trades. Now then the building trades belong to the Ohio Valley Trades and Labor Assembly, the different crafts, see, which we're a part of. Little, little, you know, a little complex and that. But most generally, and I see this happening, business people are more inclined to be involved in the United Way, which is very good for the areas, the Easter Seal Telethon, you know, things like this. Anything that's helping out in a community. Now I did belong to most of those things when I said I isolated myself to my job, I felt that was part of my job to be also involved in community, you know, affairs and that. My -- Easter Seal Telethon, for years I've been on the, the telethon itself, you know, as far as going around and helping to get money because they help my grandchildren speech wise and that. And the same way that the United Way, I believe very strongly in the United Way in what it does for the community irregardless of corruption that we heard about. The president of the national group, well, he's just a bad guy as far as I'm concerned! I don't look at him as just because he's United

(309) Way. He was just the wrong person put in that situation. So I don't think that's any reason that we should give up on the United Way because of a corrupt person. If corrupt's the right word.

MNK: Can, can you talk a little bit about -- Well, first of all I wanted to -- There's a question's been burning in my mind. I wondered if you can remember a particular job that you did with your father when you maybe first started out --

CO: Yes, I sure can.

MNK: That was particularly harry or, or scary or --

(318) CO: That's harry, okay. Yes. Back in 1954 I believe my father may have been the steward on the job, the job steward. And it was over -- I was working for a contractor called Link Belt Company. And it was over at ... It was Dilles Bottom, the powerhouse, Berger Plant. It was called the Berger Plant, and that's the powerhouse over, over in that area. And again, we were starting from the ground up and putting this together. And the first phase of that, after the foundation work was put in and everything, we were erecting the structural steel for the conveyor work. All the conveyors you see going from the powerhouse and that bringing the coal in to the powerhouse and that, that was our job at that present time. So we were up -- My father was hooking on to the steel, and I was up in the air. And we have like when you talk about a ... again, you have two men holding on normally and two men doing the connecting. Plus the foreman is there making sure that we're doing what we're supposed to be doing. So we had, we had some guidelines on a about a 115 foot truss. Meaning you have to put -- Today, you put the whole truss together because of the modern technology. But during that day, you could only put, put one side of the truss up. Then you'd have to put the other side of the truss up. And then you'd have to guide this side off because naturally you got to cut loose from the rig, and then you got to hook on to the other piece. Guide meaning that you have guidelines coming in and holding it stable until you set the other piece. Well, we set the first truss about 115 feet long, and I don't know the weight of it, but you're probably looking at around 20 ton or so. And then we had a guide

(349) off. Well, then we hooked on, unhooked from it. Then we hooked on to the other truss, and then we -- When we came up with it, the one guideline, we had to change them around and that. And the one guideline then had to be removed because you had to come on up with this other truss to put it in position. Well, when they unhooked the -- They tightened some other guidelines up. They had to transfer some things. And then when they unhooked from

the, slacked off from the one guideline, then there was so much pull on the one side that the truss started to go. The one that was already in place was unhooked from, and it come tumbling down. And my father was on the ground, and I was over on the roof at the time trying to take care of the other guideline. But everything just went wrong. Meaning the, the guide cable itself went all different ways, cables flying all over the place. And the people down on the ground almost was hit, you know, from running away from this truss and that. Well, the only thing I could think of was my dad. My dad was down on the

(367) ground, and he knew I was up there working on the cables. So I went running down the step because we was hooking onto an old powerhouse, I mean the other powerhouse at that time. We were doing some, you know, on the new project at that time. So I come running down the steps, and he was running up the steps. So we met each other about halfway probably to make sure that we were both okay. But yeah, there's been more times than that, but that was the one that always stuck out in my mind. That worrying that something happened to me because on that same job, right before that, there was an ironworker was killed. As a matter of fact, there was five construction workers that was killed on that project over there. And that -- Again, that was my early days, and I was only 18 years of age. Again, I had quit college at that time, and that was my first job after I quit college. And I remember I was working at some, some lingo that maybe you're not used to, but we used to drive rivets back in those days. Again, it's a lot, takes a lot longer to drive rivets than it does to bolt up. So therefore, again, we lost a lot of time. Maybe it was good for construction, you know. But as far as manpower, no, because it would take longer or it took more of an expertise to drive rivets than it does to stick a bolt in a hole and tighten it up and things like this. But anyway, I was working in a raising gang, and my father, again, was in another gang at that time. And the rig -- We could see from being up on top

(391) the iron. The rig swung around to do something, and it toppled over. They lost the rig. In other words, the boom, everything come over. The rig upset. So we all come down off the iron, and whoever's working on the ground, we all ran over to that vicinity thinking that was the only problem. And we just wanted to make sure that nobody was under that, any of the boom or the rig itself. But people didn't stop there. They were going up a -- And you

can see the barge unloader, the facility from the Moundsville area. When you look over, there's a big concrete cylinder and on top of that structural steel. And then that, coming out from that, would be what we would call a bucket that would go down at that time would unload the barges, the coal that would come in on barges and that. So that's what they were working on at that time. Driving up the, the rivets to hold the structural steel in place. Well, everybody kept running up this real big wide ladder that they had. Probably about four wide you could run up it, go up that ladder and down that ladder. So I ran up because the rest of them ran up. And here they was all gathered around an ironworker that went in the hole and, and his brains was all splattered out on the concrete and that. And the rig was coming around to bring in a safety basket, a man basket to put him in to bring him back around for the ambulance because, you know, the body and everything. But again, you do that thinking, you know, maybe he's still alive because they don't know. Nobody on the ground saw him. So they still thought he was alive and everything. But anyway, my whole point is I saw that, and I, I got kind of sick, you know, because I never saw anything like that before. So I went over to my dad, and I shed a few tears. And I told my dad going home that night, I said, "Dad, I don't think I want to be an ironworker. I'm not going to be an ironworker." And he told me some things about -- They sound a little farfetched here, corny, but he said, "Well, let me tell you something right now." He said, "Anytime there's a problem out there, you just can't run from it. That problem isn't going to go away." So he said, "Just like being thrown off a horse. If you don't get right back up on that horse," he said, "You're never going to get back up on that horse." So he said, "I'm not concerned about you being an ironworker and that, but I'm concerned of whether you're able to handle a problem or not." So I went to work the next day! So again, that's, you know, from working with my father.

MNK: Great story. Great story.