

Ironworkers Documentation Project: AMERICA WORKS
AUDIO LOG FORM

Interviewer's recording no(s): AWP00173_SR01

Contact: Augustine "Gus" Peplinski

Interviewer: Jim Leary

Interview:

Date: Tuesday, July 12, 2011

Place: Kitchen of Peplinski home

Other people present: Peplinski's wife towards the end of the interview

Background noise: periodic refrigerator and air conditioning drones

Equipment used: (audio recorder brand and model; microphone(s), brand(s), model(s))

Marantz professional PMD 661 digital recorder; Audio Technica C87 condenser microphone

Recording medium used: Kingsport 2 gigabyte SD[Secure Digital]memory card 362.4 megabytes, uncompressed WAV format)

Recording engineer: Leary

Summary description of audio interview contents:

Now retired, Peplinski talks about his experiences as an ironworker.

Audio Interview Contents: Gus Peplinski

Time	Topic
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0:05	[As the recorder comes on Gus starts showing some photographs of his dad, himself, brother, son, and nephew.] All ironworkers. 212 years total, to date.
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0:34	Announcement, initial question modified to ask about Gus's dad and how he got into the ironworkers trade?
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1:00	Well he was born just out of Stockton [Portage County, WI], 1903. I don't know, he lived there until my grandpa bought the farm, just north of Fancher Church here, on 6th Street off of County Trunk K. And he moved there. And that's where I was born. Well, our whole family was born there. My sister and two brothers. And actually when he got into the trade I'm not sure. I think he started somewhere in the "30s, but he didn't get a book till I believe it was 1941, according to what I got here. And then he went on the road. During the war time, projects. He went bumming for about five years. We lived in Kansas, Illinois, following the work. Basically I
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think it was under World War II projects and stuff. And then we come back here. Well, my grandpa got burnt on the farm, that was in 1946. That's when my dad come back to the farm. We lived on the farm there ever since that.

2:25 I went to Amherst High School and graduated in 1954. I started ironwork with my Dad, Buren Powerhouse in 1957, January. Got my book in April 23, 1957. I'll have 55 years coming this April. [What was your Dad's name?] Leon Peplinski. [And did he have brothers who were also ironworkers?] No, he was the only one who was an ironworker. He had three other brothers and three sisters. [When you were a kid, traveling around with your dad, did you have much of an impression at that time what it was to be an ironworker? Did your dad show you things?] No, not really. I never got involved in part of his work or anything. He never took us out to the job sites or anything. One thing I do remember... We lived down by Baraboo and he would bring me a box of worms from work so I could go fishing in the Baraboo River. I was in the second grade I think. I remember that very well. [He was working on the power plant then.] Yeah, Badger Ordinance.

4:08 [What inspired you to get into the trade yourself?] My Dad got me into it and I had the opportunity to work at the Buren Powerhouse there. They were looking for people. There was quite a few guys that started on permits and stuff at that time. Matter of fact I initiated with five other guys when I got my book. After that, there was a lot of people took apprenticeships and there really wasn't any apprenticeship program at that time anyhow. You worked on permit and went before the board. They okayed it and you got a book. That was it. There were quite a few guys at that time who got into the union the same time I did. [Where is the Buren Powerhouse?] Just this side of Wisconsin Rapids, in the little village of Buren, Consolidated Papermill there. It was a big powerhouse plant, a steam plant for paper-making machines. And at the same time, there was one paper machine was going in at the same time too, the same project.

5:40 [When you started out, what kind of work were you doing as an ironworker?] At the start, I was on the sheeting crew, siding up the powerhouse. Then from there on, I got into just about all of the phases then. [Was the sheeting crew like welding sheets?] No it was aluminum sheeting, tiles. There were sandwich panels made up and then we bolted them to the girds. They're still there today. LAUGHS [At that time, you say there wasn't an apprenticeship program. So how did you learn to do all the things you needed how to do?] On the job training I guess. [Can you tell me, where there some old timers who gave you pointers or after screwing around, someone yelled at you...?] Well, worked under my Dad, he was a foreman. I worked under him for a few years. And then, I don't know. I got to be a foreman at an early age, working for Consolidated and other local contractors. Wisconsin Bridge and Iron. I guess you just learn by being amongst people that knew. [Were there any people you particularly admired who were good at welding, connecting, tying re-bar, or...] Well, I knew a lot of guys through the years. I liked them all. They were all... Some of them were more structural men. Some were strictly rod men. They were all good people. I enjoyed working with everyone that I ever knew.

7:45 [So what was your favorite part of the trade?] Structural and heavy rigging. I just really enjoyed heavy rigging. I got into some pretty big projects and moved 300 ton transformers, pulling 200 ton debarking drum at Buren, that was at the Craft Mill. Done a lot of work at the

paper mills through the years. That was basically the bread and butter, the paper mill work.

8:24 [Can you tell me what's involved in the heavy rigging?] Oh I guess knowing how to handle things, how to cope with everything. You're talking about 200-300 ton of material. I mean, you gotta know what kind of rigging you're going to put on and who is and what you got to do. Are you going to lift it. Are you going to roll it. Whatever the situation calls for. [Working with cranes then?] Yeah, most of your big stuff was always with cranes and power equipment. A lot of big stuff like when a big heavy chain falls. Consolidated Papermill had to set of 50 ton chain falls. [What did they call it?] Chain falls, chain hoists. They had sixteen parts of chain in them. You could pull all day on the thing and you'd hardly ever see the block move. They'd handle 50 ton apiece. [Were they set up inside the mill somewhere?] No you hung 'em on a gantry or on a lifting beam or wherever you had to lift. There are a lot of places there. We moved the chipper out of the woodroom there. We had to install mono-rail picking beam and pull the chipper out. It was down in under the first floor, kind of like the basement type of floor. Had to pick it up out of there and roll it out. Roll it on a truck. Took it in for re-building. It's... There's a lot of stuff involved in big equipment moving. I really enjoyed probably about the most.

10:20 [You mentioned working in paper mills. What kind of places have you worked in over the years? What kind of jobs?] Just about anything and everything. From the power houses, I worked at the Weston Plant, Powerhouses 2 and 3. Papermills...powerhouses and paper machines. Nekoosa, Rapids, Port Edwards, Stevens Point... Powerhouses down in Sheboygan... Two bridge jobs, I didn't do too many bridge jobs. Mostly it was structure and machinery moving. And a lot of rod work with the college here in town. jobs. Tied a lot of rods...on the Sentry Building. Tied rods on that old building right from the start to finish. That was a big project. [Did you work mostly in Local 383 territory or did you boom out at all?] I didn't boom out much at all. I was down in Milwaukee, working on a bridge, probably 2-3 weeks, month maybe. Work here, locally, was pretty slack in the mid-80s sometime. I was out in Sheboygan on the powerhouse for about three years. Other than that, I would say just my work was within driving distance. Green Bay and Rhinelander were the farthest and them places I drove. The powerhouse in Sheboygan, I stayed down there. I lived down there, got an apartment. One the good thing about that, down in that powerhouse in Sheboygan, every day after work, you could go out on the pier and go salmon fishing. LAUGHS That was lots of fun. I roomed with a guy from down around Iola. He was a millwright. He and I roomed together and he enjoyed fishing. Every day after work we'd go salmon fishing. Caught a lot of fish too. [An ironworker and a carpenter getting along?] Yup, yup. He was a helluva nice guy. I worked with him... And back at the Foundry, when I first ran into him, I was working for Hennes. He had worked for Hennes for quite some time. We roomed together down there in Sheboygan for about three years. [What was his name?] Roger... He's been dead now quite a few years. It'll come to me sooner or later... [How do you spell that...?] Hennes. They're no longer in business. ASCO bought them out. They were pretty big in construction for years and years. I worked for Hennes for quite a few years. [Was he a Norwegian from over that way?] Yeah. The carpenter? Yeah. He was a Norwegian. [Polish and Norwegian? How did they get along...?] We got along fine. LAUGHS Yup. He was a millwright foreman and I was an ironworker foreman there. I had done all the rigging for him and the machine parts... He was putting in the turbine and generator. I was doing all the loading and rigging for them.

14:37 [So do the carpenters and ironworkers ever get into disputes at all?] Oh yeah, that was pretty common. [Could you tell me a little about that?] Well, no particular incidents but it was always...kind of bad blood between them, especially certain particular guys that were trouble makers more than anything. But they wound up getting settled. You won some, you lost some. That was... working with the paper mills, there was always conflicts with the mill rights. [What would some of the disputes be over?] Well, rigging. We never had any problems of unloading equipment and when stuff came in. But then when it came to setting machinery, basically they wanted to do all their own rigging when it comes to setting the machinery. According to our agreements, the rigging belongs to the ironworkers. It depends on who the job superintendent was, which way he leaned. The majority of job superintendents were carpenters, so you know which way they went. So they had to bring in the business agents and settle things. [Did you have to do any of that stuff yourself?] No. The majority of jobs, I was foreman on and I didn't get involved in the steward... I don't think I ever was a steward on the job. I was foreman on the job almost all my life.

16:25 [So what is involved with being a foreman?] Well, coordinating the work between the supervision and the men. Getting the job done. How many people you need to do the job. When you're on a trip, all the stuff you need to plan things ahead. When there was a shut down, there was a spell there at Consolidated in Platteville. They had a two week shut down every year around the 4th of July. You could count on it. They had so many job scheduled that they had to get done. You had to know how many men you needed to do the job and get the jobs done and get them done on time.

17:20 Most of them was run overtime. That was the hottest part of the summer. It was pretty hot work a lot of the time. [I've talked to some fellows who said how a certain foreman was miserable to work with and some were great. Then I talked to people who had been foreman and how they managed the men. Do they yell at 'em or do they work along side of them or how they...how they get things to happen.] Usually I got along pretty good with the guys. Once in awhile you get someone who wasn't worth his salt. LAUGHS Most of the time you didn't have much to say about running 'em off the job. You just have to put up with it. I very seldom had any problems with as far as getting work done. Lot of times greenhorns, they didn't know one end from another. You had to get them put in with someone who knew what was going on. Worked together. That was probably the toughest, pairing guys up on the job. Getting the right combination of workers together. 30 years, I guess, it all panned out. I'm sure I've made enough enemies over the years and I'm sure I probably made a few friends besides. Being a foreman isn't a... It ain't no glory behind it, I mean... A couple dollars an hour difference in pay sometimes it ain't worth the grief you got to go through. Usually if there are problems, where does it go? It goes down to the foreman.

19:36 [You mentioned greenhorns. Did you ever run into...say, someone's new and they get sent for a tool that doesn't exist or...some prank played on them?] Cannon Report. LAUGHTER That was one in the service. The peons got sent for a cannon report. LAUGHTER Sky hooks a lot of times. Most of the time, there wasn't much horseplay going on on the job site. Occasionally there would be something. A couple of guys working for Hennes at the Waupaca Foundry one time and they were really close buddies. Then they were pulling stuff on

each other just steady. It kept the rest of the crew in stitches most of the time. Everybody enjoyed them. They were both real swell guys and good workers. They just had something going every time you turned around. One of them, I know is dead, was Howie Reynolds and the other guy, Mel Ganthor. I haven't seen him now for quite a few years. I think he's still alive. I haven't heard of him dying.

21:12 [What did they do?] Pull some crazy stuff on each other all the time. One time I think... Howie probably started it. Working in the Foundry, you had housing over the shaker conveyers and we were doing something inside of them, on the conveyers or something. Mel was inside... I think Howie was inside. Anyway, one of them was inside and the other guy stuck his head in through the opening through the doorway there and everything was covered with dirt all over. He takes his arm and scrapes a pile of that black dirt right up and LAUGHS Mel was the one that scraped it...doing it to Howie. He didn't forget that. Two days later, Mel was cutting a piece of manganese plate, the hardware plate and it's hard to cut with a torch. You got to be real slow and steady in order to keep your metal flowing. He's down on his hands and knees, cutting on that plate. Howie found a box of little box of...some old grease on it, laying around on the gird somewhere. Grease, black grease...and all full of foundry sand and everything else, dirt. Mel was bent over that plate cutting there, concentrating on that and Howie comes up to him and takes that box of grease and pushes it right on top of his head, screws it around. LAUGHS and he took off running. Stuff like that there...pulling on each other every once in a while. LAUGHTER [They both must have been good workers.] Oh yeah, they worked together for years. They got along fantastically with each other. They just had a little horseplay between them all the time.

23:30 [How about you – have you had any tricks played on you at all?] Well... not that I can recall as far as working on the job... I had a buddy of mine pull one on me one time. I'll never forget it. I was probably in my early to mid twenties. We chased around a lot together quite a bit. One night about 3 o'clock in the morning he calls me up... "Gus, can you come and bail me out. I'm in jail. I need someone to bail me out." So I get dressed and go down to the goddamn jail there. "Is Bert Ladeski here?" "No, there's no Bert Ladeski here." What the hell is going on. I found out later, he was sitting...got home late in the morning...or early in the morning, late at night. Was schnozzled up and called me about getting him out of jail. I called him up and I told him he better never end up in jail because you ain't never going to get me to get you out! LAUGHS I'm sure he hasn't forgotten that either. That was about the only thing that anyone ever pulled on me.

25:05 [Nicknames figured in much on the job?] Some guys all you ever knew them was by their nicknames. Cowboy Pearson was one of them. He was the guy that initiated the same day I did. I didn't know that his first name was Howard for twenty years! I knew him by Cowboy all the time. I'm sure there were a few other guys with nicknames, nothing I can really recall. [Why did they call him Cowboy?] Well, he dressed and presented himself in cowboy boots and western type clothing, jeans and western type shirts and everything. [Pearson sounds like a Swede or some kind of...] All I know was that his correct name was Howard Ward

26:18 [Years ago, I got to know a couple of Ho-Chunk guys who were ironworkers. One was

Ken Funmaker.] I knew him. [Did you ever work with Kenny?] Yup. He was a good worker when he was on the job. That was the biggest problem. When he had a paycheck...I don't know if that's a typical Indian or what but it would always be a few days before he got back to the job. CHUCKLES He was a good worker when he was on the job. He'd get drunk and take a few days to sober up. [I stayed up all night drinking with him one time.] LAUGHTER [I guess he got hurt on the Portage power plant.] There's another. My son was a pretty good friend with him. I can't think of what his name is. It wasn't Kenny. [Elliot? Robert?] I don't know, all I know he was a Funmaker. Might have been one of those. [Also worked with a Potawatomi, Ned Daniels. He was a welder and worked mostly out of the local in Green Bay. He died awhile ago.] Yeah.

28:00 [Any characters you encountered on the job? Some who were colorful or memorable?] Mel and Howie were two of the most comical characters you ever run into. Swell of guys that they were, either one, they'd give anybody the shirt off their back. But they were just lots of fun to be around all the time, no matter what the job was. There was never a dull moment when them guys were around. They were always lot of fun. And then there were our after hour sessions, stop over at the bars after work. We had some pretty good times then. [So things changed over time as far as guys getting together and go to the tavern?] Well, no, I don't think so. They probably did with me. As I got older, I kind of gave up going to taverns. I have been retired for over 12 years and right before I retired, I'd stop in pretty regular. Sit with the guys and stuff. Got home late for supper more than once I guess. LAUGHS

29:32 [When you finish a job or top out or something, is that cause for some kind of ceremony?] Well, a lot of time, there would be a pretty good party at the topping out. There was one party down at the Weston plant there... It was towards the end of the job and I was working for Hennes at that time too. They had a bunch of scrap iron they sold off the job. He threw a big party, all the boilermakers and ironworkers, and... We had a good feed, a big party, all night. Something like that. The guys would sell scrap iron at the end of the job or something and throw a beer party. Occasionally it would be a retirement party, someone was retiring. We had our share of parties. [Do you think more so than other trades...or similar...or...] Oh I would almost venture to say ironworkers are probably a little heavier drinkers than most. I don't know too many ironworkers that didn't drink much. I know a lot of them that quit drinking. And some of them quit at a pretty young age. They had reasons for quitting. Their wives told them you quit or get out.

31:24 [When I was interviewing some of these fellows around Madison, "Oh, you're going up to Stevens Point – or farther north. That's where the Jack Pine Savages are..." I grew up in Rice Lake so I always thought of myself as a Jack Pine Savage. So can you talk about that...?] I don't know how that ever come to be. Nekoosa and Rapids area, there's a lot of Jack Pine in that country. Paper mills, everything. They used a lot of Jack Pine. How that ever came about to be... We were always referred to as Jack Pine Savages quite a ways back already. I don't know, other than that there was a lot of Jack Pine up here, like Adams County and surrounding counties, southern Wood county... That's all there is is Jack Pine that country. There wasn't a helluva lot of ironworkers that come out of that part of the country. [So what did you think about it if someone called you a Jack Pine Savage?] Didn't bother me in the least. LAUGHS What the

heck... [In the 60s, when all these Polish jokes came out, did that figure out at all in the trade? Did people call you Polack or anything...?] Never bothered me anyway. I told just as many Norwegian jokes or Polish jokes. Listened to just as many, as far as racist or bothering a nationality, that never bothered me in the least. How many Norwegian or Swede jokes do you hear and pass them on... Polish jokes. That doesn't bother me any.

33:30 [Do jokes get told much on the job site, people on break or at the tavern afterwards?] Yeah, well some guys could tell a joke and every joke they told would remind them of another one. They could go all night and keep telling jokes. I can't remember one joke five minutes after I hear it. [Some guys are like that. Max and Pete Trzebiatowski, those guys were good. Do you ever hear of any ironworker jokes? Ironworker and carpenter...or something like that.] No, none that I really recall. Probably has been. You can take just about any kind of joke and even change the names and make it ironworker and a carpenter, or a priest and a rabbi. So I'm sure there were jokes that way. But I don't recall any particular ones.

34:40 [How have things changed over the years, starting with your Dad and you being in the trade... Gear or safety things...?] The biggest thing that bothered me the worst was that safety crap. I've done my share of connecting and stuff and I never tied off, I never wanted to be tied off. You make a connection. You get up and go to the next one, not come to the end of the rope and so you have to unhook. That safety crap, that really... I'm glad I retired when I did. There's nothing wrong with it. I'm sure it has saved quite a few lives. Everyone has a different outlook about things. Management and your company and everything else. They treated it a lot different than they did at the start. It's a pretty big thing today, the safety part of it. I enjoyed riding the headache ball, going from point-to-point on the rig. Later years, then we used the basket which wasn't much different than riding the headache ball. But after a while, you couldn't even use the basket any more. You had to use man lifts and tie off every place you moved to. 'Course my Dad worked with a guy, working on a dam. Paul Lang. I think they were at Petenwell. INAUDIBLE. He fell off of a scaffold 8 feet and got killed. [8 feet...] Yup. Two rings of scaffolds, fell off of there and broke his neck.

36:47 [Have you had any accidents?] No, nothing... Oh a few cuts and smashed fingers, a few crippled up fingers. That one won't straighten out. That happened at Sentry. LAUGHTER Never had any serious mishaps. Not really any close calls. One probably could have been down at the powerhouse in Sheboygan...no, that was at Green Bay. I was riding the headache ball, working for Hennes there, working on the precipitator. I got on the headache ball and the operator was going to swing me back down to the ground, probably for lunch or whatever it was. He was working a little bit in the blind, not totally in the blind. He didn't raise the hook up high enough and swing it out. And he caught the beam with that hook on the headache ball. Well the line was laid out at probably a 45 degree angle and I'm hanging on to it. He didn't have a non-spin cable on the rig. He had enough strain on there, it kinda opened up the twist in the cable, the lay of the cable. And then when he swung back, I couldn't even let go of the cable. The lay opened up and it pinched my gloves right in the lay of the cable. So he had a little strain on it. That was probably the closest I ever come to having anything happen. [How did you get out of that?] Well, he realized that he hooked the hook on the iron. Then he swung back and picked the load up and then went down to the ground. I wound up, I just had to pull my gloves

off. LAUGHS They were wrapped in a cable. The twists on the cable opened up and there was enough to pinch some of the fabric in the... [But not your fingers. Your fingers were... Oh man...]

39:00 [When you started out, what kind of gear did you have and how has the gear changed over time, what you wear...] I don't think nothing ever really changed much as far as clothing or tools. Clothes, you just dressed accordingly. In the winter, you put on what you had to stay warm, and in the summer you stripped down to stay cool. The tools and equipment pretty much stayed the same all along. Well, to start with, on rods, you used a neck roll for tying rods, a big roll of wire you hung it around your neck and under your arm. That was a pain in the ass. It didn't take too long and every shirt you owned, the shoulder on your shirt was wore out—just rolling that big roll of wire around, tying rods. Well then they come out the wire wheels, those little spools. That really made things a lot better. As far as structural, things didn't change much. I think I was on one job where they still done a little bit of riveting. They riveted one little--it was a fly ash tower was what it was. That was at the Buren Power House. Then everything pretty much went to high tensile bolts after that. There was one little spell they used what they called darlettes. They were a high tensile bolt. They had a head like a rivet, then they had splangs right behind the head. We had to use a riveting gun to drive it in the hole. And the impact on the nut on the backside. We had to drive 'em with a #90 riveting hammer to drive them into the holes. They didn't last very long. I don't think I used them more than a couple of years, couple jobs. I don't know if they figured... They figured I think it acted more like a rivet. Fill the hole full. And then they found out, in time, with the tension on high tensile bolts, it wasn't necessary to fill in the hole. The strength came in the sheer itself. The tension between the two pieces of metal done more than filling the hole up. With your high tensile bolts now and torque wrenches and everything, impacted it. Them darlettes didn't ask very long at all.

41:54 [You mentioned when you had that wire...] Neck roll. [Yeah...tearing up your shirt. I ran into some guys whose wives made really good wool socks for the winter or maybe did some re-enforcing on some of their clothing. Do you ever have any custom made stuff...] Sew a leather patch on your shoulder that would take the wear of that roll. That helps. And then it got warmer too. That patch of leather in the summer time. I think the problem was that... Its new wire, just like you use today, you could let go of the end of that wire and it could spring up and pop you one in the face. It wasn't too nice. [Did that ever happen to you?] Yeah, well... [There's a little song that I've heard called "Ironworkers Blues." It was made up by a guy named Duane Olby and he recorded in the Twin Cities. I used to know who he was but I never met him. He was still living when I was living in Washburn, Wisconsin. I've been in touch with his son. His son sent me a copy of the recording. But it has something about the wire comes loose and it hits your lip...or something like that.]

43:36 [What about the hard hats. Was there anything distinctive about the ironworkers' hard hat?] No, there's really nothing special about them. I mean everybody wore the hard hat. If you were on some job, some companies had different colored hats for different trades. But other than that, there wasn't anything special about them. [Was there a certain color for ironworkers?] No, not nothing specific. I guess that was just up to the company's discretion. They just see somebody goofing out there. Well, that was a carpenter, he's got a red hard hat. That was an

ironworker, he's got had a green hard hat. So he knew...just by looking at the hat what trade he belonged to. [Some guys decorate their hard hats.] Well, legally, the only thing you can do is put like stickers or decals on. As far as any other kind of decoration--actually, it's foolish, it weakens the hat. You start drilling holes in it and mount stuff that shouldn't be. Technically, you ain't supposed to put anything but a decal on it. [Like paint or something...] Well, paint was never a problem. One guy, George Bienfang Jr (I THINK), he painted his hard hat titty pink. LAUGHTER I guess that was his trademark. LAUGHTER

45:25 [Your tools, how did you go about acquiring your tools when you started out?] Bought 'em as you needed them, I guess. Some of them were handed down and some other guys...if...they had more tools than what they needed. They could have 2-3 wrenches and some didn't need one of them. I think I'm sure all the tools that I have, all but the bull pin, I guess I got from my Dad. All the wrenches and everything he bought. [What did you call it, that you got from your Dad?] A bull pin. [What's a bull pin?] It's a tapered pin that you drive in holes to line up the iron. [It's different from a spud wrench?] Yeah, that's all it was used for, just for lining up a hole. It was a tapered pin. [So did you ever put your name on your tools or mark them somehow?] Well if you just marked 'em, you'd stamp your initials on them or something. Very seldom did you lost any tools.

46:35 [How about...you were growing up. Did you ever slice wire or tie knots for the trade?] Oh yeah, I tied a lot of knots and sliced rope. Sliced long, short splice. I don't know--hundreds of knots. LAUGHS [Can you talk about how you learned how to do that and just some instance...what...] Tying knots for an ironworker is quite important. You use it...well, you don't call it a rope, you call it a line. You use it in a lot of applications, for tag-lining a load or pulling a bucket of bolts up to yourself. Many things. You oughta know how to tie a knot that's going to hold, then its something that you can untie when you want to take it off. Over the years, I always considered myself pretty good as far as tying knots. I knew a lot of knots. [Is that still part of the trade?] Oh yeah. Yup. [Now a days, what would you use the knots for...? Say, working on a job... nowadays?] Same thing as always I guess. If you want to send up a bundle of something in a secure, so that half of it didn't fall off on the way up.

48:28 There was an old story about this guy—I don't remember how it even all went. This guy was going to hoist up a keg of bolts up to the top of a roof of a building or some darn thing. He got all banged up and smashed and the guy asked what happened? It all started out that... He started pulling up this keg of bolts and it got too heavy for him. He let it back down and he come back up to the rope. He had a hold of the line and jumped off the roof. Let his body weight pulled the keg of bolts. On the way up, the keg banged into him and it screwed up his arm, hurt his arm. Then when they got all the way to the top, what the hell was it? It hit a beam or something and the bottom of the keg fell out and all the bolts fell out. No that was probably the second trip around or some damn thing. Well, anyway he got hit back and forth three different times. Once he run his fingers up through the shiv when a keg of bolts overhauled him and it just went on and on and on. That's how he got banged up. Every time he met the keg of bolts on the way up, that keg would hit him when he was on the way down. And when he was on the way up, the bolts were coming down to hit him. It was just a series of getting banged up. [I heard a song about that, Why Clancy Wasn't At Work Today] That same story has been switched around in a

hundred different ways. Once, a bricklayer with a pile of bricks or a bucket of bricks. And I think that bolts, I think that was in an ironworkers magazine one time years ago. I heard that same story often. Different versions of it but basically it's the same ending all the time. LAUGHTER

50:35 [Did you splice cable too?] No. That was...a rather complicated technique, to splice cable. The only thing that anybody ever did splice cable was making chokers, making eyes on that cable. As far as splicing cable together for linking out a piece of cable, it wasn't practical. Making chokers was quite an art. [Did you make them or know guys who make them?] I knew a guy that did make them. [Could you talk about someone who was a choker maker?] That don't... I never really know him personally. I knew the guy that made it. Companies would submit an order and they'd make different sizes, 3/8ths inches, different lengths. They would make whatever they wanted. [Were they ironworkers?] Yeah, most of them were ironworkers who did it. Some of them are retired ironworkers or whatever. [They do it by hand obviously?] Yeah. There's a little hand work. I have pictures of the equipment... It's like a thimble you wrap the cable around and then you've got a dip that you stick between the lay and then you thread the different strands in between the lays. [Yeah, I've seen those tools at Local 383.] That's quite an act. I could splice rope, long splice, short splice. Splice eye in a rope. But I never got into cable splicing.

52:26 [What about... Ironworkers got to work in all kinds of weather. Can you talk about any strange or difficult weather you worked in over the years?] Oh, plenty of it. Some awful hot days and some awful cold days. One of the college jobs there [UW Stevens Point], that was early in the spring. Working on rods. Down from the footings up, putting basement walls in. Facing to the west in the morning time, the sun beating against the wall--it was hot. Hung a thermometer on the wall ties on there that wall--the panels are all oiled to release concrete and stuff. That thermometer went up to about 125 degrees. You sit there and sweat it out, and hope to get some breeze. Get done and get out of there. [Does it affect the iron or steel at all?] Oh, it's hot. I tell ya. Working connecting the iron. The thing is, painted iron wasn't that bad. There are a lot of jobs with raw iron, unpainted. That black iron is pretty damn hot to sit on. You can't even grab a hold of it, it was so hot. You could fry an egg on that iron a lot of time. Cold got just as bad. Doing one of the dormitory jobs, working for Utter [?] in Point. You come in from break, I was wearing Sorel boots. Stopped in for a lunch break and my feet were cold. Took my boots off and warmed my feet up, pulled the liners off the soles and I couldn't pull them off. They were frozen to the bottom of the boot. So now you know how your feet got cold. [It's like those stories you hear about guys in the log drives. When they take their boots off, their boots were frozen on. So the iron would get slippery and dangerous in the winter?] Oh yeah. It can get pretty damn slick sometimes. Sometimes you had to go up there to clean it off. It took days. It wouldn't melt off if you didn't clean it off. [How would you clean it off then?] With a scraper and broom and shovels. You had a snow storm, snow built up on the iron. Well then you get some warmer weather, it starts thawing. Then it freezes back again at night. If you didn't clean it off, it would take a week before it melted off unless you had really good weather. [Did you ever use torches or anything like that?] It wasn't practical to try and drag it... The only way you could do anything would be with a brush burner and a bottle gas tank. A brush burner... You ain't going to drag an LP tank up on the ice to try to melt the ice off. You done the best to scrape it off, get as much off as you could and then a little bit of sunshine would melt it off.

55:52 [Some of the ironworkers I've met and they've done some metal work or tables out of rebar or making sculptures out of tie wire. Have you ever run into that or do anything like that yourself?] I haven't done none of it. No. After retirement, I went a little bit into some wood working projects. I never done anything in iron work as far as all that ornamental stuff goes. I would enjoy getting one of those plasma cutters. You must have seen some of the work that they've cut out with plasma cutters. It's computerized... [Oh I haven't.] They cut out pictures and stuff. It gets pretty darn expensive. [Yeah. Ed Smith has made a couple of miniatures of lattice cranes. I was at his place last week. It made me wonder if anybody ever made miniatures of any girders, or structures for building... Sometimes trades people made them.] Well, I've seen a lot of stuff made with match sticks or balsam wood or something. Build bridges with them. As far as metal works or something, I never got involved in any of it.

57:38 [Can you tell me a little bit about the folks who are in this picture then... You talked a little bit about your Dad but how about the other folks.] My Dad is in the middle here. It was when he got his 50 year pin. That's me on the side and that's my oldest son, Dennis. He's an ironworker now. He's down working on windmills down working by Portage. That's my next younger brother. He's retired now. He's 69 or 70. And that's his son, Wayne, who lives next door. I sold my old place to him. He's living in my... I own a 40 and that old farm building and we put this house up in 2005. Sold the house over there. [What's your brother's name?] Jim. He's got a book in the... Jim got his book in 1965. As far as I can figure out on the date on this thing, Dad got his book in 1941. I got mine in 1957. Jim got his in 1965 and my son Dennis got his in 1980. And Wayne, Jim's son, is 1990.

59:13 [Some folks have told me that in a lot of the trades, but especially in the ironworkers, in the early days there were a lot of farm kids that got into the trade. Did you run into that? People who grew up on the farms became ironworkers?] Not especially. I probably knew just as many that came from the cities than came off the farm. I wouldn't say one way or the other...more than the other. [Some people refer Local 383 as a farmers' local sometimes. I don't know where that came from.] I don't either. LAUGHS [You hadn't heard that.] No.

01:00:09 [I'm about out of questions but do you want to say something overall about your experience with the trade, what you think of about ironworkers.] Well, I enjoyed the whole...my whole lifetime as an ironworker. Here are some of my pictures from earlier. These are from the Learning Resource Center in Stevens Point and the addition they put on and what year that was. These pictures are INAUDIBLE. [So is that you on the beam?] That's me. That's me there. And that's the same picture. [So this is from the Stevens Point Journal...?] South Center at the college there. [Yeah, but the paper is the Stevens Point...?] It's the Stevens Point Journal now. These pictures were taken by the Point photographer, Doug Wojcik.. After these were published in the paper, he came and gave me these pictures that he took, connecting the trusses, trusses on that building. [That's cool. I'll make some copies of those.] This is at Nekoosa. This goes back quite a few years ago. Got a stiff leg putting on an addition on top of the paper machine.

01:02:03 [These are pictures of ironworkers up on top of the...like the lone ironworkers on top of the beam. I've seen a couple like that and they kind of remind me of some of those pictures

you see in the lumber camps with the big load of logs and someone on top of them.] This job was way back in the building. We had a little narrow gauge railroad track built on the roof and they had a crane down below to hoist iron up. Put it on a little cart and they'd roll it down to where we could get a hold of it with the stiff leg, to set the iron there. There's one of the trusses going up. We had that stiff leg there, the beams mounted on the top of the roof there. The stiff leg was lashed down too. You'd put the iron in ahead of yourself as far as you could go, and then we ducked the boom back. Here we're ducking the boom back behind to pick up our skid beams and cast 'em ahead of you so you can move the stiff leg farther ahead. You had to unhook one leg of the brace legs, duck the boom around, the leg around the boom and then swing your the skids back around. [The stiff leg is like a stable part of the... Could you describe it?] This is probably about as good a picture as you're going to see of it. This is a mast. It goes straight up and you got a bull wheel on the bottom that you can turn. You turn your boom around. These legs are triangular, off each way on the backside. That supports the boom. You could swing like from that corner around to this corner. You couldn't reach back here without hitting those legs. So in order to move these beams behind you, you had to disconnect this one leg. You held the mast with a come-along and cable. Duck the boom around behind you and reconnect it, grab your skid beams and throw 'em over where you could reach and then place them farther ahead so you can move on down the building. [Wow. This would be the part of the trade that would be called rigging. Is that right?] No, that's stiff leg work. [Stiff leg.] Stiff leg derrick. [Makes me think of sailing ships.] Between a stiff leg and a gin pole, this is a stiff leg. You had stiff braces behind it. And a gin pole, you just had rope falls behind it. You used like an electric pole, telephone pole, something in the front with guidelines in back with an air tug or something that would fastened to the pole. It's used for setting iron you couldn't reach with a crane. [There's a lot to the trade.]

01:05:33 [What did you think of it, as a trade?] I enjoyed every bit it. I wouldn't want to do anything else. [What did you like the most or why do you think you enjoyed it so much?] Well one thing is being outdoors most of the time. This was one of my last jobs in Buren, we put up a big stack. This is the crew, on top of that 300 foot stack. That's my nephew, he's welding. That's my son. And that's a shot of the stack just going up with the rig. Just setting that top piece. This is at the Kraft mill. There's the engineer on the job, one of the Consolidated's engineers. That's the basket that you had to ride up on. [Is that you in there?] That's me. I don't even know who that was.

[I THINK I'LL TURN THE RECORDER OFF.]