

Ironworkers Documentation Project

**AUDIO LOG FORM**

Interviewer's recording no(s): BH IW 1 [Satalic and Bass]

Contact: Craig Satalic and Al Bass

Interviewer: Clark "Bucky" Halker

**Interview:**

Date: November 22, 2011

Place: Union Headquarters, Local 1 IWU, address appears above.

Other people present: None

Background noise: These guys were busy fellows and some of the phone calls and interruptions are here on tape.

Equipment used: Marantz PMD 661 digital recorder and Shure SM57 microphone.

Recording medium used: Transcend 8 gigabyte SD memory card, uncompressed WAV format

Recording engineer: Bucky Halker

**Summary description of audio interview contents:**

**Audio Interview Contents**

Counter

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Topic

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[This is Bucky Halker and I'm here at Local 1 of the Ironworkers and I'm here interviewing two veteran ironworkers today. Why don't you give me your name first.] Craig Satalic.(now B)

[And your nickname is...] Beaver. [And what year were you born?] 1955. [Here in the Chicago area...?] Yes. [Suburb? City?] Chicago. [Right in the city.] What neighborhood? Tenth Ward, southeast side. [Oh, ok. Was that a Croatian neighborhood at the time?] It was mixed. [What else?] Polish, Croatian. A: Italian. B: Italian. There was a little bit of everything. [Yeah.] A: Hail Lily [?]. Laugh. [Did you go to school in that neighborhood...?] Yes. [...and grow up there too?] Yes. [What high school did you go to?] Mendel High School in Roseland. [Ok. And your name, sir?] Al Bass. [And Al, what year were you born?] 1944. [And where, in Chicago or...?] Montgomery, West Virginia. [Montgomery, West Virginia. Wow.] Yeah. My Dad was a coal miner. [Ahh, I was going to ask. And then how did you get up here to Chicago?] Economy. The mines went down. I was 8 years old when my family moved to Chicago. My father went to work in the steel mills. [And what neighborhood?] Southeast Side. [Southeast Side. What mill?] Republic Steel. [Yeah, that was a big one down there.] Yeah. [Did you go to school down in that area or...?] Yeah, went to grammar school at Taylor, that's right there at 99<sup>th</sup> Street. And then I went to Chicago Vocational High School. [Did you get trained as an ironworker there at the vocational school...or...?] No. I was trained... My smith use class which was the vocational class was machine shop. [And then, how did you actually get into ironworking?]. A: Well, I come from the era of where they drafted the whole neighborhood. And...so I was in the military. And when we got out in '67, I went back to my old job at General Mills, and I had a wife and kids. So I was working two jobs. So nobody seen me. A friend of mine was getting married and they wanted to have a bachelor party and I bought a house. They were all apprentice ironworkers. And they says, "Ahh, that's it. You've got to be an ironworker." They told me about it, signed me up, and I went and took the test. And I got called as an apprentice ironworker. [And did you do one of those indentured apprenticeships or did you kind of wander around inside... Because some of the guys that I talked, like in Chicago, worked like 18 years for the same employer. They did their whole apprenticeship going...with the one they were working.] I mostly served one company during my apprenticeship, but I worked all facets of the trade. Of course, in Local 1, you're indentured to the local, not to a company. So if they don't have work, then you move right on to find the right place to find work. [What year did you start working?] October, 1968. [And what was going on in the city? What big building sites did you...?] McCormick Place. Sears. Hancock. All the big... Standard Oil. What do you call it now, Beaver? B: Sears? A: No, Standard Oil. What's it called? B: Amoco Building? A: Something like that. All the major structures were gone and that's why they were taking a lot of apprentices. I personally went to...the old McCormick Place. The other one that burned down.

4:05 [How did you get started? How did you go from your neighborhood to end up with the ironworkers?] B: My Grandfather was an ironworker. My father was an ironworker. I'm third generation ironworker. [Wow. And were they all in Local 1, or...?] Yes. [Did you ever talk to your Grandfather about this?] Never knew my Grandfather. [Your Dad, I'm sure, talked to you about things.] My Dad, yes. [Was he the head of...or a business agent or an officer in the local?] He became the business agent in 1979 and I became the business agent when he retired

in 1993. [You went to college, is that what you said?] Yeah, I went to college. I graduated from high school in 1973. Got a four year degree in accounting and a minor in management. Two months later, I took the ironworkers test. [And did you just go...] LAUGHING [Why...why would you...?] A: Yeah, my Dad was pissed. LAUGHTER B: Father was very upset.... VERY upset. [Because he thought you wasted four years of college?] A: No, money. B: Wasting all of his money, yes...yes... [Did he eventually realized that having an accounting background did have some value with the union at some point or...?] No, not really. He didn't really care about it. [And what about you? Did you think it earned some roll? I would think that that it would.] What he did wrong was... Work was good at the time and in the summers, I would work in a steel mill as an ironworker., on straight paper, and I really liked it. So... When I had the opportunity to take the apprentice test, I took it. I became an apprentice and then a journeyman ironworker. [And what year did you actually join the union then?] '78. [And were you... That was before you were working full time or when you started working full time?] I started full time as an ironworker in September of '78. [And what...at the iron mill or at steel mill?] I went all over. I went all over at that time. [Any of the big jobs in your hometown?] Yes. Northwest Train Station. Madison Plaza. Mostly high rise. I worked down town my whole...15 years that I had the tools on, I worked down town. That's where all the money was, really. Worked in the Ford Plant, on shut downs and stuff like that. Worked in the steel mills when the steel mills were going but the steel mills died, what in about '84, '85? So then there were no more steel mills that were...but I did worked quite a bit in the steel mills when I first became indentured in the ironworkers. [Were there a lot of ironworkers in the steel mills back then?] Oh my God, yes. Four hundred or better. [Were you working on machinery? What kind of stuff were you building...? Things that they needed to get done?] Conveyers, hoppers, furnaces, everything. Beefing up welding, beefing up sheeting. A: General maintenance. Everything. Especially US Steel. US Steel was... American Bridge was their subsidiary so American Bridge did all of their structural. [Did United Steel Workers, did you guys ever have any little jurisdictional tiffs with them over stuff?] B: No, not with me. I don't know about you, Al. A: They didn't really want to work. LAUGHTER So they let us do whatever we wanted. Really. I think that's why the mills kind of died out here. It's because they had such good conditions. I mean, some of my friends, after ten years, they were getting 5-6 weeks paid vacation. A: 13. B: Longer than that, they would get... A: 13 weeks. Those were the days. Yeah.

8:13 [How did you get from...working, you know, in the trade coming up...] Through my father. My father was a business agent before me. He became a business agent in 1980 I think and then he retired in 1993. And I ran for the election in 1993 and I've been...business agent up until March of this year. And the guy that was a business manager, he moved up to the international and I was appointed. And then I ran in June and I won so I'll be their business manager for the next three years, until 2014. [What's your primary job as business agent, doing the business management stuff. What is it that you have to do for the workers and the union?] Handle grievances, put in the work. [Do you have to go to a lot of job sites?] I do. I try to keep

hands on. The more people see you on the job, the less problems you have. A: With employers. B: With employers, yes...if they know you're going to be around. If they know you're not around, they'll try and cheat and do whatever they want to do. But if they know you're around, you know... [What kind of cheating?] Work shorthanded. Breaking union rules. Breaking our union rules. So... A: Other people doing our work. [Other nonunion members or union members...?] Union members. It's even worse now that the economy is very slow. Everybody's stealing work from everybody. [So is it, like, the laborers' unions or...?] A: Laborers, the carpenters... [I'm glad I didn't wear my laborers jacket today. Laughter. I was afraid of that.] B: Mostly the laborers, not the carpenters. And with the man lifts and stuff like that. You know, when we first got in, there was never man lifts. You worked off floats or you walked the iron. And now with all the subpart Rs and this and that and OSHA, and most people work out of the man lifts. So the work that we used to do for the electricians and the pipefitters and the sheet metal, they're doing their own work instead of us doing their work. We would set the structure that would hold the piping for the pipefitters or the piping for the electricians or the duct work for the sheet metal. And we would always get that because they were...they... It became their trade because they were scared...they didn't want to go on the open iron. And now that we have the man lifts, which are safer, but we're losing some of the work that way too.

11:13 [So how did you... You came up here and started working and how did you end up getting involved in all the union activity and...? What was your...] A: Well, originally, I was recruited to being an instructor for an outside local. I was doing a nuclear power plant in Braidwood, which is a...at the time was Kankakee. They've been absorbed since then [the union local]. And I was approached by two individuals that...worked for me in the gang. And the question was... Would you teach an apprenticeship class for us? I said sure. What do I do? Then a couple of weeks later and he says, "I need a resume." And I said, "For what?" I filled out a resume." He says, "Ok. Wednesday come to dinner with me and I'll take you to... The Trustees want to meet you." I says, "Charlie, what's going on?" He says, "No, no. It's just a formality and anybody that has anything to do with it." So I'm sitting there, having dinner with them. And he says to me, "You do realize there's seven people from our local want this job." I says, "What job?" He says, "The instructor for our apprenticeship." I'm out of Local 1. This is a different local. I says, "Charlie, I can't do this." He says, "Follow me to the hall." I actually headed home and I think, ahh, Charlie's a good guy. So I go to the hall. Sure enough, Kenny Dvorak, a whole bunch of people there to get the job. And he says, "Oh, Al's here. Won't do any good. You've got the furthest to go." So he asked me questions and stuff and I leave. The next day they says you got the job. Now this is...in like, January or February. So when international came in. At the time the executive director was Ray Robinson. [That's a local guy, wasn't it?] Of 63, yeah. And he... I went over all the manuals, picked the ones I wanted. Gave 'em to him. So September I had a whole three year program detailed out. I had good training in the military. In the military, I was in an elite unit, we'll call it. I was a Green Beret. But a Green Beret is...has all of the capabilities that everybody talks about but their main objective is that they are...glorified school teachers. They have to teach insurgents or they have to teach

conventional forces. So I had extensive training in how to set up classes and give classes, which benefited me to set up that apprenticeship. And I taught there for four years, but the coordinator at the time here...told me...he had some six indentured apprentices that never had re-enforcing rods. Would I come in and teach them? He was in the class, okay? [He means Satalic.]

LAUGHTER [Was he your best student?] Ahh, we won't get into that, OK? LAUGHTER But he still owes me. That's right. He don't know it. I still got his test scores, see? LAUGHTER. Well, up until I have his test scores. But I came in and started teaching. Then I taught here for 23 years, 2-3 nights a week. And then when...the coordinator at the time retired, they offered me and appointed me the job of coordinator. I've been the coordinator for 13 years now.

15:04 [Do you have a certain number of students...like... Do you have classes that come through? How long does the apprenticeship program last for a certain group of students?] Three years. It's a... An apprenticeship is a comprehensive... The definition of an apprenticeship is a comprehensive program of on the job training and running the school curriculum. This school gets them 802 ½ hours in three years. The job gets him 6000 hours. So between the two is how we turn out the journeymen. Actually, our apprentices... If you compute the hours that they spend on the job and related school curriculum, they put as much or more time into their education to get their degree, which is journeyman ironworker, as any college degree person. Of course... 30 some years I've been involved in the apprenticeship and I truly believe if a guy serves an apprenticeship and takes it serious, he has put so much effort in, he is a professional. He's not a day worker. He's nothing. When he gets that green card that says, "JIW" and we have the backup to show it, I'll show any college professor what they've had to put in to get that degree. I consider the degree, not a journeyman ironworker's card, which is a degree.

6:41 [So when they first start in the apprentice program and they're working on the job, do they work just a couple days a week and then take classes or...] Our program is set up for night classes. They work and then they come a minimum of two nights a week. [And that's even when they're working a regular work week on the job?] Oh yes. Our classes are from 5 to 8, three hours. They come two nights so there's six hours a week in the class. When they take welding, they are there 9 hours a week, three nights a week. Two nights in the welding booth, one night in a theory class. [So what skills do you cover over the course of those...that three year program, in the classroom when you cover welding. Obviously that's...] The core curriculum subjects are structural steel erection. That's 120 hour course. Re-enforcing and post tensioning: That's 120 hour course. That is what the majority of the work is. They also take a 60 hour metal building class. A 60 hour pre-cast class. They take 180 hour welding class. Metal buildings, then all the safety. They get a 10 hour OSHA, 32 hour lead class. A 40 hour hazmat, hazard materials class. Subpart R class which is 12 hours. They get a 24 hour scaffold, erect, or dismantler class. Our students actually get... If you count the curriculum that is in every manual, they get over 240 hours of dedicated safety training which is, now a days, what everybody wants to start with. In fact, when you go, I'll show you all the manuals and stuff that they have to cover during the three year... I got 'em all on the wall so...

18:40 [So what's the biggest challenge you're facing these days? I mean, we have a bad economy, but let's say over the last 10-15 years, what have been some of the big or newer issues you have today?] B: Well, the biggest issue I had to face comes in June when we have a new contract. [And is that a city wide contract? How do you guys negotiate?] We negotiate with the Associated Ateel Erectors. It's mostly...probably about 80% of our contractors belong to it. And I'll have five or six people to negotiate and we'll have eight more, which is five men. Then we have a recording secretary. And Jim, who've you met, is the trustee. And three other BA and we'll negotiate our new contract. [Is that with just Local 1 or is 63 with it?] No, just Local 1. We negotiate our contract and usually 63 follows in our footsteps. It's kind of like we're like the top dog. They see what we're going to get and then they have their own associated erector, which is called the Urban League or something... AI? Urban Iron League? A: Something like that. [Now the erectors, one time I know in Chicago which was in your Grandfather's era, were not so sympathetic towards working with the unions. Do you find them generally receptive? Or in this economy, is it hard?] Well... [...hostile and push the buttons...or...?] All the problem we have now is the price of everything. It takes over \$100 to put a journeyman ironworker, \$100 an hour with the insurance and...the pay scale and the benefits and everything like that. But the Midwest, especially Chicago, we are very fortunate. We have a Democratic Congress. We've got a Democratic Governor. We've got a Democratic Senate. So that means a lot. [It makes things easier for you guys.] Right. [Well, I mean, is it easier, too, for contractors to pass on, say, the higher cost of labor everything and everything to the developers? I mean, is that...] TOGETHER: That's what usually... [...as opposed to working in Alabama or something if they were putting up something there?] Oh, it's probably half. But the quality of work, like AI had mentioned, with our journeymen ironworkers coming out of this program. The quality, there is no better ironworker. Now I could be prejudice, but there is no better ironworkers than the ones that go through his apprenticeship and the workers here in Local #1. A: Well, we have a big burden, see? Our local is #1. LAUGHTER [I know, I know.] B: I don't think anybody's as proud or more proud than AI, but I'm really proud. I'm proud. I mean, I worked around all these high risers and I see what the hard work that goes into these. And the qualified people... And years ago, I've been an apprentice trustee, when we used to interview the kids going through, you know, some of them were lucky if they had a little college. Now, what do we have, AI? 30% of them have degrees. We have a smarter, well, I don't know about smarter with the ironworkers...but they, they have degrees. Most of the people have degrees. Years ago, guys that were putting up buildings, they were lucky to make it out of grammar school. And they were skilled. They were very skilled. And, you know, even with OSHA's putting this, we are still the #1 skilled craft in Chicago.

22:40 [Now did you guys go out in your ironworking careers to work on other sites outside your local? Did you go on the tramp, so to speak as they used to say?] I don't know about AI. I worked in Indiana. I worked in Joliet. I mean, locally, but out of our local. And I worked in Kankakee. And that's about it. Locally. [What about you, AI?] A: I did a big power plant in

Joliet territory. That's Collins Station. And I did Braidwood which is... One of the reasons Local 1 ironworkers are...well respected all over the nation. It's that. That is the best training facility in the world. [Points to apprentice training building.] Tall buildings. Used to be steel mills. Every facet of ironworker was... ironworking was available for ironworkers to be work on or be trained on. You go in other areas... They got three story adobe brick buildings with bar joists. I mean... I don't mean it derogatory that they don't know how to do it but if you set them down on something like the Sears or the Trump and they are in awe. They have no idea what to do. They're not accustomed to it but where our guys, it's second nature to them. Especially over time. I mean... Right there is New York City. Major metropolitan areas is where the true tradesmen come from. You have other areas, they didn't have the opportunity or the facility to train for it. So...

24:29 B: At a convention, we had a convention here in Chicago this past August. Most of the, probably 95% of the locals were in awe of our skyline. They had never seen anything like that before. I mean, you go to Boston, you go to Washington... The highest buildings are maybe 12-15 floors. You don't see 60-70 story buildings, 80 stories. The Sears is so big, the Hancock. And that's hard working... And putting those buildings up isn't like putting up buildings now. Most of them are built with guide derricks. There wasn't the conventional cranes that we have now to make it easier for our guys. There was, there was a lot more harder work. Al worked on some of the derricks. I was able to work on some of them the first 4-5 years, but then they come out with the convention cranes that they put the cranes on the side or in the middle and you set the derricks up to take the cranes down now. The cranes take themselves down now. They got...these 500 ton cranes can go 300 somethin' feet, right up... It just changed this whole... It's all changed, you know? But the skill there, like I said and I keep repeating it. It's still there for the ironworkers.

25:57 Al: The last job I know that they actually used the guide derrick was Harris Bank. I had it from the foundation to the 23<sup>rd</sup> or 28<sup>th</sup> floor and then I went out to Collins Station. But Bethlehem Steel and the suite, it was the guide derrick to put that up. And then after that, it went to that. When we were talking about was the Chicago skyline. I'm sure you've been to New York, right? [Yeah.] Awesome. Huge. No character. Every one of our buildings, 95% of the buildings have character. New York, that's it. They have some unique buildings, but every one of our buildings is different. B: Every one of them. A: It is. It is a testament to design.

26:50 [So let's talk about safety for a minute. You guys both saw changes in the safety, especially with you Al, in your career, but maybe you guys could just talk about that...because I got these pictures of some of these guys on the Hancock Building, it's like he's got street shoes on, shorts and T-shirt. He's hanging on beams. He's not tied off at all. But maybe you guys could say a few words about that.] A: It has definitely cut down on catastrophic injuries. And...everybody strives for safety. This 100% tie off? I don't want to get in trouble here... OSHA...OK. [You won't get into trouble because some people have said incredible things when

I ask about safety. Especially the old guys. They all complained about the safety stuff, you know.] AL: Synrac [?], that's what OSCHA, spent 11 or 14 years, coming up with structural steel erections Subpart R. Now originally OSHA wanted to have a six-foot tie rule. They negotiated. They gave our connectors 15-30 foot. I mean, it's ironworkers. You have to be able to do the job. They finally passed it. Give our connectors 15-30 foot. Didn't make any difference. All the insurance companies said that the GC's, the general contractors, everybody six-foot tie offs. 100% tie offs. In fact, when safety people would come into my office, I go ballistic on them. I say, "You know something? I have a 12 hour subpart R structural steel erection, mandated that I give to my students. Teach OSHA. I'm wasted my time. I spent 12 hours for nothing. They go out on your job, six-foot tie rule. To hell with OSHA. I just hope they don't get to where these people that's never stuck a bolt or tied a rod in their life...never ironworked... B: Set policy. A: ...gonna to tell us how we do our job. I just hope they don't go to firemen and they say, "Ok. I don't care if one of the children are dying, you can't go within 200 foot of that fire." Ironworking... Especially on an erection floor of a super structure. That's ironworker territory. Nobody else should be around. Now... It's a hostile environment. Now I don't mean arguing or fighting. I'm talking about the possibility of danger from erection, from crane swinging, load swinging, holes, putting cable and stuff up. It takes a unique aggressive individual to be an ironworker, to work in that hostile environment. You get accustomed to it, all right? And for somebody to walk up from down there and say, "All right. Everybody's got to wear a vest up here." I'm going to get in trouble. On the 40<sup>th</sup> floor, you got to wear a vest and you can't turn your hard hat around.

30:31 [So is it insurance companies that are really driving this and rather than the government or is it both of 'em?] B: Well, I see it...with being out in the field...on jobs...like I mentioned before, that the fatalities have really...because of the safety... But with these man lifts...there's guys screwing their necks up...breaking fingers, breaking hands, breaking arms, working out of a lift that you wouldn't have if you were on open iron. There was a skill...there was a skill back then. And, it separated the men from the boys. I mean, if you weren't comfortable walking steel, you weren't comfortable climbing up a wall, hooking on, and tying rebar or anything like that. You couldn't be an ironworker. There was no place for you. Now...I see that... I mean, we've had some injuries, career ending injuries with guys. They forgot and they broke vertebrae in their neck and everything. It has taken a lot of the skill out of our trade. And yes, has it has cut down on fatalities. Yes. There are always are... For me personally, we just had a fatality in February, at the Shrine Tower. It fell and one of our guys got caught underneath. Accidents are accidents...and I believe in that. If there's, you know... Can you count down on accidents? Yes you can cut down on the accidents. But there's always...you know. They always say, zero...? You know what? God bless 'em if they can see that. I've been around 33 years and Al's been around longer than me. Things happen. It happens fast. It can happen really, really fast. A: Nobody gets hurt. Very few people have ever been hurt, injured maimed or killed when a catastrophic happening. Somebody does something stupid, okay? And you can't train against stupid. B: You're right, Al. It's 100% right. A: It's...look... B: I mean, we used to work... I



used to be more comfortable... To this day, I see people putting cable up and I see people working out of these lifts and... On a skyway project, this was about 10 years ago... A contractor had floats. You worked off a float. You'd tie a float... The runners would go out 300 feet in one of them snorkels... B: Oh my God. A: I would feel a heck of a...more comfortable working on a float 300 feet up in the air. [Yeah.] Then every time you moved, it would bob up and down. I mean... And it took some of the skill away. The younger guys, and we don't teach it, know more because no one uses floats but Al, you know... A: I know. B: Floats was the #1 tools and then they came out with some angel wings which was similar, but was already made up. And now they use snorkel or man lifts. A: In lower buildings. I mean, you build the Sears, you're not going to be working off snorkels, right? You're going to be ironworkin'... So... B: We used to use needle beams and plank. Doing the road work. Sitting on the roads, bridges. You don't see that no more. A: Sears... I worked on Sears from 28 to 104. And American Bridge had a 25-man plank gang. They planked the erection floors and now they're putting in the decking in, right? And they come out. But they...I mean, that was three inch plank. Some of it was 40 foot long. LAUGHTER. Guys pick them up, carry them, they plank the floors, they come and erect it. Then they got to take the plank out and send it up to the next one. You don't see planking any more. Which is probably good. B: Everything's changed though. We've gone through. Al's been through changes. I've been through changes as a business agent, as an ironworker. Lots of the changes are good. Some of the changes aren't.

35:16 A: I went into a rampage but a lot of the safety that come out has been beneficial. It's the other parts that they...I feel like they went way beyond. Like I said, it's cut down on...a lot of catastrophic things. B: Your connectors are probably your elite... They're the best physical shape. They're more comfortable running on iron like monkeys on a tree limb than being tied off. They have a better chance of falling trying to tie off... I mean, safety regulations, than if they were on their own. Al knows that. A: Like I said, 15-30 foot. They agreed with...the whole committee agreed connectors have to be free to move. [Yeah.] B: Yeah, so... The feeling that I, Me and Al agree. Safety is great and whenever, but sometimes safety kills. That's the way I look at it. In that formula, you're killing people on safety but over and above. A: Six foot tie rule... I'm trying to think of a percentage. I'll go low... 60% of tie offs at 6 foot is eye wash. The damn lanyards? Use six foot long. Ok? You're tied off here and you fall, it's eye wash but it means, hey... If its 100% tie off, then you better do it. It's... You can't even go on a ladder. GIGGLE You'd probably get fined by a general contractor working around your house if they had those rules. I know a step ladder, you can't... B: Don't stand on the top of the step. If done it. I just did it this weekend. LAUGHTER A: I'm a safety guy. With those hips, don't you be kind, don't you be going on no damn ladder. B: I know... A: Give me a pen, I've got to sight 'em [for safety violation]... LAUGHTER

37:43 [So what about fun on the job? Do you guys still have as much fun as they used to...? These old guys all said they loved their jobs. Do the younger guys still love their jobs too?] B: I had fun. Yeah. And I know Al had fun because you work with the same people most of the

time and I was with the same guys. Some jobs had fun and some jobs are real serious, from me going on jobs. But it was a ball. It was something... You'd pick on somebody all day and everybody... It would be fun. It would make the day go by. [Did you guys play jokes on each other at all?] B: Yes. A: Well, we bring new apprentices in. First orientation class, I tell 'em... If you're sensitive, you've pick the wrong trade. I'm telling you, ironworkers are a true brotherhood, but among themselves, don't tell them anything about your personal life, anything that bothers you because they will beat you to death with it. They all come in... I says, "You're all going to end up with some nickname that you're not particularly going to like because you did something." I says, "But push comes to shove, they've got your back on anything. But don't..." And that's what was fun. All the time. First of all, ironworkin' is the only trade that has worker in its name. If you don't want to work hard for a living, become an electrician. Ok? I mean, think about it. What trade other than us has worker in its name? There are no easy jobs. I'm giving you my spiel. B: Well, we had fun. A: Always did. B: We'd kid each other and if you showed you were thin skinned, that was the biggest mistake you ever made in your life. If you let them think it was bothering you... I recently got a call about six months ago. I had a guy call me and said that the foreman yelled at him. LAUGHTER And I laughed. I laughed and I told him about it and he laughed. I mean... You get yelled at a lot but that's how you become a good ironworker. Because if you did something wrong, they would scream at you. And if they screamed at you, you won't do it again because they embarrassed you. But if you tell somebody, "Don't do that again," he's gonna do it again. And that's how was broke in and Al was broke in with some Irish guys. Some Irish guys, they would beat you to death. I mean...and Al knows that and I know that. A: My old gang, the crew used to work for me years ago when I was still at 500 West Monroe . I had a grown man, 45 years old, come up to me literally with tears in his eyes, saying, "Al, you gotta tell these guys to lay off of me." I says, "What? I'm the boss. They do the same thing to me. You just have to get it back to them. You can't let it bother you." Ah, they used to beat it into you, you gotta give it back. And that's when it was fun.

41:20 [Did you ever play tricks on each other besides the verbal games and harassment?] B: We'd hide tools and stuff like that. A: Put chalk in their gloves. LAUGHTER I walked around one time with water cups like this, stuck to the top of my hard hat. B: Yeah, he didn't know it was happening. A: No, they snuck up behind me and I walked around for about 15 minutes with those cups. Somebody looked at me and said, "Al, look at your hat." And whoosh... Yeah, that's... B: The guys are more serious now. I mean, I feel it when I see. I go up and I start teasing them, and they look at me, do you know what I mean? I got a nephew and he'd come out of a trailer with a cup of coffee. I said, "Just because you're related to the business agent, you don't need to have another cup of coffee." Well, I got the dirtiest look and I was just teasing him. And he told me... A: Which one was this? B: Lucas. A: Oh...Luke... I threw shots at him all the time... B: And he says, "Uncle Beav... You embarrassed me in front of everybody." And it wasn't...it was just to have fun. But...so...

42:43 A: I decided...I was going to tell you before this coordinator, it was getting to the point where it wasn't that much fun anymore. I remember I had some carpenters... I was doing a little 9-story hotel. They started in the hole and they're all young and they can't frame nothing and my second day, I went ballistic on them. "Did Stanley Garage have a lay off? Where the hell did you guys come from?" And I was raring up on them... "You want me to do it myself?" And the kid looks at me and says, "Al, I think you need a hug." LAUGHTER I laughed. "What did you just say to me?" "Yeah, let's have a group hug this morning." Get... LAUGHTER B: I can see some of them guys saying that. A: Oh, they were all Bible thumpers from some church. I don't know. LAUGHTER B: Was it Davillas? A: No, they were a framing outfit for a little while. Chicago something. Not Chicago Deck or anything. They didn't have a clue. But that guy looked at me, "I think you need a hug."

44:02 [Is your work force getting more diverse like the city itself? I mean, do you get more Hispanic guys coming through the apprenticeship or African American guys coming in? Is it still predominantly...?] B: The apprenticeship is, what, about 30-35% African [American]. It's been like that... There might be... A: We make an effort to maintain diversity. Hmm... We had...I don't know, 5 or 6 years ago or so, we had a run...9 years ago, we had a big influx of...a lot of Hispanics came. They were good, but we've always maintained diversity with African Americans. We tried with women but... It takes a very unique man to be an ironworker. It takes way beyond for a woman to be an ironworker. I've had women asked me, "Well, what do women ironworkers do?" I says, "We don't have none. All we have is ironworkers. We don't consider them women, men or nothing. They're ironworkers." You can't ironwork, there isn't a job specifically for a woman ironworker. Now, we got some that can really do the job. B: And they're not fragile. A lot of the women we get are fragile and they ended up...five, maybe six years...and it's just too much for them. A: It is. B: And then we got some that are great. It's just... But we've got some men too, that work 5 or 6 years and it's too much work. A: But percentage wise, I always get gigged by the government because I don't have...the percentage or projected amount that I'm supposed to have. And I tell 'em, "What do we have...2800, 2068 people apply and I think... [To the apprenticeship program?] Yeah, the last time I gave a test, 35 women applied. [Yeah, that's low.] And I've been in meetings with all the concerned groups, the reverends...and I actually had women get up and say, "I don't want to be an ironworker." I mean, it's a very demanding job. It's...like a linebacker. B: And the laborers, like to put the women on the flags and stuff like that. Electrician, it's a little less strenuous job. You know... But ironworking, if you tying rebar and you're with #11, just because you're a woman and an ironworker, like Al said, you pick that #11 bar up just like a male would have to do it. There is no leeway.

47:10 A: I'm going to get in trouble here again but... That stuff about women only being flagged for laborers... If there is an easy job in construction, especially when it comes to ironworking, it's extremely difficult to make a pension, age pension in ironworking. It's a very physically demanding job that's very difficult to work until your 62 years old, to draw a pension.

And if there is a lighter duty job, that's the person that's gotta get it... the one that's put 30 years in, trying to get to his pension. Not... B: I agree. A: ...somebody that... "because you've got to give me that job." Uh uh. I mean, we're union. We have to insure that legitimate people that are getting older and it's a physically demanding job, they've paid their dues. They are the ones that should get those lighter work.

48:23 [Do you have any American Indian students?] A: Yes. The one that came in...that actually went through the American Indian Program. Murray is his name. Heck, his father is a Local #1 ironworker, but he went through the Indian program. B: Paul went through the same thing. Didn't Paul? A: Yeah, he might have. Yeah. [Yeah, I heard he was a guy that went through the...] Ross. [Yeah.] B: Jim Stanley? A: Yeah. Oh, the kid. [His relatives are from where I grew up. I grew up in Northern Wisconsin and his family is from that area.]

49:00 A: You gotta do something about that grey hair. LAUGHTER [Yeah, I know. Shouldn't we though? That's what my wife says. That's what my wife said this morning. Well, it's getting thinner, I can tell you. I don't know about yours.] A: My wife says, "Can't you dye your hair? I don't like to be married to an old man." [That's pretty good. That's a helluv an answer. I can't see the back side of it, you know?] A: How old was you when you started going grey? [About 17-18 years old.] A: 16 years old I started getting grey hair. It's genetic. [I've got two sisters who are completely white. I have one brother, though, and he's got nothing. Head full of hair and still brown.] Older or younger? [He's younger, but he's not gonna... He's definitely...] They used up all the genes on you. LAUGHTER [Yeah, I think so.]

49:46 [One more question here...and then if you guys want to chat about anything, we'll just leave it on the tape here. But I wanted to ask you guys about the labor movement today and, you know, obviously it's not in great shape. I guess the ironworkers are doing ok but the movement as a whole is having its problems. But I mean, what do you see in the future? What do you think it's got to do to try to, you know, get more workers involved or maybe help them out?] B: They need to get on board... The Republicans need to get on board with Obama. People, middle class people like ironworkers and all the building trades in Chicago, they spend money. When they spend money, stores make money. When stores make money, they hire people. If they start with the bridges and stuff that they want to do and the infrastructure, you're going to see a lot more work, especially in the bigger cities. Because there are just so many bridges here in Illinois and in our district, in Local 1's jurisdiction, they're shot. And if you got to New York, I personally haven't been in New York, but I know in New York, every other street, the bridge is down because they let the infrastructure go. And that's... And we got Bascule Bridges. Many areas don't have Bascule Bridges. We have Bascule Bridges all over the city of Chicago and they are big jobs and they need to be fixed. Where me and Al live, we used to live, there are Baskill Bridges there and I mean... It's just...it's terrible. They don't maintain them. It might take them 30 minutes to close bridge once it's open because they're not lined up right. But we need the Republicans to get on board with this thing with Obama so we can put the American people

back to work. [What about you Al, what do you think the movement needs to do?] A: We need positive information about unions. When was the last time nationally newspaper... When was the last time you heard anything positive about a union? [I can't remember.] Okay. Now, and that's the problem unions have is if the people being want to join the union did not grow up in a union environment. Their education has been all the negative things said about unions. From corrupt officials now to bargaining, alright? Now...you always got problems with officials, just like Enron, just like banks, just like Wall Street, okay? I only seen it once, when the World Trade Center went down. There was an interview with a fireman and an ironworker about the tragedy. The ironworker was there as a volunteer and they gave a statement. He turned to walk away, he looked back at the thing, and he says, "See President Bush, unions aren't so bad after all." One time they showed it. The nation's gotta realize that everybody that rushed to the World Trade Center, everybody, was union. It was the union brotherhood that went there. It wasn't Wall Street. It wasn't the businesses around there. It wasn't the banks. The unions went out and commandeered buses to take their people there. Not to get paid or nothing, to help. The firemen are union. The ironworkers are union. All them people... It was union people that rushed to try to do something. Everybody else stood back and watched. That is an absolute positive message of us, the rank and file, what we are. Stop picking out only the negative things. Think about the middle class that have a good life from it. You deserve a legitimate wage. I'll start sounding like a Baptist preacher here in a minute. I think we need more positive news coverage of unions. They talk about all the volunteers. Why couldn't they say, "Everybody there was union." Why couldn't they say that? Oh my God because somebody's controlling them. Ahhh... Sorry... I go into rampages some time.

[Any other thing you guys want to say? The lights on...you can talk about whatever it is you...]  
B: I want to thank you for taking your time to interview my co-worker Al and myself.

A: One more thing about the unions. [All right.] I keep talking about professionalism. One of the reasons Chicago has maintained a big market share. We're the last bastion, the last fortress in the country of controlled union tradesmen. But we supply the product. There's no union contractor that minds paying the price if he gets the product. That's a fact. In Chicago, believe it or not, our contractors like this union environment. You know why? They all bid our package. They all bid our wage. If they start closing their doors, what replaces them, they can't compete. So they would prefer it to stay union, if they're signatory to us, because they want to use that wage package as their bid package. So as long as we supply a professional product to them, we're viable. That's one of the reasons we're the last ones there. All right, I'll shut up now.

[Thanks so much. I really appreciate it. It's been great to talk to both of you]

END: 56:39

