

Ironworkers Documentation Project

**AUDIO LOG FORM**

Interviewer's recording no(s): BH IW 1 [Truty]

**Contact:** Gerald "Jerry" Truty

**Interviewer:** Clark "Bucky" Halker

**Interview:** Jerry Truty

Date: October 19, 2011

Place: IWU Local #63 headquarters, 2525 W. Lexington, Broadview, IL.

Other people present:

Background noise: The Local IWU 63 headquarters can be a bit noisy and this can be heard in the background. It's an industrial building for the most part, so the cooling and heating system is a regular problem. Occasionally, the building even generates a line noise that is impossible to keep off the recording. Sometimes you can also hear people in the office section talking and laughing or somebody will walk into the room.

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:**

Retired ironworker Jerry Truty describes his background, entering ironworking, important sites he worked on, working in other states, other jobs, jokes, the labor movement, and the current state of affairs.

**Audio Interview Contents**

Counter

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Topic

[It's great to be here. Please give me your name first.] Jerry Truty. [How do you spell your last name, Jerry?] T-r-u-t-y. [And tell me the date of your birth.] I was born September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1942. [And in Chicago?] In Chicago. [What neighborhood did you grow up in?] That neighborhood was...a...ahh...a Division and Western area. St. Mary of Nazareth Hospital. [Did you go to school there?] I did. I lived in that area that Zone was called...Zone 22. And I went to St. Helen's grammar school. That was on Augusta and Oakley. [And was that an Italian? Your

name's Italian, right?] It was Polish. Polish. I'm Polish. [You're Polish? See, I thought you were Italian.] Definitely. 100% Polish. [I'm glad that you told me that. That's a Polish neighborhood.] That neighborhood was Polish at the time. Very Polish. As a matter of fact, the language I had to take in 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> grade was Polish. I had to take Polish in those days... in grade school. From that neighborhood, we moved on to Milwaukee, Ogdan, and Chicago we had a tavern there. My Grandfather died. My Father took the tavern over for a few years. And I went to St. John Cantius which is now the River North neighborhood. Also I had Polish at that school. It was a Polish neighborhood as well. [Yeah. And did you go to high school at...?] No. Then we moved northwest to the Belmont-Austin area. And I went to St. Ferdinand Grammar School and from there I went to St. Patrick's High School, which is on Belmont and Austin. And...then...after a year at St. Pat's, I went to Steinmetz High School, and graduated from Steinmetz. [And did you...ahh.. Did you join the service, did you do other work...? How did you end up being an ironworker once you left the path from high school?] After high school, I went to join... My Father was a post man, mailman and he worked at the Post Office in the Dunning Station, at the Dunning Station on Irving and Narragansett And after high school, I also became a post man. My uncle worked at the main Post Office and I got in through him and...got transferred out to the Dunning Station so I worked at the same Post Office with my Father. And from there, I was a mailman about a year and I joined the service. I joined the Air Force, the United States Air Force. And I had an aptitude for mechanics and I became a jet engine mechanic. I...jet air craft mechanic, I should say. I went to San Antonio for basic training and then Amarillo, Texas for air craft mechanics' training. After that, we got shipped out to France. So I was in France for...four months. De Gaulle, of course, kicked us out of France then. We worked on F84 jet fighters and we had 4 bases in France. And all four of those combined into...were combined in the 366 tech fighter wing. We were shipped to New Mexico. While we were in New Mexico, the second or third year, we had the oldest jet fighter in the air craft inventory and we got the newest jet fighter in the air craft inventory, which was the F4C phantom jet. And I was the crew chief on the phantom jet and we got combat ready in one year's time, which was phenomenal in those days. We shipped out to Vietnam. So all four of our squadrons went to Vietnam. And I was at DaNang and I served my time until I got out there in 1966. Came back to Chicago and went right back into my job at the Post Office. I was married on military leave.

4:16 [How long were you...in the military? Was that two or four years...] Four years I was in the service, yeah. And my uncle called up one day and says, "Hey, they're giving a test for apprentices. Would you like to be an ironworker?" And I says, "Well, I don't know." He says, "You know what I do, an ironworker." And I said, "Yeah, I'll take the test." I took the test. I did very well. And... I was still at the Post Office when Ray Robertson called up and says, "You're going to start next week at I90 North Michigan." I says, "Ok." He says, "You'll be working curtain wall over there." I called up my Mom and says, "Mom. I quit the Post Office." She says, "What are you doing?" I says, "I got a job with the ironworkers." I says, "It pays a little more and, I don't know, I guess I'll be hanging curtains." She says, "What?!?" I says, "I don't know. They told me curtain wall. I assume it's some kind of show or something. I don't know." So I quit the Post Office and I went to the job. Came on there and... It's the John Hancock Center. [Wow. I was going to ask...] I didn't even know. And it's only six stories out of the ground. And of course it was a big wide base because the Hancock is shaped that way. I

get up there and I'm on the second floor, that's where we had our shanties and everything. That's where they were starting the wall, on the second floor. And I got into it and...ahh...Mike Bentley, who was my boss at the time. He says, "Yeah, you'll be working with Jerry Rolakowski over there. You just hand him whatever he needs, you know? All the tools you needed in those days was a stick rule, a ball peen hammer, and a pencil. That was your tool issue.

6:05 So I started working with Jerry and he's explaining to me, oh, what this is all about. And I'm just mesmerized. And I says, "How tall is this going to be?" He goes, "Haven't you heard?" I says, "I don't know nothing. You know... I'm a mailman." And he says, "It's going to be 100 stories tall. The tallest building in the world." I says, "You're kidding me." And we're only two floors off the ground. I didn't think nothing of it. I'm working on the edge with him. As it turns out, I worked at the Hancock for two years, on every facet of that building. I worked on the outside skin...on the interior...the...oh, the trim work on the inside. I even worked on the escalators and the revolving doors at the end. I was on that job for two years. So as my apprenticeship went along, I learned quite a bit of our trade because I worked on so many different facets. I caulked on the outside, on the stages. But my main... The pride of my job was working with this gang. Tommy Roback's crew. We were on top. We worked on the scale. We did all the crane jumping. We had two cranes there. And we had a Chicago boom, which was on the south side of the building. [What's a Chicago boom?] A Chicago boom is...a...ahh...a derrick boom that, I have a picture of it here. This one. This is the one we're using. But anyway, it would be anchored at its base on the side of the building. And it had guide cables, allowing you to boom down and up and swing left and right. Here it is. This is a Chicago boom. As you're looking down, it's all the way down right now and it's picking a load. And when you bring the load into the building, when you pull it up, this boom will go up and the load will come in... And then you'll have two guys. One guy on one line and one guy on the other line to pull the boom into the building. So the load comes into the building and unloads your...material. [Now is that... Is it called a Chicago boom because they kind of came up with the original idea?] I think so. I believe that's what they told me. [Now, when you're doing the curtain wall... Do you use a boom for that? You keep a wall away from the building and bring it in closer or is it a different kind of... How you bring the curtain up to like the tenth floor?] All the material is boxed for the, all the aluminum skin...

8:35 I don't even know if I... Oh yeah, here. All these... All these panels would come in a box. All these moyens would come in a box. All these...ahh...ahh...these little frames and all the frames for the glass would all come in boxes. So you had a gang called the raising gang. That is all they would do all day long. Bring materials. Bring supplies up. All day long. It never stops. The trucks come in, one truck after another, after another. All the time. And it's always bringing materials in there so the guys that would be putting the wall up would be breaking open this stuff. And you'd have another crew that would be breaking open boxes and stacking it. So they'd be getting rid of the wood, you know? [Yeah.] And then the other crew would start installing it. [Did they do more than one shift a day on that building? Did they get it done while working a couple of shifts...or...?] Well, sometimes they would work some overtime. We had as many as 110 guys at one time. Now you gotta understand that this is 1968. This was one of

the first times that our local ever went out on strike. While we were... We had a strike, this job was keeping a lot of guys working. They were bringing in guys just to keep them working. So the strike would keep going on. And one time... I think at the very peak, and Roy Williams would know that exactly. I think there was 110-115 guys on the job, working for our company, which was called HH Robertson. It started out as Couples and then...midstream somewhere, HH Robertson bought them out. So... It was a lot of guys working...110 guys.

10:23 [Did it take you a while to get used to the...I mean... You started on the second floor and you obviously went up to the very top. Did the heights bother you at all when you first started?] No. At that time I loved it then. And some of the guys I worked with, you know, which were seasoned guys. Some of these Al Simcox and Frenchie and Stan Hamm and Tommy Robeck. These guys... We were all young and we just wanted to work. We... I always wanted to work on like the structural guys on the structural steel. That's what we pride ourselves. We can do anything they can do. And, of course, with the jumping on the boom, we did. We were always on a structure. And...ah... No... I got used to it all the time and then I would always work with these guys who were experienced and it passed on to me and we were always going... We had a great camaraderie with this crew. We just... We just enjoyed it. We loved it. [So were you glad, pretty soon, after you got the job, were you glad you left the Post Office?] Yeah, because then I know where my life was headed and what I was going to do.

11:35 [So you were apprenticing on the job. Was it like an indentured apprenticeship you had...or... ?] Well, not indentured but because... The fortunate thing... There was one particular time, my partner and I... They couldn't get enough guys to go on the outside of the building to do the caulking because...ah...the caulking was done on stages. This is the how stages, again...the Cadillac. They had these stages and you'd jump out there and you'd caulk with Biocal [?]. This Biocal would come to the job frozen. They were dry iced frozen, solid as a rock. And you'd take it out on to the stage, a box of it was frozen, Biocal. And you put it into this heat box that you have there to warm it up. Then you'd put it into an electric caulk gun, I mean an air pressured caulk gun, and you'd have to caulk the building tight, you know? So to do this... They couldn't get enough guys to go out and none of the guys wanted to work on the outside of the building. One reason was that the structural guys were still working up above and a lot of stuff was being dropped. It was being dropped so much that we had... I don't have a picture of it but we had put up what was called a protective scaffolding. And this scaffolding would have a, on the side of the building, what we called a knee brace. It was a beam that went out like that. A little 4 inch beam and a beam that came down like this and a beam that came down like this. And made a frame out of it and it had a pipe welded to it. Ahh... Not a pipe but a plate, a square plate with a hole in it. And on the column, there would be another plate and we'd stick a pipe through the plate with a hole all the way across the column to support... And then this would be in the middle and it would sit up against, say, this is the column here. Now... You'd have this thing and then we'd put...on every column, which was 20 feet. Then we'd put a bar joist. One bar joyce in the back, one bar joyce in the front. And then deck it. And that would keep, you know, all the bolts and nuts and whatever welding rods, whatever that they were dropping from the top. This thing would...our guys that are working in the crux in the baskets and other stages caulking, they would be protected. So our gang, we did that. And that

was...on the...21<sup>st</sup> floor we put this in. And we had to jump it every ten floors. What we had there was another beam sticking out of the building with a ceiling jack that you would keep the back end secured and then you'd have a little platform that you'd put a wench with cable going out to the end. There was a shiv at the end of the beam and we'd hook it up to this here. There would be a little eye here and then we'd hook up the cables. We'd put a shackle in there and we'd put the... And we'd raise that whole thing with all the decking and... Everybody... We'd have... That would be a Saturday job. You would want to do it with the least amount of guys on the job. Or...well not at night but on Saturdays. And we'd get how many columns there was...14 columns...whatever it was, on whatever side of the building because it went all the way around. And we'd have all the guys together. Everybody would sit there. And we'd have one guy, sitting on... In the wench, there was a drill... We'd have a ¾ inch drill and it would turn that wench... And you'd have another guy standing in front, making sure that that cable would wind perfect because if you had the cable jumping and stuff, it would get tangled up and you would go nowhere. So all nine guys or ten guys or how many guys we had there, we all had to be in synch. When Tommy would say, "Go up." Everybody would hit the drill and Tommy would watch to make sure that one drill didn't go faster than another. And the other guy would be there with a 2 by 4, making sure that that cable wound up exactly up next to the next turn. You know, all tight. Because when it came to the end, it couldn't jump. Because if it jumped, the whole thing would jump. So you didn't want that. So we would raise that thing and that's our gang. We'd get guys from downstairs to help us on that because we didn't have enough guys. And ahh...

16:17 [What else did you do like the safety back in those days?] You know, in those days... I'll tell you what, Bucky. In those days... I've got a cute story for you. In those days, we weren't wearing belts and stuff. We were working on the edge without belts. And...it came to the city's attention. And they had this guy. We called him "Shut 'em down Schultz." A tough old guy. Charlie Schultz. [Somebody else...] You heard about him? [Yeah.] Shut 'em Down Schultz. He was a son-of-a-b... He'd come on the job and he'd demand and saw that we were being...you know... Belts were not unheard of but very rare. And he came in there and he was ready to shut that job down. And everybody had couples...would say, "Oh God, we can't do that." So they went out and were buying belts like crazy. I mean, we had a shipment of belts coming in. And everybody's looking... "I ain't wearing this shit! This is going to... I'll trip over it..." And everybody was just not receiving it well. But then they finally got in...realized that this job was going to shut down if they didn't comply. They started wearing them. And I started wearing one...giggle...and in those days, they didn't have the lanyards with the clips on and all that. We used to tie bowlines. Tie off where you'd have your belt and you tie off like that. So... One day, we're up... I'm up there with this guy, Al Simcox, and this here boom... This is our horizontal boom. We brought that up there with the Chicago boom. The first jump was up to the 20...ahh... We jumped to the 21<sup>st</sup> floor. The first jump we made, we went from 21 to 31...ahh...37...and ahh... Oh, the last... That's what it was. The last jump we made was to the 80-something story. So I'm there with Al Simcox and he's going to weld on the column the connecting plate for this boom. How you connect... You put a big huge pin in there, a big five inch pin. And we're welding it and... It was up in the structure and the structural guys had their deck decked off with planks. They called it a planked off deck, while they're hanging iron two stories up. So...ahh...and they would double deck it. Two stories would be a deck and two

stories below would be a deck. So that way they can always jump and always have a deck that would never be open all the way down. And we got up there on the second deck and we had to go to the 81<sup>st</sup> story. That was decked off on the 80<sup>th</sup>. So we put a plank up to the parameter beam, to the outside beam there. Put a plank up there. We would shimmy up that plank, walk the iron out to the column and another guy would go up on top and lower the materials on on a hand line. We'd get our, me and Al Simcox, would clamp it down. And then he'd start welding it in solid. Well, I was his punk. I had to hand him rods. "Tie off," he says. "Awe, f\*ck. We gotta tie off?" "Yeah, tie off." So I'm tied off and I was sitting there and he's welding. He's using up the rod and I'm getting bored. He's welding and welding... And finally he says, "Get me some more rod!" I jump up right away. "You know you're a punk. You gotta snap to all the time." I jump up, walking down the iron, forgetting I'm tied off, get on the plank that goes down. I start running down the plank. The belt cinches up, you know, and catches me. I'm swinging out. All I can see is plank. I'm about this far off the deck. I'm hanging off the parameter beam on my...and all I can see is deck and Michigan Avenue, 80 floors down. I'm like a pendulum. Ahhhhhh! I'm hanging there...and I swung in and out so many times now, I'm hanging there. I can't get my feet on there because I'm just not far enough down. Now I'm screaming to my other partner. "'Untie me – untie me!" He says, "I can't. You've got the weight on there." "Well cut the f\*ckin' thing!" So he cuts it and I fall down. A bunch of structural guys are standing there watching me. "Look at this tinkerbell mother f\*cker for Christ sake." LAUGHTER They stood there and they were laughing their asses off. So my name was Tinkerbell there for a little while.

20:50 And ahh...and then...we jumped that boom. That was the night... We put this on the top of the building. As you can see, we built this here thing...put this...ahh...guide tower to keep all the guide cables because that boom had all the guide cables holding it. It was a horizontal boom with a trolley on it. We put that one on. That day, we worked 36 hours straight, raising that boom because we brought it from the west side of the building, on the 81<sup>st</sup> floor, to the top – the 100<sup>th</sup> floor – on the south side of the building. And we used American Bridges crane to bring this whole thing over on that side, one thing. But we had to get everything prepared. [36 hours...] 36 hours straight we worked. Yeah. [So how did they pay you on that? How do you passed your 8 hours – you're obviously going to get over time. ] We got double time. [Was it the same, all the way through?] Oh...we got double time all the way through it till the next starting time at 8 o'clock. And worked straight time through that day and then into double time again. [Wow.] No. As a matter of fact, I take that back. I think that we got double the whole 36 hours. It was a Saturday. We worked on Saturday through Sunday. But...ahh... We had one guy...

22:14 Roy Williams had to go somewhere. He was a steward or assistant steward at the time. He couldn't make it, he had to do something. I forgot what. And so he calls Leo Quinn, one of our characters of our local...that you are going to be the steward on this thing for that night. Leo said that...ah...he was the only guy in the local to get three checks. There was pay day for him, a Friday. I guess it was pay day and he got paid that double time. And then they laid him off. So he got three checks that day. But anyway.

22:52 We got that thing in there and that was quite an exciting thing, to be on top of the building. I was getting coffee, I was an apprentice at the time so I had to get the coffee. And here's what it looked like. That's the Lake Point Tower sticking up there. Now, as you can see,

we were all up there in our bare shirts, I mean, bare skin. [So it was warm and cold.] It was warm up there. I go down stairs to get coffee. It was snowing. It was snowing under there. Flurries. And I froze my ass off and brought the coffee back up. And it was amazing. But ahh...yeah. Below it was snowing. It was unbelievable.

23:44 [So after that, what year did that get done?] '68. Then '69 it was finished. [It was kind of a building to start on. I mean, after that, did everything did everything seem like a letdown for a while or was that. I mean, that's a pretty historic building.] By then, I had been into it so much and I just... I wanna be an ironworker and I just love to work and I knew this was for me. After this job was over, like I said, after this and this whole crew disbanded, and a lot of them went into... Some guys left but most of them went into the crews below that were still putting up skin, you know. Still putting up the curtain wall. And so that's what I did. I got into the caulking gang because that paid scale. Me and Tully said "Shit, that's great. I want to get scale." So my partner and I, Jimmy Tully, were working on the stage for this Bobby Alvarez, his name is. And he was the caulking foreman. So he shows us the ropes on how to start doing this caulking like I told you. So we're on the stage. We're caulking all the joints that we're supposed to. And our stage is on the last bay of the building so one side is like this. The other side we're hooked in with our stage into the beam that's on the outside of the columns. We got these sky climbers on cables were run up and that was guiding us up. But the other side, because the building goes like this, you're coming up. The stage wasn't long enough so we got a big 2 by 4 to lay on on that stage. So we're not digging into the building with the stage going into the building. The other end, we tied off with wire on the bottom of the stage with a huge 20 foot 2 by 4. It would rest on that end column that goes like this. As you're going up and going up, of course the stage is getting closer to that end... And all that 2 by 4 is hanging out there. We're caulking, me and Jim are caulking. It's a beautiful day. But it's windy. And as we're going up, the winds... The winds that are up there are all different ways. Winds are constantly blowing on the top, different directions. You may be on the, let's say, the 40<sup>th</sup> floor and the winds going south. When you get up to the 50<sup>th</sup> floor, they might be going north. You know? And the wind is just blowing all over the place. So as we're going up, the wind comes up and blows our stage nearly perpendicular to the building, you know? We're caulking and all of a sudden...Whoa...there's a big deal, you know... I was looking at Jim, "The building's going over!" We thought the building was falling...because we're sitting on the stage and oh my God... And he came back in. Wham... Slams into the building and he says, "Oh shit." Now...as we're going down, we're not paying attention... We're worried about this and not paying attention. The cable used to wind up on the stage ran up...wind up and we had a little 55 gallon drum cut off to about six inches so the cable would roll in real nice. And now...it gets jammed into the sky climber itself. We can't go up. We can't go down. It's jammed tight. The building is all glazed. It would be an open floor every three floors. Or every four floors. Anyway, we're in between. We don't know what to do. "Jim, what do we do?" "I don't know. We're going to have to break a window to get in." "F\*ck you. I'm not breaking a window! We're on scale! You wanna loose scale for breaking a window?" I says, "Oh, man...what do we do?" He says, "Look. The next open window is up one floor, but down two floors...is another open window." "Yeah." He says, "We'll slide down..." And we used to have ropes, 3/4 inch rope that was our safety line, independent of every... We just hang there. "Slide down the safety line and go into the building." [Just with your bare hands...] Yeah, that makes sense. Ok. "But wait a minute, Jim. What if I slip?" He says, "Your belt. Give me your belt." He says, "We'll tie you off." Ok. We tie it off... And at that time, we...as we got farther into the

job, they got lanyards now. He clips off the lanyards and I start sliding down the rope. I get down one floor. I'm out... I'm tight. I says, "Jim..." I'm hanging there on the rope. I got my hands and my feet around the rope. "Jim, what do I do now? The lanyards stretched out!" "Awe, Jesus Christ. If I let it go, I'll drop it and it might hit you in the hand or the head or something. I tell you what, I'm taking my lanyards and put it in there and tie it off. You can go." Ok. He puts his lanyards in there and I slide down another floor. Still not close enough to the building. I said, "No luck yet." He says, "Oh shit. I can't throw out the noose now." He says, "You've got all the Langiors. I'll tie you up and you'll go..." "Oh Christ," I says. "I'll tell ya what. The belt is up here on me. Everything is all stretched out. I'm hanging there. I says, "I'll undo my belt and I'll slide down..." I undo my belt...you know... let it go, slide down another half a floor. Go in... We're home safe. Now Jim jumps on. And he just says, "F\*ck that." And he slides down and he pulls in. So we go in and tell Bobby what we did, the whole story. We tell him... "You carzy f\*ckers... Why didn't you break a window? You could have came in no problem. You goofy idiots. You could have hurt..." You know?

29:35 But it turns out that the two years that I was there, it was an extremely safe job. One guy was lost on the job. One guy died on that job... Compared to the First National Bank, which was going up at the same time, where they lost over 15 guys the whole time. We lost one guy and that was way down when it was even 10<sup>th</sup> floors up. One ironworker fell off the iron. But ever since... That was a fabulous safety record. So it was quite a unique job. It was my pride and joy. [Yeah, I can imagine. That was quite a work...] And it was just great. And like I said, I got to work on every aspect of it. Even the revolving doors. I helped put in the escalator siding and all the trim down there. It was unique. It was a great job.

30:28 And after this job, like I said, were you used to it? Yeah, I was used to it. I was anxious to get everything, you know, in the trades. I went to work for Lenny over at the Time/Life Building. And that was also a great job, a lot of fun. A lot of good work and we made a bundle of money there with a lot of overtime. And from there on, I went on to several other jobs. And I was working with Lenny...at...ahh... Chicago Mercantile Exchange on Jackson and Canal. The X building that looks like a little Hancock. [Right.] That was the Mercantile Exchange, when it came from the old digs to that one. [Yeah.] And...ahh... I was a steward over there. Lenny drug up and he went somewhere. Oh he did... ahh...I think he went out to O'Hare Field. So...I wound up taking over that job. And as things went on and progressed, I went on to be the superintendent of Tyler-Happach Glass Company there. It was a good gig to me. I rose up through the ranks there. And luck was with me and I wound up being a superintendent. And then...ahh...I...ahh... From there...ahh...I went to...ahh...another job after that was over. Oh God. I can't remember that one.

32:07 Anyway, I got involved with union politics a little bit and...ahh... I ran for a trustee. I think it was '69 or '70, I believe it was. I didn't get voted in, but I wound up running for a delegate to a convention in '67. And I did win that. I...wound up running for the executive board and I...ahh... [Checks phone] I was on the executive board and this was in 1978 I believe or...79. And ahh... I wound up having some changes in my life and my family life. And my wife and I decided that we wanted to leave Chicago and we moved to New Mexico. And then in 1980, we moved down to New Mexico and I started my own business down there doing rolling doors. It was successful for about three years. I had it for five years and it went under. Then I went back to work. Oh, I got a job at a sewage treatment plant as a mechanical supervisor,



mechanical foreman there. And I worked on that job for 2 years also. And ahh...wound up being the startup engineer over there and put in all the mechanical equipment down at the Albuquerque Sewage Treatment Plant. After that, I went to work for the ironworkers. I had taken a withdraw from Local 63 at that time because I was working on this job and I was destitute at the time. I was near bankruptcy through the business and I hmm...had to work. So I took a non-union job which I was a strong union guy at the time. You know... And I felt a little... Oh boy, I hate to do this, but I had to to support my family. So I took this job and worked as a non-union fitter or whatever you want to call it. A super...foreman for the mechanical end. And they had union ironworkers working at the job. And in New Mexico, union and non-union work on the same job. And I was embarrassed that I was carrying a union card and these guys are on the same job and I'm working non-union. So I felt really horrible about that so I took a withdrawal so I wouldn't, what I would think was dishonoring the card. And ahh... I worked that job and when I was done, I pulled my withdrawal and went back to work with Local 495 in New Mexico. I kept my 63 card but I worked on permit with the 495 guys. I worked on the tallest building in New Mexico. 22 stories. So I did that...and hmm... Then my kids, we raised our kids down there and they wanted to go to college. And my older guy went to Aurora University. So...ahh... I couldn't afford... By that time, all the union jobs were washed up and I was out and I found out at the time, that these guys all carried union cards but they worked non-union whenever they can. It was a matter of survival. They had to make money and it didn't matter if they were union or not. They had them get a job wherever they could. So I was kind of saying...why did I ever take a withdrawal when it didn't make any difference to any of these guys, you know?

36:00 So anyway, I'm on a the tallest building in New Mexico and...I'm working with these guys... It's a whole different thing. It's not like the Chicago unionism. Down there, I guess the bosses, the companies, everything. One day I'm saying, "Who's the steward on the job?" "Well, I don't know..." "I don't know..." Nobody knew. I'm like, "What?" I called the hall and says, I knew the BA [business agent] or whatever. And I says, "Who is the steward on this job?" "Oh yeah, yeah. Tell Martinez to be the steward." Ok. I go back. "Hey, Tony. You gotta be the steward on..." "I'm not going to be no f\*ckin' steward. I'm...no way. You can tell Ray to go f\*ck himself." Ray Ruiz was his name. I go back, "Ray, Martinez won't..." "Ok. Well, tell what's his name...the other guy...Lavato or whatever, he's the steward." "Louie, you're... Ray says you're the steward." "Tell Ray I ain't no f\*ckin' steward. F\*ck you. I ain't bein' the steward." I says, "Ok. " I go...and I says, "Ray, these guys aren't... None of them want to be the steward." "Jerry, do me a favor. You be the steward." I says, "I'm on paper. I'm a permit guy. How can you..." He says, "Do me a favor and do it. Don't worry about it." Ok. I'm a steward. So I go along on the job and one day, we had a night shift and a day shift. One day, the night shift smashes all these guys helmets and they break everything into the gang box and they broke this guy's helmet. And the guy had an expensive helmet. He says... It has a welding shield. And he says, "Oh, wow... What am I going to do? I just paid so much for the last one." I says, "What are you talking about. You give it to the boss and tell them to get you a new one." "Oh, yeah? Good luck with that." I said, "What's with you guys. None of you guys want to be a steward. Why is that?" "Well, the steward is the first one to get laid off." I says, "What?!?" He said, "Yeah, oh yeah." "And what about all your shit?" "Yeah, we buy all our own stuff." I says, "What?" I says, "Wait. Give me that hood." So I go to the boss and I say, "Hey, you gotta buy a new hood for this guy." "F\*ck I do." F\*c k you don't. You gotta buy 'em a new hood." "Who the f\*ck are you?" he says, "I ain't buying shit." I says, "Listen, you guys signed a

contract..." and I had the bylaws with me. I said, "It says right here that you supply all safety equipment and our guys aren't welding without a hood. You better buy one or else we'll just do something about it." He's like, ok. So he buys the hood. And I says, "And by the way, get them gloves too. All these guys have holes in their gloves." So he buys them gloves and he brings in... The guys almost fell to their knees. They couldn't believe it. "How the f\*ck did you do that?" I says, "Don't you guys know the rules? Don't you know to follow the..." "Nobody ever did that before." I was a big hero then. A big hero in the union. I said, "What do you do, buy your own rods too?" hahahahaha . . . So I used to go to the union meetings and I'd get up on the floor and make suggestions. And they accepted me, even though I carried a local 63 book. And...ahh...it was amazing. So anyway, as my kids go to college, I realize that I can't... Now the union jobs are all folded up and now I'm working for my old boss in the sewage treatment plant. He had some other things going and I was pulling up old gas station tanks. You know? They were gas station pumps, putting in fiber glass tanks now. We're taking out the old steel ones so I was doing that all over the state. And now I realize that I'm...and I'm getting paid really poor wages, you know? \$10/hour at the time. And I says, "Oh, man, what am I gonna do." My kid wants to go to Aurora. Well, that's good. They can stay with grandma and grandpa. And they said, "Wait a minute." I come back and I started working in the summers over here because I have one more kid still in high school. So I did that for about three years. [So you went back and forth between here and there, it was like seasonal work?] Right, exactly. I would come back for the winters because...ahh... I wanted to spend time with my kids. My other kid was playing soccer like crazy. And he would stay with my... And then... Oh, he would stay with my grandparents...my parents, his grandparents. So then I told Alice, "We're going to have to move back." I says, "We can't make it down here. It's just not..." With two kids in college, I gotta make some money and work was boomin'. So she says, "Yeah," she agreed. We were tight as a family down there as compared to up here because we all had each other. My kids were into soccer big time. And then my wife... I started being a referee. My wife started playing. I started playing. On weekends, it was just soccer mania all weekend. We'd go to the kids games and they'd come to our games. They'd play year round and we'd play all we could and it was just a soccer family. Unbelievable. No vacations. We'd only go on tournaments. We'd been all over the west, Colorado, California, Arizona. Every Thanksgiving, we'd meet in Pheonix, all over the place. So we decided to make the move back. We come back. My younger kid goes to Southern Illinois University.

41:36 And I started working for MTH, my buddy Joe Harris runs MTH. And...I called him up and he put me on. I worked there for 15 years where I finished up my career there. And...ahh...I did several nice jobs with MTH. The last one of which I am proud of is the Beam. That was quite a job. [Yeah, tell me a little about that job.] The Bean, you know, you've been there. You've seen it. Beautiful. But...underneath the Bean...ahh...are two huge beams. Bucky, I would say they were...I think they were 3 foot, 4 foot 6 or something like that high and maybe 2 feet wide. I forget how many thousands of pounds these beams are that go 35 feet long. And they're underneath that to support that beam. And that's when... Joe was telling us one day... We were in the bar, drinking. He says, "Yeah." Louis Sernie [spelling] who was one of the vice presidents. He says he's got this job...and it's a structure piece...of art. And he says, "It looks like a bean." He saw pictures. He went out to California where they're fabricating it. And he says, "We gonna do it." Wow, that's really unusual. He says, "Yeah, it's really a neat job. So when I get out there..." I say, "Well, what's this big..." I thought it was one piece that we're going to just drop in, weld it up, hot air. He says, "No." And he showed me. We're

putting in these huge beams. I says, "What is this thing?" He says, "It's... You won't believe it," he says. 200 and some odd plates of stainless steel. I says, "What? How are we going to put that together?" He says, "We're going to weld it." I says... [So you worked on the super structure of it...and on the...] We put in that and then... Once them beams were in, we got the base structure. They come out with the beginning pieces, you know? And we had a guy come from California that was a fabricator and he was also an artist by the way. A real nice guy. I forgot his name already, oh boy...and we were pretty close too. But anyway... We started putting this thing together and I was just amazed at this...this big... And of course they're all covered with paper because its stainless steel, all highly polished. You know? So we put it all together...and we started. I got pictures. I got a big picture on my wall to start that thing. We had a little crane that picked up each piece and we started it. Then for some reason, Joe wanted me to run another job. So I left there for a while. Ran another job. But then I would come back on occasion. You know, when it got slow someplace else and I would work there. It was all these plates and I couldn't imagine. We put the thing together... I left when it was half way done with all these plates. And inside, they got all these wires holding it all together. The important thing in putting that thing together is that everything is equally stressed. So what it was, there was going to be no waves or anything. So we put that thing together and there was just a tack on the inside we would put, just to hold it together. And then...ahh...after I left, I found out they were going to have to weld this whole thing. [Wow.] It turns out they welded, but they just put a little button tack every six inches or eight inches. And, ahh, we put the whole thing together and it's all just tacked in. [Just on the inside?] No, it was on the outside. It was actually on the outside. Inside and outside. You had to do it on both sides. [Ok.] And...ahh... The mayor was hot and heavy to have that thing done for INAUDIBLE. [I remember that.] We remember that, yeah. [I do...] In fact, here's a picture. Whew. So he says, "I don't care, we want this thing..." So we couldn't weld it solid. They just left it all tacked up the first year it was on display. If you knew it would have little dots all over it. And of course next year we had to cover it up with year round welding. My brother worked on it, I worked on it, and my cousin Larry worked on it. Our names are on that list.

46:00 [How many people in your family now are in iron?] There's Larry... As a matter of fact, for our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we had that pin party at Navy Pier at the auditorium on the end? [Yeah.] My uncle got his 40<sup>th</sup> year pin that year. [I know his name.] Johnny, you just met him. I got my 35<sup>th</sup>. My brother got his 30<sup>th</sup> and my cousin Larry got his 25<sup>th</sup>. So there are four of us now. [Now you've got a nephew coming on...] He may be coming in... I don't know. We'll see what happens with that. But, yeah... It's been a great career and a great bunch of guys and...ahh...I enjoyed it. It has been the pride of my life. Like I said, in the service I was a jet aircraft mechanic and I thought I was going to be one for the rest of my life when I got into that. And...ahh...of course when I got into this, I knew this is where I was going to stay. I've very proud of being part of building Chicago.

47:04 [What do you like about being an ironworker?] The best part, and I've said that since I was this old, until I say it at my last job... At the end day, when you walk away from whatever you did, you look at your sense of accomplishment. And you see what you've done. When I look at that Hancock, I am extremely proud of it. Anything we've done, we both... My wife just rolls her eyes every time we come downtown. We go out to Navy Pier. I was in charge of the...crystal garden was mine. That was my job. I had 60 guys working there at one time. 63 guys at the height. And that was my baby. And ahh... Every time you look at something like

that, you got a sense of pride that you've put something into the city. And in reality, you are part... Chicago is part of your blood, you know? Your blood is part of Chicago. It's give and take. Made a very good living at it and...and ahh...I'm very proud of what we put into it. And...ahh...my boss, Joe Harris, he just texted me. He said, "I'm waiting." He's at the York Tavern now. [Ok.] We've done some jobs in this city, our company MTH...and did some fantastic work throughout the city. We're very proud of what we did. I always admired Joe because he wasn't afraid to tackle anything, no matter how absurd the job seemed or how far out of a reach it is. We would do it. And we worked at the tallest point to the lowest point, doing anything, anything at all. From the Bean to the Hancock. I mean... We... I don't know if you ever noticed the...hmm...Spiegel Building that was on 335, or it is on 335 and 88. It's now Sara Lee's headquarters. We did that job. It was an amazing, amazing job. It was the most complicated job. We got five different types of curtain wall there. It was just... It was a gazillion parts and it was very difficult. And we're proud of that. We're proud of a lot of things.

49:36 Here's another thing. We did a... years later, after the Hancock. We were doing... See, we're taking out this piece of this mullion. They had leaks in the Hancock so... We're taking out the section of...of a...of a... mullions and behind there, we found out that there wasn't some areas that were caulked properly, so I was all planed out, stripped down, re-caulked and we put these things back in. And we're working on the House Stage which is a Cadillac. It's enormous and it's beautiful to work on because it's real smooth. [Quite a bit of difference from 1968.] Yeah. But this is the house rig. [So you got to work on the Hancock twice?] Yeah. [Wow.] Years later, we came back and I did this repair work with my partner. And then we also did the... This was another one of our pride and joys. We did all that work on top of the...ahh...Chicago Title and Trust Building. [Oh yeah.] And there we are, we're working on this here, on top. [So it was safe to work on the Title?] Yeah, Chicago Title, yeah. And my son was playing soccer for Aurora University so I took these pictures and they used it on their program brochure. [That's great. Oh, that's a good shot.] It's got my Hancock in the background.

51:010 [You talked some about the union. You worked with the union too, and probably saw all the changes.] Yeah. [You probably have some good things to say about the union. Just say a little about that.] Yeah. When I came in, the local was run by a guy named Matt "Moon" Martin. [Yeah, he's in this picture?] Yeah. And he ran this union with an iron... Well... Towards the end, I don't know if you'd call him running the local. There was a woman here called Mrs. Kramer who actually did the hands-on running of the local and...the administrator, in a sense. But when I came in, he was the power house. And...ahh...in 1968, we came through changes. That's when benefits were extremely important. In the old days, Moon used to come up to the podium and say, "Ah, yeah, we got your new contract. I gotcha a quarter for ya." In other words, we got a 25 cent raise. Well, back in '68, that's when things started changing and then the boom in Chicago, well, nation-wide, was just extraordinary. And the union changed because we had the younger guys coming in. They were looking towards better benefits and more retirement security and less of...ahh...corporate...ahh...owner of the companies... Less company involvement in what you're going to do with your money and how you're going to do it. And the unions were getting a change of... We were going through a change. And ahh... I was into the union very much so. I would be one of the rare apprentices that would actually get up on the floor during a meeting and ask either a question or make a statement and stuff like that. And I ran for office. I got into office...ahh...just before we moved to New Mexico for personal

reasons. And...ahh...ahh... helped form the union to what it is today. Today...guys got a nice package now whereas they have the apprenticeship...is there to put money into their survival. The apprenticeship is the most important thing for the unions, to make sure that you have trained product to put out there that is into safety, that'll make the company money and yet keep job security going. And that...just...ahh... A good thing which today I don't understand why the unions are losing all of their market share and all that. Because...I used to get into arguments with my cousins who were always "Yeah, you union guys. You ruin everything..." Well the stigma of the old Chicago type unions isn't what it is today. We've got good hard young working...young kids that are working hard and trying to do the right thing and trying to build, whereas in the old days, there was always... You'd have your slugs...you know, and they were protected. Those are the days of the past. And today, it's a good thing. I was proud to be a part of that. Unfortunately, I didn't stick around here long enough because, like I said, I had personal issues to go through. We had a major change in our lives for 12 years. But...ahh...yes, the unions to me is what makes America. It is what made America. When you look at the history which Richie's [Richard Rowe] has told you so much about, to me its baffling why there isn't more. We should have a stronger base. I mean, you've got my nephew coming in. He would love to be a union man. He's always looking at the union labels on things and always, you know. To me, that's what we need more young kids doing. Corporate America has got too much of a strangle hold on the middle class today and I hate that. And that's why I think the unions are good. And...ahh...

55:30 [Are there things the unions could to improve...?] They are doing. They are doing. They are doing. As a matter of fact, I read in the paper today, Bucky, about McCormick Place unions...are... making changes because they see that they need to get the competition from Orlando and Vegas back to Chicago here. I mean, you can't do it by coming in here and saying, "Ah, union...we're going to do it this way." You're going to say, "I'm union and we're going to help you make money." And to me, that's what the union is basically for. They want to protect the rights of the workers and make sure they got a fair wage and a good living, but yet make that company money. I always stood proud and Joe Harris along with it... We did a job. We made the company some money...and we made ourselves a good living. So to me, that's what union is all about. The middle class is what made this country great and the unions are part of the middle class. That's what keeps us strong. It's a different thing today. It's hard to understand. I don't understand it now. [Well, I've asked all the questions I was going to ask. Do you have any closing comments you want to make?] Just that...ahh...I'm looking forward that Chicago will continue to grow and be a great union town. I hope that people that are looking back at this whatever...if this winds up in the Library of Congress, looks back at this and says this is some of my roots. I hope it goes on too. We show by example what can be done. Chicago is one of the... And I've been all over the world. It is absolutely the greatest city on this planet. And that's about it.

[Thanks very much. It has been a pleasure.]

END: 57:34