

00:05

This is Fletcher Powell interviewing Garland Moore on April 3, 2013.

First of all, thanks for being here, we really appreciate it. Um, just to start out with, let me have you say your name and tell me what your occupation is now.

Garland Moore, I'm a maintenance mechanic at Boeing Wichita.

OK. And, so, are you from Wichita, originally?

I was born in Wichita.

OK.

Moved away when I was younger. Came back in '89.

OK. All right. If you don't mind me asking, how old are you? What year were you born?

1956.

OK. And where did you move away to?

Shreveport, Louisiana

Oh, really? With family?

Yeah.

And then you came back to Wichita in '89. How old were you when you left? Were you aware of Boeing, generally, when you were younger?

Oh yeah. Well, my dad worked at Boeing for 41 years, and we went to Shreveport on a—he was on a field trip, actually. A permanent field trip.

OK, with—

With Boeing.

With Boeing. What did he do with the company?

He was a flight line mechanic. A&P mechanic.

OK. So, you came back here, was that again with your family? What brought you back to Wichita?

Uh, my father left, he worked at Barksdale Air Force Base on B-52s for Boeing, as a Boeing contractor. And it was a permanent thing supposedly, and it ended up that they shut that operation down, so he came back to Wichita, we stayed there because we were in school. I came back because of the job situation in the '80s down there, it was 13.5% unemployment, something like that. It was hard to find a job, even with experience. I came back here to work at Boeing.

You specifically came back here to work for Boeing. Did you go to university down there? Was there a specific degree you got?

I have an associate's degree in electronics.

OK. And so was it your idea all along to go into this kind of work?

No, I was, uh—I was an automotive mechanic for a lot of years. Automobile mechanic. And I worked for an oil pipeline company, working on all kinds of equipment. And the oil field played out in Louisiana, so we were looking for work and I was lucky enough to get a job up here.

OK. And how did that happen? Did you—

I came up and interviewed for a job and they hired me.

Yeah, you just saw an opening and applied? What was that job?

It was a crib attendant. Maintenance parts man.

Oh, ok, all right. Just because that was one that was open?

That's what was available so that's what I took.

And you named a couple of things that you did before Boeing, could you, um, just repeat those a little bit and tell me a little bit about what you did there before you came?

I started out in the work force, I was a printer, I ran a printing press for Arkla Gas in Shreveport. I moved on to being a meter setter there. Went from there to a bakery, um, Holsum Bakery, as a maintenance man. Left there, went to Texas Eastern Oil & Gas, um, as an automotive mechanic, equipment mechanic really. I was a really good job, they were based in Houston, Texas, but we were still in Shreveport. It was a pipeline transmission company, east and west. Uh, stayed there till they got bought out and, uh, did some various other jobs, service manager at an automotive repair shop, for a while, and, um, worked on my own for a while, and came up here.

So, you started in Boeing right when you came up here, you said in '89?

1989. March of '89.

March. And, um, when you started out, um, what other jobs might you have had after you started out at Boeing?

I stayed at Boeing as a maintenance—I mean, excuse me, as a crib attendant, in the crib, for uh—I handled all the building materials that they used in the factory. Um, I stayed there till 2001.

12 years there...

2001, then I took a job with—I was elected as a business representative for the Machinists' Union at that time. I stayed there for seven years, went back in the shop after seven years, and, um, took a job as an oiler on the flight line side, which is still Boeing now, and, uh, worked my way into the maintenance parts, uh, or maintenance area, and now I work on all the ground support equipment that they use to jack the airplanes and service the airplanes.

05:41

OK, and talk a little bit about that, what your responsibilities are.

Uh, we have all kinds of equipment, big jacks, tail jacks, that jack the airplane up, jack the wings up, bodies up, uh, trailers, um, big stands where they go up into the airplanes, um, the hydraulic equipment they use to test—to do the functional tests on the airplane, we service that and work on it and all that kind of equipment. Air bottles, nitrogen bottles, anything they use to service the aircraft.

As you were going through your different positions at Boeing, were there times you had to receive special training for any of the things you were doing? Obviously you'd done a lot beforehand.

I've had various types of training, um... Some—most of it there at the place. We've had a lot of safety training, some hydraulics training, mostly just their in-house classes that I've been to.

Did that take a lot of time?

Yeah, it takes quite a bit of time to go through all that, and you have to recertify every year, so it takes some time.

Did it end up feeling like it was worth it?

What's that?

The time it took for that training.

Oh yeah, it's been a very good job.

All right, well let's talk about that part a little. What are some of the rewarding things you've found working for Boeing?

Well, it's, um, when I started at Boeing it was like a family. You know? And it's progressed into more of a business, you know, more business-oriented towards the employees, but it's, uh, you know, it allowed me to lead a lot better life than I had before. It's allowed me to have a family and have a house and, like the American dream. I have a house out in the country and three cars, and it's allowed my daughter to get an education, so it's been lucrative for me.

How do you mean that it was like a family when you started?

It was a much more family-oriented business to me, in my view. Generations of people came along and went to work at Boeing, and, uh, it seemed like the, uh, company was more employee-oriented at the time than they are now. Now it just seems like it's a numbers game.

Has that been sort of a slow progression?

Oh, yes. It seems like most of it happened when they merged with McDonnell Douglas. That's when the, when I see that's when it started.

Yeah, so, do you think, when that happened, that merger, did that cause a lot of issues amongst the employees, I know that was a little before you were elected, but—

Over time, it did. There was some animosity with the—Mr. Stonecipher that was-- came from McDonnell Douglas, a lot of people held a bad view of him—and some didn't, you know, a lot didn't, but, um, it—that's when all that seemed to start. We went through a lot of negotiation process and that seemed to change as well, when some of those folks came on board.

Do you feel like it was because of the hard slant toward business that started to be taken? Or do you know?

I think it was just a product of the times. Everybody's going that direction, it's—there's no loyalty, it seems, to the worker anymore, to me. Like there used to be.

And you saw that shift probably around that time?

That's when most of that started.

Yeah. So, we might have sort of just touched on this, but I'm wondering, uh, we talked a little bit about, um, the rewarding parts that you found on the job, tell me about some of the frustrations of working there.

10:11

Well, it—when you get into any kind of business, you know, especially a large business such as Boeing, it tends to take forever to accomplish any kind of change. I mean, you'll see a way of doing something better, and there's such a process that you have to go through to get that done that it, it's really frustrating. They have a certain way of doing things, like, buying parts is a monumental process to us. It takes forever to get parts, when if you're on the outside you can go down and buy the parts, and you just can't do that in this kind of business, and it's frustrating, you know, when you're on a timeline, a timetable, and you know where the parts are and you can't get them, you know, things like that it just, it hurts, I mean, you know? Especially in our situation, you know, they're shutting down and cost is one of the issues they said, they stated, and we know a lot of the issues, but it seem like if we had a little more control of what we're doing we could have done a better job.

Aside from cost, is there just a lot of red tape you have to deal with?

Yeah, you have a certain way you have to do it, certain people have to buy it. Like we do the—I have to look up all the parts, I find them, where they're at, I find them on the internet or I find them—talk to a supplier, get it all ready, then I have to do paperwork to—it evolves through the system, and I take it to certain people to get ordered and it, it's frustrating, it takes a while to get your parts.

I wonder, do you feel like this is something particular to the way Boeing is run, or do you feel like this is the sort of thing that people in any large business end up having to deal with?

Well, I've seen two or three companies, not as large as Boeing, but I've seen companies evolve away from this. There's a company here that, they learned to do things very efficiently, they got rid of all the paper in their plant, and, uh, they didn't have any, they didn't have any of this to go through—if they had a problem with paperwork and bogging down, they fixed it, they got rid of it. Sort of like what the Japanese do. But, um, it is what it is, it evolves and it goes and, uh, you just learn to deal with it and do the best job you can.

Did you ever have to deal with being laid off from Boeing?

No, I've never been laid off. I'm one of the lucky people, I guess, that went through the entire cycle and have never been laid off.

But I'm guessing that a number of people you know have had to deal with that, and especially probably being laid off and picked back up—

A lot. A lot.

How have you seen that that's affected people?

Back in, around the 2—somewhere around the 2000 timeframe, or 19... 2000, in that general area, 2001, um, I saw a lot of people they'd get a layoff notice and they'd take it back, get a layoff notice, they'd take it back. And it might cycle six or seven times, you know, they'd get a notice and right before they're supposed to go out the door they'd—the company would pull the notice back and it... One guy just finally just quit, he'd had enough, he couldn't take that anymore, it's just too... it was too mentally hard on him to deal with it, you know? He had a family to deal with, and I can understand that, it was just, you didn't know what to do, you know? You found another job somewhere that's maybe stable, and they keep doing that to you, and then it's just part of the business, it's cyclic and sometimes it happens, but it weighed heavy on a lot of people. Watched it for many years.

Do you feel like you kind of just got dealt a lucky hand?

14:30

I think it's more of a product of where I'm at, in maintenance—we don't have the turnover rate. We have had layoffs, but we don't have the turnover rate like they do like in production. And, of course, I'm talking when Boeing was—when Spirit and Boeing were one. We still have that with our mechanics out there, they've laid off and brought back and laid off and brought back. I've actually seen, on the flight line side, they would bring people back, and the day they'd get back they'd give them a 60-day-more notice. And they might have quit another job to come back, and, uh, that's tough, that's tough on anybody. You don't know what to do. I mean, they're there for the benefits and the money, but it, uh, you know, at some point you gotta worry more about your family.

You said, was it 2001 you were elected at the union?

Right.

How much were you involved before that?

I was a shop steward, right after the first year I got there I became a shop steward. I was involved in the union throughout.

What was it about that, what was attractive about it to you?

Well, I came from a union family, and, uh, I just believe that you can do more as a group than you can individually. You can bargain more, you can get more benefits, and you have protections afforded to you that just can't get without it in a right-to-

work state. If you do—if somebody says you do something, they terminate you or they want to discipline you and you don't feel it's fair you have a process you can go through and deal with that. Whereas if you're a day laborer or there is no union, you're just out of luck. They rule and that's the way it is.

Have your feelings about the union changed at all from the time you got there until now?

Well, certainly I went through a rough period. I was—I've had a long, good career at the union, I've held every position there is at the local lodge level. I moved up to business rep and I went to the pinnacle, I've been able to travel for the union, I've been to trade shows all over the country and did a lot of announcing for them at the trade shows and went through a cycle where I got, I got beat in the election and I went back to the shop floor. So, yeah, I've had some tough times and a little bit of bitter feelings there, but it's still, I'm still part of the union and believe in it.

Yeah, you were beaten after you had been elected you mean? Or you had tried—

After seven years I ran again and did not win.

OK. Um, tell me just a little bit about your different duties, then, among the different positions you've had at the union, being the business rep and president and so on, um, just some of the things—I mean, I don't know what it means to be a president of a union.

I started out being a shop steward, I got involved in all kinds of committees, I got on the jobs committee and, uh, I, uh, worked my way up and became president of the local, and it was quite a large unit, you know, at Boeing, at the time, we were the largest union in the state. And, really, you just run the business of the local when you're president. But you, of course some people view the president as having more power than he has, which he doesn't. But you mainly run the business of the local. You make sure all the business is done correctly and run the meetings every month, the local meetings, and, uh, make sure everything's done the way it's supposed to be.

18:51

Is that a hard thing to do? I mean, I'm guessing there are a lot of different voices.

You know, it doesn't matter, it's like anything else. You, uh... you are never gonna please anybody 100% of the time, I don't care what you do, there's always gonna be somebody that's not happy. But all you can do is do what you think is right and move on.

Do you see any difference between, say, members of different airplane manufacturers, um, when you were president of the union, I'm just wondering if there were differences between the people at Boeing and the people at other places.

Well, when I became business rep, um, I started dealing with different contracts throughout the city, uh, contracts with Boeing, and in Seattle as well, and yeah, there's a difference. We do a lot of heavy work in Wichita at Boeing, you know, there's a lot of heavy maintenance work and they build big airplanes. Cessna, they build smaller jets, Learjet, of course, and Raytheon. Um, the people at Learjet are really good people, really nice people, and it's a little more laid-back atmosphere than it is, uh, Cessna is a pretty hustling place, the move pretty fast there. Hawker I haven't dealt with near as much, they're Beechcraft now as it is, but uh, I know a lot of people over there, they work pretty hard, pretty fast, but Boeing is kinda out there because the work is a lot harder on people, especially because of the, especially when you're bucking rivets and things like that, those people really, my hat's off to them because they do a really good job and that's really hard work, and it's really hard on you. Yeah, there's a little bit of a difference there. Seems like Cessna's evolved, too, you know, they've been bought out by Textron, but they, those smaller aircraft companies are more family-oriented, they're, like, kinda like we used to be.

I'm curious a little bit about labor strikes, what's the first time you had an experience with that?

1989. Right after we got here.

Right away. So what was that like? Especially right after you got here, that's something.

Well, it was a little, I don't know, it didn't bother me any, but it's kinda different to go through. I didn't have any money when I got here, I didn't have any when we went on strike, so we, uh, but we went through it, and, uh, it's just a part of doing business. I mean, that's a means to an end of getting what you want, it's just like a businessman has his stance, that's what you do to get what you want.

21:57

Was that something that you were at least a little bit primed for, having a father who worked in the industry for so long? I mean, you'd at least maybe seen that sort of thing?

Yeah, that definitely had an impact on me, but I'd been in labor unions down south, too. I worked in a bakery and we went on strike, too, but, yeah—I, probably a lot more than people who had never seen it before, yeah, I was prepared.

So, what goes into that? How does that decision get made, that we're going to strike? What leads up to that?

Well, we go, um... they have committees that meet with the company, and that's a long process, say at Boeing, you might start up to a year out, actually. But mostly when you get, like, three months in toward the contract, the committees will start meeting regularly and deciding, you know—bringing their issues to the table and you bring those issues back and do surveys, find out what the people want, the company asks their people what they want, they know—they have a lot better handle on that with their people, but you get those people together and you come back, you work off your surveys, mainly, to see what is important to your people. And you take those issues back and work them, work them with the company, and you get to a point to where you stop, and you come back and you show that to your people and you have a vote. And the people decide whether or not you're gonna—if, if it's a good contract or it is not, and they decide whether or not to strike.

Did you ever feel like it got to that point a little too quickly? Or did you feel like it was pretty well justified each time?

No, I've been through four strikes and I've sat at the table on two of them, two strikes and three contracts, and it, um, I feel like that—it was the right thing to do each time we did it. We had justification for what we wanted and, you know, nobody likes to go backwards either, and sometimes a company wants you to go backwards, but—no, I've, I've not been in a situation where I think the strike was unnecessary.

I imagine when you're striking, there's a lot of outside pressure from, I don't know, maybe neighbors, but certainly people who are not involved in what you're doing who see a union striking and may not know everything that's gone into it. Did you feel that kind of outside pressure from people around you, people in the community?

Oh, you feel that, you feel that pressure in your own home.

Yeah.

You know, if you have a spouse that doesn't, has never participated in a union, doesn't understand, they're like, hey, we don't have a paycheck, you gotta work. And I've sat in a lot of living rooms and talked to wives, especially, as to why we need to do this, and, uh, but—everyone has their own opinion and there's a lot of people on the outside that think people that work in an aircraft factory like we are, the money that we get, the benefits that we have, that we're getting too much and we have too many benefits and that it's not fair and we should go back to work.

[camera battery runs out]

I guess we're changing batteries.

[videographer: can you ask that last question over?]

25:56

Well, you were just talking—are you recording again? You were just talking about, just, uh, the people you've had to deal with—

I've sat in a lot of living rooms and talked to wives and explained why we need to be out on strike. But you have a lot of people out in the city, maybe, that don't think you deserve to make more money, or have the benefits that you have, you know, or they think you're overpaid and they think people—you might, you might have one person that'll go out and tell somebody in the community, 'hey, I work at Boeing and I don't do anything, I just, you know, I sit there and sleep all day,' and they think that everyone is like that. Well, I tell you, they can come out and try doing what I see a lot of people do out there. You just don't walk out there off the street and do some of these jobs. I mean, and some of them are very, very stressful. But, you know, you do get paid well.

Do you think that's a pretty big misconception? About the level of work that you guys do?

I, um—I think so, I think it's, I think it's out there and they think that aircraft people are lazy and they don't work hard, but I'm here to tell you I don't think that's true at all. I know it's not true.

Do you have any idea where that idea might have come from? I mean, aside from one guy who didn't work hard?

I think people that don't have what other people have, that works into it, you know? But for every one job we have at Boeing, it supports four jobs out here in the community. I mean, that's four people that have a job because we spend our money in the community, too, so, it, um—I think it's a product of 'the grass is always greener on the other side' and people want what you have. That's the only way that I've had to look at it.

You said you went through three negotiations? In your time? And were you working just with Boeing in Wichita or—

No, in Seattle.

In Seattle. So, approximately when did those happen?

'99, 2002, and 2005.

OK, so all after the merger.

Right.

So what was the experience like, then, having to—what's the process of negotiating, especially with, uh—

Well, I started out on the jobs committee, it's the corporate jobs committee, where we go to each location that's in the bargaining unit, which is Seattle, Puget Sound, Portland, and Wichita, and we look at jobs and decide where the jobs belong, if somebody has a—they want their job upgraded or something like that, they think they've changed the work enough that—to upgrade the job, we had a joint committee, the company and union would meet and look at all this and you decide whether or not to upgrade it and you do that in the negotiating process.

How long was the longest process that you had to deal with?

Well, I spent, I spent a month up there, but we would start—we would meet every six months, or sooner if need be. We used to meet a lot, but it would—and you'd be there a week, four days to a week with travel time back and forth. So, you know, a day traveling out on either end, but... I spent a month up there in '99 in negotiations—straight—and that's the longest I've had to go, but, you know, Boeing, they meet, but we might go up there for a week and then come back in three weeks leading up to that point, but in the final negotiating time you stay there till it's done.

So, since '99 is the first one you did, it's fine if you don't really want to speculate, but do you think the experience of negotiating with Boeing might have been different before the merger?

30:31

'99 was a, was probably the best contract the union's ever gotten from Boeing. I don't think there was anything else that was on the table that we didn't get, I mean, it was a really lucrative contract for us. 2002, after the change hit, was very nasty. Nasty ordeal. There's, um—what I call threats were made to the employees. Films were shown, captive audience meetings of 'we're gonna shut the place down, we're gonna lay everybody off and have to shut down if you don't accept this contract,' that sort of thing. And I actually sat in one of those, so I know what happened, but—you know, but the people still had the right to decide. I mean, companies do what they do, you know, but that was a first for me, I hadn't seen that kind of philosophy used. So, that seemed to me when the breakdown started. There was a lot of problems, it seems like, with, started at that point as far as working together.

They got very aggressive, apparently.

Got very aggressive and didn't seem to want to listen to what we had to say.

I'm happy to talk more about that sort of thing, but if you don't mind moving on to sort of how you see Boeing as an employer and a contributor to Wichita. Do you feel like—I don't want to, this is a little leading—but do you ever feel like they were looking out for Wichita?

Now? You mean?

The entire time—because obviously, you feel like things have changed.

Sure, they had a presence here in Wichita for many years, back to the Stearman days. You know, my father worked at Boeing—I remember when I was a little boy, we'd come out and pick him up on second shift and I'd hide in the back seat and try to scare him when he got in the car, but that was back in the days when the flight line at Boeing was really hopping. I mean, there were planes everywhere, they had tests going in, planes were flying, you know, at night, but they had—you could hear the engine tests in the background, behind the hangars, just, it was just busy, busy, busy, and it was just full and they, you know, that was a lot of their bread and butter here back then, and it's a shame to see what it's become today, I mean it really is. But um... I don't know. We watched that continue and go on... I don't know, I lost my train of thought.

Sure.

What did you ask me?

I was just—if you saw Boeing as ever looking out for the city, and like you said that's changed, so—

Well they, you know, Boeing before the sale to Spirit, they, yeah, they used to contribute a lot, and then still do contribute things to the city. But they, um—and I hate to see them go, you know? They decided some years ago that they were gonna move out of here, in my view, anyway. This didn't happen just last year, they just, they decided that there wasn't enough work to justify this, but I have a different view of that myself, you know. But they have contributed to the city, many many things over the years. You know, there's a lot of things that they've done, they, they've helped with Exploration Place, to coats and blankets—a lot of things that people don't see, coats and blankets for people in the wintertime, the employees themselves to Good Neighbor Fund, give huge amounts of money, huge amounts, two, three million dollars a year. And that's just, comes off the employees. And they do, like, the Angel Tree at Christmas time, you know, they used to do a lot of that. Make toys. Make toys for kids, you know, out there at the factory, so, yeah, they've contributed a lot over the years to the community. And it's really sad to see it end.

35:51

A number of people have expressed their own sort of sense of loyalty to Boeing for a lot of the things that they've done in the city and for the jobs they've had. Did you feel that at one time, and has the sort of feeling changed?

You mean the loyalty?

Yeah.

Boeing's been very good to me over the years and, yeah, I'm the kind of person, I'll stay a couple minutes to make sure I get it done, or, if I've got a job to do I make sure it's done, you know, I work with a man who's 70... 74 years old and we don't miss deadlines, even now, we make sure we do what we're supposed to do and get it done. And that's just, you know, we get good pay and benefits and we feel we owe that to them, and that's what we do.

Do you feel like that's sort of a loyalty to your sense of duty or do you think it's how the company's treated you, particularly? What I mean is, if you were working for another company—maybe you're just a good, hard worker and you have a sense of duty to do your job. Or is it something particularly about how Boeing had treated you through the years that makes you want to make sure that everything's done just right?

Well, there was a—I'm not gonna sit here and say that. I've been very frustrated with a lot of things at Boeing over the years. Mostly, it's processes, the way processes work, and that's always been frustrating to me with big company, you know, it's—you just see things that just drive you crazy. Like you might stock a part that's—you might stock an assembly for a part and then all the parts to build a part, and then people tell you you gotta get rid of space, gotta get rid of space, and, but they won't let you get rid of one or the other. Things like that. But yeah, I've been pretty loyal to the company—argued with them a lot, I won't deny that, I stand up for what I believe it right but—and there's a lot of people loyal to them, even now, you know, and it's, uh... But there's a point where you think that they don't care anymore, so why should you? You know?

Yeah. I'm not assuming that you've necessarily gotten to that point yourself, but where do you think that happens? The 'why should I care about that—'

When people, like I said earlier, when they show up, quit a job and come back to Boeing, get a layoff notice the day they get there, in 60 days they're gonna be laid off again, I guarantee you they don't care anymore. They're done. And if that happens to you more than once, it's, it's just not a good thing for anybody, I don't think. 'Course, you know, some of it's not in the company's control either, you know? They have a process they have to do, and they need the people for a little bit and then—I don't think anyone wants to do that to somebody the way they had to, but for some reason it just happened, but those people, some of them got pretty irate and irritated, and I understand that.

You said that it was kind of clear to you for a while that Boeing was looking to get out of Wichita. So was it much of a surprise to you when you found out they really were pulling out for good?

It wasn't much of a shock to a lot of us. You could see—well, just the fact that you don't have any work. You've got some programs and things are just slowing down

and nobody wanted it to happen, and we didn't know that it was actually going to happen when it did, but it wasn't shocking news. I mean, I—you know, when they made that announcement, nobody said a word, nobody screamed and hollered, everybody just turned around and left. They didn't—you know, it was pretty amazing.

How did they make the announcement to you?

They called us all in a big hangar and told us they were shutting it down.

Everybody.

Yeah. Everybody.

What were your initial thoughts? Say, within the first couple of hours after that happened.

40:38

I was pretty irate. Especially when another McDonnell Douglas person—you know, Mr. Stonecipher made an announcement they would never sell Boeing Wichita and they did, they sold it to Spirit. And then they sent another McDonnell Douglas person to tell us that they were closing the factory, you know? I was pretty irate about it, I didn't like it. Because I don't personally still don't see why they need to close it. Now, they need to make changes, that's for sure, but, really, I don't see a reason to close it.

You just don't think, it's not justified—

It's the expertise that we have there. We have literally the best mechanics in the world—and they've proven it, time and time again—for what they do. Heavy maintenance repair. It makes no sense. In the field that we're in. And considering the type of aircraft that we work on. It just makes no sense.

And so you're still there.

Yes.

Until when?

We don't know. My actual end date is supposed to be at the end of the year like everybody else's, but, uh, we may run over into next year. Or longer. We don't know for sure. They say they're on schedule to close. So we don't know, we're just, we'll be there till the end.

Doing your job till—

We'll be there till they tell us not to come in anymore.

What happens after that for you?

Um, I just turned down a job offer in Seattle.

From Boeing?

From Boeing. Because I'd have to go right now and I just don't want to uproot my family, my daughter's gonna be a senior next year and, uh, I just don't want to put them through that. And I'd have to make a decision and go fairly quickly and I'm just not one to move that fast. I've decided I'm gonna go back to Louisiana probably and look for something out there.

After, um—your daughter's a senior this year? So—

She'll be a senior next year.

Next year. So you're going to wait until she graduates before you go back to Louisiana?

Right.

Yeah. And then do you have any idea what you'll look for there? Just something similar?

I'm gonna try a few things on my own, I'm gonna try to check some civil service work on the air base there, there's a big, big air base in Bossier City over there next to Shreveport, so I'm gonna see what I can find.

So, what do you think happens to the community, to Wichita, since Boeing is leaving?

I don't think that Boeing leaving, at this point, as small as they are now, is gonna have a huge adverse effect on the city of Wichita now. You still have Spirit there that has most of everything, anyway, that we had. But, uh, it will have some effect, it's still a pretty good payroll, they've moved a lot of salaried people out, they had about 3500 people—I don't know what it's down to now, but including all the salaried people, they've moved to different places, and that'll have some effect on the economy, but I don't think much.

That's interesting, because when it was announced, while it may not have been a massive shock, it was at least—especially for a lot of the other people in Wichita, maybe, who didn't see the slow drawdown—it felt like kind of a gut-punch, you know? But if it's not as—maybe you're saying it's not as big of an economic issue but it's sort of an image thing.

Well, the reason it was a gut-punch is because—especially for the union people, the Machinists union—we spent countless, countless, countless hours lobbying for this tanker. And the union spent a lot of money lobbying for this tanker to be done. And Boeing promised, ‘oh, this tanker’s gonna be done in Wichita. If we get this contract this tanker’s gonna be done in Wichita,’ I mean, that—they had the plans drawn up to do it here and everything else and, uh, as soon as they got the tanker, bam, they decided they’re not gonna do it here. And that was a huge blow to a lot of people, you know, we, um—we work on the president’s airplane and it’s a big deal to a lot of people, but it, the fact is, these guys do things that there’s not a lot of people that can do, and they’re really, really good at it, and that, couple with the fact that, you know, a lot of people felt like they just lied to us. And they say it’s business, and maybe it is, but I feel they wouldn’t have got that done without our help.

45:46

And do you think that was their motivation? I mean, to keep saying, ‘oh, yeah, we’ll keep this here,’ so that you guys would help them get it done?

I wouldn’t begin to, I wouldn’t begin to even go there, that’s, uh, you know, it is what it is, they’re the ones that have to live with their conscience, and I believe that every man pays a price, you know, someday, and that’ll be between them and their maker. I’ve seen a lot of people hurt over all of the things that happened here, and a lot of people have done well, but, I’ve seen an awful lot of hurt over the last seven, eight years here, and, like I said, those people will have to answer to their maker for the things they’ve done.

What do you think the ultimate legacy of Boeing is in Wichita?

I think it’s a—you know, it’s a good legacy here. They were here for many, many years, a lot of people owe their lives to Boeing, I mean, their fortunes to Boeing, their families—they raised families here, they sent them to college with their, with what they made at Boeing. I think they’ll have a good legacy as far as being remembered as an aircraft company where—that helped this community become what it is today. You know, back when I was a kid, Boeing was it, I mean, we had—back then we had swimming pools out there, they had a big swimming pool out there and baseball diamonds and things, you know, ‘Course, those have been covered over by factories now, but it was a cool deal and it was a big deal to—I remember they had the biggest swimming pool that I’d ever seen, you know, it was a huge, huge, huge swimming pool. And of course that’s all gone, but that helped build this whole area, so, yeah, I think they have a good legacy here. It’s a shame what’s happened the last 10 years, but that doesn’t—they were here a lot of years and did a lot of good.

(to videographer: Did you feel like you had any...)

[videographer: I think that was awesome.]

(Definitely. I was wondering if you had any questions that came up while we were talking.)

[No, not really, if I came up with one you eventually asked it, so...]

Well, thank you, so much, that was really good to hear, and I really appreciate you coming.

Well, some people might disagree with you, but—

That's up to them.

I'm pretty argumentative, but that's truly how I feel.

Was there anything maybe that we didn't touch on that you were thinking about coming here?

Well, frankly, I didn't even know what I was doing when I came here. You know, my only take on any of this is, you know, there's a lot of people here that really get down on labor unions around here, and, you know, everybody has their own opinions on this, but labor unions have done a lot of good in this city. Their salaries are responsible for a lot of things that people have that they don't even realize, and, you know, I've been out talking to business owners and doing things, and I represent, I wear my union gear a lot of places—still—and there's a lot of people that don't get it, but there's some that do, they say, 'hey, a lot of people bring their stuff in here to get it repaired, or they come in and buy new cars here,' and... I remember there was a man that bought a Chevrolet dealership down in Mulvane. And he was like, uh, when Boeing was booming and Raytheon was booming and Cessna was booming, you know Cessna was really going good, too, he said, 'man, I moved up here from Texas and I thought I was in heaven,' he was selling cars that fast. And just that fast it turned around and went the other way. So, people will notice when these union jobs are gone, these high-paying jobs are gone. People are gonna notice it. They're just not gonna notice it until it's too late to get the help they need. And that's where it's gonna hurt, that's what I hate the most, is the money that's contributed to the Good Neighbor Fund and things like that. As these evolve down, it's gonna get less, and less, and less, and they do an awful lot of good for a lot of people.

Do you think people just don't realize it?

I don't think—I think they have a pre, pre-fabricated notion of what unions are, and I think that's—they don't take the time to learn. It's like anything else. If you see something on the internet now, hey, that's true. They don't take the time to learn what they actually do or what they have to contribute, and I think that's a real shame, cause if ever there was a time that labor unions were needed in this country, with all your benefits being taken, pensions being wiped out, 401ks make money for a little bit but then they may not, that's a real shame. Benefits, health care, you know,

all those things that people take for granted... you know, I saw an interview the other day on TV, and these people were, like, 'we gotta cut the budget, the national budget, we gotta cut the budget.' Well, ok, what do we cut? 'Well, you can't cut Social Security, you can't cut my health care, you can't cut my benefits, you can't cut my unemployment, but you gotta cut.' So, what do you propose? You get into things like that, and to me it's just, they're for something and they've never taken the time to learn it, so people need to learn about different things and try different cultures, different things before they just say there's something wrong with it, so, that's my biggest thing with that.

Don't just see the word 'union' and assume it's a bad thing.

Exactly. That's all I have.