

Anthony Incandela interviewed by Jaime Lopez, Barrie Cline and Setare Arashloo

Anthony I.: My name is Anthony Incandela. Appropriate for an electrician, I guess. I am 36 years old. I grew up in Deer Park, Long Island. Resided in Queens through my entire apprenticeship, and now I'm back in Long Island because I can afford to. Currently I live in Rockville Centre.

Jamie: What do you do for a living?

Anthony I.: I am a Local 3 electrician, a journeyman.

Jamie: Where are you working now?

Anthony I.: [00:00:30] Currently I'm at Coney Island Hospital.

Jamie: What kind of work are you doing?

Anthony I.: It's a build-out, refurbishing a wing in the hospital, so demolishing the old stuff, building new stuff.

Jamie: Some of the hospital is still operational?

Anthony I.: All of the hospital is operational. We just have the one section blocked off with plastic, and we're in there. We're working [00:01:00] amongst the patients, and doctors, and everyone else.

Jamie: Everything is going on around you, and you're still doing your own thing.

Anthony I.: Everything is going on. You have to be careful of where you walk, be careful of everything and materials around. Working in a hospital is a little bit different than working in other places because the code is stricter. You have to make sure that you use explosion-proof boxes and fire stop around every box instead of just the [00:01:30] penetrations. It's a little bit more strict, but it's nice because I haven't been on a hospital yet, so now I get to see the medical side of the field.

Jamie: What's the difference between the medical equipment as opposed to a regular construction job?

Anthony I.: I would just say that a regular construction job is ... How do I word this? I don't want to say more lenient, but a hospital is more stringent on their rules [00:02:00] as to what must be done and why, because there might be oxygen piped into the room, and if you have electricity in the same room, and if there's an arc, that happens, explosions happen. It would be the same as if you were wiring up a science room in a school because they have gas piped into the science room. It has to be explosion-proof. I didn't know that until I got to Coney Island Hospital. Now I know.

Barrie: Can you explain an [00:02:30] arc?

Anthony I.: An arc would be ... I would say, a jump of electricity from one point to the next, whether it be intentional or not, most of the time not, while the voltage travels through the air to get from its destination to the grounded point. In that travel it might harm or cause any kind of damage. Right?

Jamie: Yeah. [00:03:00] I like that definition. Anthony, tell us about some of your jobs that you had before. What kind of jobs have you had before?

Anthony I.: Before I got to the local?

Jamie: Before you guys were in the Local 3.

Anthony I.: Oh, man. I'm a man of many hats. I was a teacher aide for BOCES while I was young, very young. When I graduated high-school, I went directly to college for broadcasting communications, so I did a lot of work in [00:03:30] the TV industry. A lot of audio, video, transcribing, running tapes around the city like a madman. It's nice because I got to see a lot of the stuff that I went to school, for and then decided it wasn't for me. What else have I done? All sorts of different odd construction jobs. I sold mortgages for a little while until I realized I'm just not a salesman. I don't like pushing [00:04:00] things on people. What else have I done? Many many things. I was a short-order cook. I like cooking. Cooking is great. Yeah, basically anything to occupy my time.

Jamie: Right. Can you tell us a little bit about how you became an electrician?

Anthony I.: Yeah, definitely. I was raised in a union family. My father was a Local 1 plumber and a teacher in the Local 1 school. My mother was [00:04:30] a teacher and then a statistician for the county, so she was also a union member. I came up in the environment of knowing the benefits of being part of the union, but I did not want to go that route right away. I wanted to go to college, like everybody says, and do your thing, white collar. I just realized that I wasn't happy wearing a white collar and sitting behind a desk. It just wasn't for me. It was like the movie Office Space. That's my life. I'm not happy [00:05:00] in an office. I'm not happy filling out TPS reports. It's not for me. I decided that I need a life that would sustain my want for physical work and also allow me to have the life that I live, for the things that I could afford, and plan for the future, retirement benefits.

When I started out in the TV industry, I wanted to work [00:05:30] hands on. It was always audio, video, technical directing, actual directing, but not so much because that's more visual than physical. When I got into the TV industry, I tried my best to work with my hands. I was out with the crew. I was on red carpets. I was going to locations. That was when I felt the most alive. Then when you're in the room for months working on the Avid or working on whatever editing system you have, it [00:06:00] just wasn't for me. I knew immediately I had to make a change. My father offered to help me get into the plumbers union, and I said, "You know, it's not really for me either." I enjoy working with electricity. I enjoy the technical thought that it takes to circuitry.

Ever since I was young, my favorite class in school was tech class. When I was really young, I built an alarm box out of a cigar box where [00:06:30] you put two pieces of metal, it's one on the top, one on the bottom. They touch, connection, alarm goes off. I was ecstatic. I was probably in, I don't know, seventh grade, eighth grade. Ever since then I just loved electricity. I would dub tapes in my house, connect one VCR to the other VCR. My father is like, "Well, why don't you try for the Local 3?" He's like, "It's almost impossible to get in, but you could try." I [00:07:00] did a little odd jobbing as a helper out in Long Island before I got into the local. I put in my application, and waited three long years, took the aptitude test, waited another year, and then I was in.

Barrie: Why is it ... Sorry.

Anthony I.: No, go ahead.

Barrie: Why is it so difficult to get in?

Anthony I.: That's a difficult question to answer. There's a lot of members. We have a very, [00:07:30] I guess, large volume of electricians in the local. Sometimes to fill an apprentice class, we are just taking more before others retire, and it's just building and building. I would say in past times, like the '70s and '80s, it was a lot of nepotism. It was a father-son business where usually to get in, your father was an electrician, and his father was an electrician, whereas I'm first-generation. [00:08:00] I started at square one, the first yellow brick, and just kept on following it until I got there. It took a long time, but I'm here.

Jamie: Anthony, how many years have you been in the business now?

Anthony I.: In total eight, including the five-year apprenticeship.

Jamie: You've been a journeyman a few years now?

Anthony I.: Yes.

Jamie: You've been developing your skills and [crosstalk 00:08:23]?

Anthony I.: I have.

Jamie: Learning a lot out in the field?

Anthony I.: I would say that a goal for the day [00:08:30] besides a fair day's work for a fair day's wage is to learn something because I'm green. There's no two ways about it. My A card is brand new, and there's a lot of things that even if you've done it a million times, there's other ways to do it, and better ways to do it, and faster ways to do it. That's the process where I'm at now. I can absolutely 100% complete any task, but how fast I do the task, how efficiently I do the [00:09:00] task, that will all come with time and experience.

Barrie: How did you first learn how to do what you do?

Anthony I.: As far as in the local? As an apprentice, you start out pretty much as a shadow/gopher/helper, a pair of hands. You watch and pay attention to everything you can, ask as many questions as you can. Since [00:09:30] it's such a big local, there's a big diversity. I didn't say that right. There's a wide range of skills and motivation. Whereas one apprentice might take a little bit longer to pick up something, another apprentice might pick it up right away. There's such a vast spectrum of work that we Delaware, this one apprentice, his strong point might be fine work like data work. Another guy might be [00:10:00] really good at pipe work. Eventually, you do enough of it, you'll even out and be a very well rounded journeyman, so watching with your eyes, listening with your ears obviously, and homework, school. Moreso on the job training, but the school helps out a lot.

Jamie: Anthony, do you remember your first day on the job?

Anthony I.: I absolutely do.

Jamie: Can you tell us a little bit about your first day or when you first came in?

Anthony I.: My first day on the job, I was [00:10:30] working for Echo Electric, one of the more famous shops in the local. I was at 111 Wall Street downtown on the Citibank building, and it was nerve-wracking. It wasn't really a construction site. It was a build-out, a refurbish, a refurbishing of the floor. It wasn't brand new constructions, but it was still very scary. I just remember [00:11:00] following my foreman around with these giant eyes like, "What's going on here?" being very careful where I step. I just always took note of how much material was everywhere, hundreds of feet of pipe bundled in the corner. You have to climb over it. Everything is very ... You have to be aware of your surroundings at all times. It was exciting and scary at the same time. Plus it was the first step of a long road that I knew I was going to stay on it until I see it [00:11:30] through. There's a lot of people that say "Oh, well, I'm going to try it, and if I don't like it ..." I was like -

Jamie: You were determined.

Anthony I.: "I'm already 27 years old. I've changed careers at one point already. This is what I'm doing." I had that "I'm going to do it" attitude. I was scared, but also really motivated.

Jamie: You were just with your foreman? It was just you and the foreman?

Anthony I.: Me, the foreman, and two or three journeyman, just jogging around the building. "Oh, my outlets broke under the desk." Okay. Push the cart to the desk. Fix the outlet. Then there was the floor [00:12:00] of a complete build out. Where I was on the floor doing everyday electrical stuff, you would also get the treat to go fix something in the office. You would get to leave that and see what a house mouse does, a house electrician.

Jamie: Right. When you talk about the house electrician work, it's something that's a little bit more refined?

Anthony I.: Yes.

Jamie: Not all construction workers get to see that side of the repair and new installation inside these [00:12:30] finished spaces.

Anthony I.: Well, that goes back to the wide spectrum of skills that we have in the local. There are some people that are incredible at subway work and will bend four inch pipe like it's nothing, but they're not very good at fine work. You might not want them putting the finished plate on. Then you get the guys that are really good at fine work. They're very clean. Everything is nice. You have to be aware of that. If you put a light up in the ceiling with a white tile, and your hands are dirty, now there's mud all over the tile. The carpenter is going to yell [00:13:00] at you. Finished work is just a totally different side of the same work. I enjoy both.

Jamie: All right. Cool.

Barrie: Can you tell us about a few of the relationships that you formed on the job? [crosstalk 00:13:13]

Anthony I.: Yeah. It sounds cliché, but when you join the union, it becomes a brotherhood. It might not even be your intention. You might go into it saying, "I'm going to do my job. I'm going to go home, and that's it. I don't [00:13:30] want to be ... I'm not a people person." or whatever. But there are so many different people in the local that there's plenty of people you do like and plenty of people you don't like, so you end up forming these really, really tight relationships with people that have like-minded opinions, or just personalities click, and you're in that brotherhood together. You go on that journey together. Me and Jamie have been on a little journey since [00:14:00] he's like a mentor sort of. He was a proctor for my MIJ exam, and we both work in the booth at Citi Field as a scoreboard operator. I know that I can always bounce a question off Jamie if I need to, and there's a level of trust there.

There's many other people like Jamie that I have relationships with in the local that I value extremely. You might come across somebody that's [00:14:30] not your cup of tea, and you keep it moving, but for the most part the brothers and sisters are ... very into helping each other. Help isn't too far away. It becomes a personal thing, and now you're hanging out outside of work. Now you're doing family things together. You might have kids at the same time. Now you're raising your kids together. You see each other at union meetings, at picnics, and the more involved [00:15:00] you get with the local, the more relationships you can cultivate, and the different relationships you can cultivate. The more involved you are, the more you put in, the more you get back. It's absolutely 100% true.

Jamie: Anthony, can you tell me a little bit more about what you do on the scoreboard at Citi Field?

Anthony I.: Yeah. I have been a ribbon board extraordinaire. I control the ribbon boards excellently, I might [00:15:30] say.

Jamie: Can you describe the ribbon boards and how it operates?

Anthony I.: Sure. The ribbon board is the thin board that is in between the upper and lower decks, and it is mostly crowd reaction. If you know that the director called three strike, or not the director, but the umpire, it's two strikes, you know to hit the two-strike button just from watching the field and reacting to what the crowd does, whereas Jamie, he does [00:16:00] the [inaudible 00:15:59] where everything is programmed, and you work off the script. There is no leeway for your own input. Whereas the ribbon boards, you react to the crowd. You don't hear commands from the director really. You see what's going on. If it's two strikes, hit the two-strikes button. If Jamie puts up the clap hands board, I match it with clap hands. It's just very dynamic, the way you react with the crowd. I've also done other positions in the room, but I [00:16:30] would say the ribbon is my favorite.

Jamie: This job at Citi Field, it's not your common electrical work.

Anthony I.: It's not. No.

Jamie: Can you explain a little bit about how you do it, like what exactly you mean when you press the ribbon board, like the interaction? Can you just explain a little bit about how it works?

Anthony I.: Well, it's basically computer-based, but it's just like controlling any other machine. There's buttons, and the button has an action. You learn what [00:17:00] those buttons do, where they are in the computer, when to do what do you do. I would say you have to have a working knowledge of the system, and whether you learn it in the booth or you learn it before you get to the booth, it's a new skill set that you have to acclimate yourself to. It's another feather to put in your cap. Not many people can say they've had that experience to actually work for a major league baseball team and be a part of the New York [00:17:30] Mets and the feeling that you get from just being there. It's incredible. To be an electrician and have the opportunity to do that, whereas most of us have never gotten to work in the broadcasting industry or the white collar industry. It's a nice change, and it's a privilege, definitely.

Jamie: Anthony, do the skills from your job as an electrician or from your other jobs in the past help you do your job at Citi Field better? [00:18:00] How does that work?

Anthony I.: Yeah. I would say that everything you do in life would be preparation for the next thing you do. It's all live off experience, live off of ... the knowledge that you gain from anywhere. I went to school for broadcasting, so I came into the booth with a working knowledge of the equipment, but being in the local and being around [00:18:30] the people that can put you in the right position, that was really ... What's the word I'm looking for? I dropped it.

Jamie: It's an interesting part that you did that before you joined the local, and then all of a sudden you're back into the same kind of environment.

Anthony I.: Right. Exactly. Everything comes full circle. That was something I was proud of for a long time. [00:19:00] When I left the TV industry, solely, I was a little bit disappointed that I wasn't using my degree anymore. Now that I'm in the local, and I can use my A card and my degree, it's really the best of both worlds. It's a privilege. It's a great privilege.

Jamie: Can you tell me a little bit about your co-workers now, on the job that you are on now? How big of a crew is it, and [00:19:30] what kind of guys and girls do you have on your job?

Anthony I.: Well, I work for a small company called Nunez Electric. Small companies sometimes get a bad reputation because they don't do the \$100 million jobs, and they're not putting 40 stories up in the sky, but I feel like the smaller the crew, the more you get to know people, and you're not on a job with 45 electricians. [00:20:00] I'm on the job with five, so I get to know everybody, and I know who is good at what, who I can ask. It becomes a little bit more personal, whereas if you have way too many people, you kind of get lost in the crowd. You're just a number on a brass tag. I enjoy working for a small shop. I have guys that I work with on the job that are actually a little bit older than the average journeyman. I would say there's at least [00:20:30] four guys in the shop that are 60 plus.

Jamie: Senior guys on the job?

Anthony I.: Senior, seasoned electricians. I love picking their brain. Sometimes they get a little cranky, but it comes with age.

Barrie: What are some of the things that you learn from them?

Anthony I.: Just, I would say, technique more so than anything else. In the school they give you formulas as far as, for example, pipe bending. Once you finish the pipe [00:21:00] bending class, you know how to bend a 90, how to bend an offset, but it's the hands-on training and the wisdom you get from the older journeyman as of how to do it, the artistry of it all, to sit back and look and say, "Well, maybe that's not the best way to do it. Maybe if I do this, I'll avoid a problem in the future," or if you jammed yourself up, and you're in a problem, they can say, "This is how you fix it. Smooth it out, everything will be fine." It's not a problem unless you can't [00:21:30] fix it. I'd say that the wisdom and experience is really what I get the most from them.

Barrie: Do you have a favorite tool?

Anthony I.: I would say a linesman plier. A linesman plier is like an electrician's right hand. They're always in your hand regardless, whether you're using the strippers, pliers, a hammer. I would say my Excalibur, my go-to tool is my linesman. And a tester. You always have to [00:22:00] test. Testing is very important.

Barrie: Do you have any means to change them to be more yours or personal looking?

Anthony I.: Well, I bought the blue ones on purpose. I haven't changed them much since, but they're blue. I'm proud of that. I'd say personalization comes in when it comes to hard hat stickers and something [00:22:30] on your vest or your tool bag. I have a Klein backpack tool bag that not many people carry. It's original, and I have a giant IDW patch on it. You just put your little flare on.

Barrie: The work itself?

Anthony I.: Well, you always have to be proud of what you do, so you have to make sure that your name is definitely on what you do whether you like it or not. I always try to-

Barrie: Is there a signature style?

Anthony I.: A signature style? [00:23:00] Right now, being a very, very new journeyman, would be right.

Jamie: Do it right.

Anthony I.: Yeah. Do it right, and do it neat, and that would be it. A guy I work with right now, his name is Teddy. He's a very seasoned journeyman. He knows everything about everything. The way he does things is typically not the way most electricians do them, but he knows how to [00:23:30] manipulate the game so much that his original way is accepted, whereas most of us stick to 30 degree offsets, 45 degree offsets because it's standard. We work with a standard because it's easier to teach and it's easier to move forward, whereas he does everything custom to the job. He will bend a 14 degree offset if he has to. I would spend a half an hour trying to figure out [00:24:00] how to make this extravagant bend that he makes he just comes by, "Boop, boop, boop, boop, boop. Done." I'm like, "You're a genius, man." I'm like, "How do you do it?" He's been doing it for 35 years. That's how he does it. I would say that your signature has to be refined over time. Start out, just do it right, and then do it right and fast, and then do it right, fast, neat, clean. It all comes with experience.

Barrie: [00:24:30] What does the degrees explain? Like the bending? [inaudible 00:24:36]

Anthony I.: Yeah. Well, we get conduit or tubing in ten foot lengths, and you have to manipulate that ten foot length to fit any situation. Let's say there is a thermostat on the wall over there, and you have to run a pipe from that thermostat to a box over there. Whereas a plumber would connect two straight pipes [00:25:00] together, we bend our pipe and manipulate it to what we need to fit into the particular situation. With that a lot of geometry comes in, a lot of mathematics, a lot of visual space usage. You have to see what you have and work with what you have instead of ... Everything isn't just black and white. You have to adapt to the situation. That's where pipe bending comes in.

Jamie: [00:25:30] Yeah. We do have these benders. On the bender itself there's marks, and they show the degree. When you bend the conduit a certain distance, it will show what

degree you're at. A full sweep on a bender will give you the full 90 degrees to make an elbow.

Anthony I.: Right. We have levels too. It's not just ... You get good without the level in time, but we come with a level [00:26:00] that says 45 degrees, 90 degrees, 30 degrees. Yeah. It's not an easy thing to pick up, but I would say being an electrician is 75% mechanical, whereas most of it is installing equipment, whereas circuitry and the actual science of being an electrician doesn't really come in until, I would say, the end of the job. Most of it is mechanical, physically putting in stuff, [inaudible 00:26:29] [00:26:30] things like that. You can be really really well-versed at circuitry, and Ohm's law, and voltage drop, and things like that that you learn in theory, but unless you have your hands on it, and unless you actually physically get involved, there's really no other way, no other way to learn than that.

Jamie: Or if you don't do it for a long time you sometimes have to relearn it.

Anthony I.: Yeah. If you don't use it, you lose it. You can be an excellent circuit [00:27:00] guy, but you haven't been bent pipe in a year-and-a-half. You're going to have to brush up on those skills before you go back to do it. It's good to be a jack of all trades. It's good to have knowledge of all different phases of the job.

Jamie: You mentioned earlier something about artistic expression or you saw that something was artistic. Can you explain how that works a little bit in your job? What looks artistic or what [00:27:30] feels artistic when you do it?

Anthony I.: If we were just talking about conduit bending. If, let's just say, you have to do a rack of 25 conduits all going in the same direction. Having them meet ... It turns into a piece of art after a while because it's visually impressive. The artistry of it all is just like an artist [00:28:00] sees the picture in his head and then creates his piece of art. We have to sit back and see the project in our head, see the best way to do it, and then apply that artistry. Like I said before, everything's not black and white. You can't just go from point A to point B. Sometimes there's obstacles in the way. That's where the artistry comes in. You have to have that vision to see what you're doing before you do it, which honestly [00:28:30] I feel is the hardest part of the job. Again, experience will take care of that.

Barrie: Are there ways that you can say even in the time that you've been active doing this work that technology has affected the industry itself?

Anthony I.: Yeah. Just in the short time that I've been in the local, they've moved from corded drills to cordless drills, whereas when I was a first-year second-year apprentice, everybody was dragging extension cords around and [00:29:00] zipping boxes to the wall with a long extension cord. If you brought a cordless drill to the job, it was frowned upon. Why do you think it was frowned upon? Because we would provide the power? Anyway, technology has stepped up in just the eight years that I've been in the local whereas we have cordless wire cutters now. [00:29:30] We call them choppers, but I don't think that's the exact term. You would fit the wire chopper on the drill, wrap it around the wires, whereas five or six years ago you would be pumping and pumping with the

hydraulic pump, or giant bolt cutters that you're hugging to try and cut this giant wire. Things have gotten a little bit more automated.

Plus, seeing the way the industry changed as far as fiber optics, [00:30:00] that's something that's new that they're teaching us, high voltage splicing, or not high voltage, high fusion splicing. The different technologies that come in with Lutron systems have gotten much more advanced. Lutron would be a system that controls all the lighting in the building from one specific point. Fire alarm panels have become more technical, and devices have become more technical. As technology moves forward, so do we. [00:30:30] We have to adapt. Now the industry is moving into wireless devices, and you say "How does an electrician work with a wireless device?" Well, now we have to learn about RFIDs, radio frequencies. The next step that the industry is going to make, we are going to follow with it. The Local 3 likes to stay on the cutting edge of the electrical industry. That's what makes [00:31:00] us premier electricians.

Barrie: Can you say a little bit more about you did say about the current job that you're on. Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

Anthony I.: Sure. It's a total build out, meaning all different trades are represented on the job. There's plumbers, and steamfitters, and carpenters, and tin knockers.

Barrie: That reminds me actually. What are [00:31:30] the interactions between the other trades in general?

Anthony I.: Most of the time everything is positive. Most of the time we like to work with each other, help each other out. There can be a few snafus here and there where pride comes in. "I'm doing this, and you're in my way." That sort of thing. For the most part I would say that there's a camaraderie, and I want to say brotherhood, [00:32:00] or brotherhood and sisterhood. There's the unity in the union building trades because we are all on the same team. We're all on the same side fighting for the same cause. It's recognized. Plus there's a common experience because everybody has been through the apprenticeship, whether it's a sheet metal apprenticeship, plumbing apprenticeship. Everybody knows what it's like to go get sent for 25 egg sandwiches and have to dole out change for everybody exactly the way they want it. "Oh, my coffee [00:32:30] is cold." "Well, so is mine." "Mine is hot." Whether you're an electrician, a plumber, or carpenter, you know what it's like to grind that apprenticeship.

Also older, I don't want to say older, but more seasoned mechanics in other trades will gladly help you out if you need it. For instance today I was supposed to remove a piece of sheet rock, so I could install a box in a wall that has already been sheet [00:33:00] rocked, but the board adjacent to it was laminated to the wall, and I couldn't remove it. If I attempted it on my own, it would have punctured the wall, so I called the carpenter over. Then I was making small talk with for a while. I was like "Hey, can I ask you a question?" He was like "Yeah sure." He came by. It was all love. If he ever needs help, I'm there to help him, and that's how it goes.

Barrie: Do you have a favorite on the [00:33:30] job story?

Anthony I.: That's a tough one. Favorite on the job story? There's been many. I've been on the job for Christmas parties. I've been on the job where things have gone horribly wrong and we had to really grind to make sure they went right again. Every day is a different experience. To pinpoint one specific story I have to think a little bit. I would say every day there's a different story that happens.

Jamie: [00:34:00] Is there anything special that happened to you today?

Anthony I.: Anything special that happened today?

Jamie: That you can remember?

Anthony I.: Besides the carpenter interaction?

Jamie: That was today.

Anthony I.: That was today, absolutely. What else? Whereas the general contractor, he's the head honcho on the job, the GC, the job that I'm on now, in the beginning he was a little prickly. He was very stern and very cold, I guess you could say. [00:34:30] As we work together, "Hey, can you do this for me?" "Sure." Where someone would be like, "No, no, no. Talk to my foreman." One hand washes the other, and eventually people warm up. People become friendly, and it becomes a good work environment sometimes, more often than not. Let me try and think of a-

Jamie: I agree with you, man. My GC did the same thing to me on his last job. He was so mean at the beginning. Now he's just like a soft [00:35:00] buttery-

Anthony I.: Well, we are two smiley looking guys though. There are some good people on the job that might rub you the wrong way, but it's a rough industry. There's no complaining allowed. If you do complain, you're labeled as a complainer. I always bring this with me. I don't know why it's just stuck in my head, but as an apprentice I saw a piece of graffiti on the wall. I don't know who wrote it or why it was written but it said [00:35:30] "The three ups, show up, keep up, and shut up." As an apprentice, that's basically your job. That type of roughness after a while becomes endearing. This guy was like Clint Eastwood from Gran Torino, a mean guy but he's a softy, that sort of thing. Again, you take different personality traits from other people. This guy jokes all day long and still gets his work [00:36:00] done. This guy is very serious. You can never get him to smile. This one is always talking about his son. The personalities I feel are a really important part of being in the building trade, in the union building trade.

When my father retired, I asked him, I said, "Do you miss it? Do you miss work?" He's like, "Absolutely not. What I miss are the guys." That's it. He's still, he's 65 [00:36:30] now, and he's been retired for a couple years. He'll still good go to Union meetings just to say hi. He has no real reason to go, but he just wants to see people, and talk, and get that feeling of camaraderie back again, which is also another reason why I left the industry that I was in and came to the union. The TV industry is very here-today-gone-tomorrow, very [00:37:00] flighty, very on your own, very tightrope, no net sort of

situation. People are always shucking and jiving to get up and get to the next spot, so they are always, this one's going to do this to circumnavigate the system, whereas in the union we are all equal. Most of us are all journeymen, and if you're not you're an apprentice and you will be a journeyman. It levels the playing field a [00:37:30] little bit, which I felt I needed when I was in the other industry, that camaraderie that I wasn't getting. It was more so me against the world when I was out there. Now that I'm a part of a local, it's us, and I don't feel alone. It's a big deal for me anyway.

Barrie: Do you think you'll suggest your son to go to the union? Is that something would you encourage him?

Anthony I.: I would definitely say that yeah, I would encourage [00:38:00] it, but I wouldn't want him to put all his eggs in one basket. Where is I went to college first and then decided on my own that the local was where I wanted to go, I wouldn't say "Son, go to the union. Don't go to college. I would let him hold his own personality. If I feel that he would be best served in the union, I would suggest it. I would say "I lived a great life. Grandpa lived a great life. You want to live a great life? Or you can see how you fare [00:38:30] in the battleground." It's all up to him. I actually do appreciate changing careers at such a late point in life. Not that it was old, but 27 seems to be older for a career change. Now coming up on 37, I'm grateful I did it. It was the right choice, but I'm also thankful that I have both sides. I have both educations. I have my degree. I [00:39:00] have my scholastic abilities and also now my technical. I have both sides of the coin. I appreciate that.

Barrie: If there was something that you would change about your job what might that be?

Anthony I.: Transparency. I feel that a lot of people have good suggestions that would benefit the local, but are too scared [00:39:30] to say because they're afraid of being blackballed. I've had a few suggestions that I said out loud just in passing, and people are like, "Well, brother, have you raised your hand in the union?" I'm like, "First of all, I'm nobody right now. Pretty soon I might not be. Pretty soon I might be somebody, but no one wants to hear what I have to say right now." A lot of people are scared to open their mouth and make a suggestion or say that something might not be working as efficiently as it should be because they are [00:40:00] afraid to be put on some mysterious blacklist that I don't even know exists. I've never seen or heard of anything like that, but people are afraid to speak up sometimes for what's right. I feel that as time goes on the more progressive the union guess, hopefully that stigma will go away, and people will get more involved. That's really what we are doing now with the Renew Project and with everything. We're trying to get the young workers involved.

Barrie: The Renew Project? What's that?

Anthony I.: [00:40:30] Jamie might be able to explain that a little bit better.

Jamie: Yeah. I guess there's a really large youth initiative across all unions, and that's what they've labeled it, I think. There's a young workers initiative in the Local 3 as well. The local is not blind that the youth needs to be involved if there is to be a future for

unionism itself. Anthony and I are both very active in that and [00:41:00] we support that.

Anthony I.: Yeah. Absolutely.

Barrie: So you have young workers in your life that you mentor or something?

Anthony I.: Well I'm a mentee. I'm a mentee, but I feel like when I get a little bit more experience and a few more feathers in my cap then I will take on a mentor. Yeah, I will take on a mentee. I'll become a mentor. I definitely have apprentice friends that I am there for no matter what they need, but as far as an official [00:41:30] title like being assigned to an apprentice, no, I have been assigned an apprentice yet, but I have unofficial mentees that ask me things. I give them the best advice, I can but I also inform them that I'm new in the game as well. Maybe you should ask Teddy who's about to retire next year. That collective knowledge is really the treasure of the local. What this guy doesn't know, that one does, and so on, and so forth. Then [00:42:00] eventually well-rounded is the goal.

Jamie: That's [inaudible 00:42:06]. You do have apprentices that you do talk to. We do have a mentor program that started a few years ago officially, but I've always had a mentor even when the program wasn't around.

Anthony I.: That's my mentor.

Jamie: I think that does exist. What do you think is a good local [00:42:30] tradition we have besides the mentorship that we always do with our apprenticeship?

Anthony I.: Oh there's many. There's many traditions that I feel that it's important that we keep going, and it's important that we add more. For instance there's a Christmas party every year. The apprentices get involved. They do Toys for Tots. They decorate the tree. There's an area of Queens called the Electchester that is predominately electricians, started by Harry Van Arsdale years ago many years ago. [00:43:00] We being the apprentices, we decorate the giant Christmas tree in the middle of Electchester. We have a big Christmas party at the local at the end of the year, and bring the neighborhood kids, give out toys. It's a really heartfelt thing and everybody gets a lot out of it. The kids get a lot out of it. We get a lot out of it because we get to give back.

It gives newer apprentices the chance to see what it's like to be positively involved [00:43:30] because there's a group ... A few electricians are into just working, and going home, and not being involved, not being as involved as they can. There was an era of time where that was predominately the attitude in the local. Now we are working to counteract that attitude and show them that you can be positively involved, and you can positively affect [00:44:00] other people's lives as well as your own. It adds more to the job. It's not just a job. It's a lifestyle. I am part of a brotherhood, sisterhood. I'm part of something bigger than myself, whereas, again, working freelance, you're out in the cold, on your own, and that's that.

Barrie: Did you also live in Electchester when you were an apprentice?

Anthony I.: No. It's actually kind of hard to get in. I was fortunate enough to where [00:44:30] when I did join the local and took tremendous pay cut to become a first-year apprentice, my father let me move back into the house for nothing. Instead of waiting on the waiting list to get into Electchester, which would have been really nice, but it's a long list, I just move back home with the folks and when I became an MIJ, and my salary allowed me to, right back out again. Yeah. If I didn't have [00:45:00] that option I would have aggressively pursued fee Electchester apartment because it's the best deal for someone in that position. Fortunately I didn't, I had other options. I went back home, home cooked meal and laundry that sort of thing.

Jamie: Can you say a little bit more about Electchester and what it is for, how it's used?

Anthony I.: Yeah. Well, Electchester, I believe, was started for [00:45:30] affordable housing for members of the local because apprentices don't really make so much. Harry Van Arsdale acquired this property. Actually, Jewel Avenue was named after him because of that. Now it's Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Boulevard. It's a community that started out for electricians to be able to sustain their life centrally located, I guess you could say.

Jamie: Yeah, [00:46:00] and build community, right?

Anthony I.: Yeah. We built our own community. We're right across the street from the union halls, so if there's any volunteering, or phone banks, anything that needs to be done, you're a hop, skip, and a jump from the local. It solidified the sense of community a little bit more. Your neighbor down the hallway, he's an electrician. Your neighbor next door, he's an electrician. She's an electrician right down there. You see people after work. You see their kids. [00:46:30] You see the family. You see them pushing the grocery cart down the grocery aisle. It just, it added to the camaraderie of the local, I feel. After generations of Electchester being there, it just gets more and more solid. Right?

Jamie: I totally agree.

Anthony I.: Awesome.

Jamie: Anthony, I didn't know about your pops being a union member. I'm thinking how was your relationship with your father and [00:47:00] how it influenced you to become a union member and an electrician at that?

Anthony I.: Well, I'd say before it influenced my unionism and my choice to be an electrician. Having a father in the building trades really strengthened my work ethic and values that he taught me that he learned in the local. I kind of had a jump on [00:47:30] the education before I got in because I saw how he moved in his life. He was a welder in the plumber's local. I remember one time he was welding on his back at JFK runway, and a piece of hot metal went into his eye, and stuck into his eye. He went to the hospital, and they used a grinder to grind out a piece of his [00:48:00] eye. He put a patch on his eye, and he went home. He said to me "You want to go to school tomorrow?" I was like "What kind of question is that? No." He's like "Do you want me to work?" I was like "What?" He's like "Yeah." All right.

I got in the car. I was probably 16, 17, and I drove him to work. I waited in the car while he did his work with one eye and just would not miss work. He would not miss work. He [00:48:30] worked all day, seven to three as a plumber, and then went to the school and taught plumbing in the school until 8:30, 9:00 at night. There were two to three days a week that I didn't see my father. I'm like "What are you doing? You're killing yourself." He sent me to military school. He sent me to La Salle Military Academy out in Oakdale. He sent me to C.W. Post, [00:49:00] Long Island University.

He broke his back to afford the things, to give us that level of life. I always admired that, and his work ethic, and his drive, and his standup-ness. He's always willing to help another brother. He has that union gumption about him. Having that before I got into a local was a step up. Now people always hear me on the job tell stories about my job. "My dad told me this. [00:49:30] My dad says this and that. Better be looking at it than looking for it. Or chaos equals [inaudible 00:49:35]." Whatever little sayings that he had, I always bring with me to the job. They're like "Was your dad in the business?" I'm like "He's a plumber." "Really? Why aren't you a plumber?" I'm like "I like electric better." Yeah. Coincidentally, my uncle, my cousin, I have a lot of people in Local 1. I was the oddball that decided "I'm going to start my own path, [00:50:00] and I'm going to be the first Incandela that is an electrician."

Jamie: Anthony, I feel that there's somewhat of a plumber electrician rivalry or some kind of rubbing against each other that ruffles feathers. How does that work at home?

Anthony I.: It's tough.

Jamie: Does it?

Anthony I.: Yeah. They make jokes about me being, "Oh, electricians are so dainty. They want to be clean when they work." I make jokes about them. "At least I can bite my fingernails. [00:50:30] I'm not going to be humping a bathtub up the steps at 60 years old." We go back and forth with the rivalry a lot. I'm outnumbered, but I'm also a little bit wittier than them. Being an electrician, that's how it is. Plumbers are little duller than us. If there are any plumbers listening to this, it's all in love. That's what the rivalry is. I'm proud to be an electrician. They're proud to be plumbers. You can't tell us different.

Jamie: [00:51:00] Very cool, Anthony. I'm so proud of you, man, after you came out and showed some love.

Anthony I.: Oh, man, I'm proud to be here. Thank you so much.

Jamie: Does anyone have anything for Anthony?

Barrie: Thanks so much.

Anthony I.: Oh, no. It-

Jamie: Anthony, how does it feel to be a first generation electrician?

Anthony I.: To be a first generation electrician in a family full of plumbers?

Jamie: Right, or just in general. How does it feel? What does it feel like to be that?

Anthony I.: I feel like a pioneer [00:51:30] because, like I said, my father paved the way for me as far as plumbing, but he wouldn't touch electric. He doesn't have the guts to go for it because he's worried about getting blown up.

Barrie: [inaudible 00:51:43]

Anthony I.: Yeah.

Barrie: Excuse me.

Anthony I.: I feel a sense of pride because I blazed my own trail, whereas my cousin, my father said "Do you want to be a plumber?" He said [00:52:00] "Yeah." Now he's a plumber.

Jamie: Does he ask you to do things for him?

Anthony I.: Absolutely. Yeah.

Jamie: Like you father is doing something, "Come over here and fix this light for me."

Anthony I.: Listen, if you're an electrician, the people in your family want electric work. That's it. Like grandma, anyone, they're like "Can you put a switch over here?" I'm like "But I'd have to break open your wall. Do you really want me to do that?" Yeah. Ceiling fans, that's the biggest thing. Everybody wants a ceiling fan.

Barrie: You can trade plumbing for electrical [00:52:30] work.

Anthony I.: Definitely. My cousin comes over and does my plumbing, and I go to his house, and I do his electric. I tell him "All we need is a carpenter now. We could start our own company." As far as being the first electrician, there would have been a sense of pride if I went into the plumber's union because of the legacy. "You're Joe Incandela's son, this and that." I also really wanted to kind of avoid that because my cousins "Oh, you're Joey's [00:53:00] nephew," this and that, "You're Danny's son." I just want to be my own man. I always have been. It makes him a little bit more proud that I set my own path. Nobody got me in. I walked in the front door just like everybody else. Also, it's sad to say, but I think he's gained a little bit more respect for me since I've been in the building trades.

When I went to school for broadcasting, [00:53:30] freshman year, sophomore year, he goes "TV production? Really? You think you're going to produce television?" I said "Yeah. I am." He's just like "Okay, I support you, but the local is here if you need it." I'm like "Please. I don't want to hear the word local. I'm going to do this thing, and I'm going to do it." I did it. I made a movie. I made a movie called Tupac Resurrection, got my name in credits. I have worked for reputable shows, True Life. I've worked for MTV

News [00:54:00] and Docs. I was the direct assistant to Lauren Lazin, the Senior Vice President for MTV. Again, well rounded. I have this, and I have that. While I was doing the TV industry, and I was proud of that, he was like "Are you sure?" Still. He knew it was freelance, and he knew that I needed-

Barrie: The culture, too.

Anthony I.: Yeah. I needed to be building my 401k, I needed to build for a future. When I left the TV industry and went into the building trades, [00:54:30] he looked more proud when I got my A card than I got my bachelor's degree. When I walked down the aisle, and I got my bachelor's degree, he was proud, but when I got that A card, he was really proud. He was like "My son's a journeyman," that sort of thing.

Jamie: Was he there when you got your A card?

Anthony I.: Yeah. Of course he was there.

Jamie: How did it feel for you when he handed you ... Did he hand you the A card?

Anthony I.: No. He didn't hand it to me. I got it from ... I forgot the man's name on the [inaudible 00:54:54].

Jamie: He was there in the room though?

Anthony I.: Yeah. He was around. He was just very proud. [00:55:00] It felt good to "I'm doing this now." It was an accomplishment to make it through the apprenticeship because there was a lot of ... I don't want to say bitching and moaning, but fussing and complaining during the apprenticeship, like "Oh, Dad, this guy's complaining about his egg sandwich, and all I want to do is learn my work. He's making me carry coffee to him and this and that." He called me boy. He's pretty gruff. "Boy, this is how you learn. You're making your bones." [00:55:30] I'm like "Yeah. Well, it doesn't seem that way now." Looking back at it, it's a very valuable lesson. Going through the hardships make you a stronger ... If you didn't have to go through that, and you were handed an A card, I don't know if it would be as valuable. When we were apprentices, when it was TA1, first year, second year, I remember there was a lot of jokes kicked around. I actually suggested, put it out there once. [00:56:00] I said "Would you do a year in jail if it meant you came out with an A card at the end?" A guy's like "Yeah." You don't want to be handed anything. You want to earn it.

As an apprentice, you make that joke. If there was a golden ticket, would you take it? Yeah. Because you don't want to break your neck doing the little stuff. Once you achieve that A card goal, once you become a mechanic, an A journeyman, you look back on your experiences [00:56:30] as learning experiences, as merit badges and stripes on your shoulder. "I did this." Now when the kid comes up to you with a cold egg sandwich, "What is this? I want ketchup, salt, and pepper." You give it back. I'm a little bit nicer with the kids because I'm fresh out of the apprenticeship, so I know what it's like.

Jamie: Yeah. I don't believe that you're tough on the apprentices.

Anthony I.: No. I can't be. I don't like being tough on anybody. As a matter of fact, you said job [00:57:00] site story. Not Monday, because we weren't working Monday, but the beginning, right when we came back, the old guy, Teddy, was really losing his patience with the apprentice. He's a second year. He is old, stuck in his ways, and knows exactly how to do it. If you don't show an effort in wanting to learn, he gets frustrated, curses you, and walks away. I had to take Teddy to the side. I was like "Ted, you were just teaching me [00:57:30] the exact same thing last year. Smooth the kid out. Easy. Be gracious. You don't have to be so mean and so messed up all the time." He's just like "The kid doesn't want to learn." He's from Romania. "The kid, he doesn't want to learn. I don't know what to do." I'm just like "Listen. Calm down." I smooth it out between the mechanic and the apprentice, and everything is cool.

Jamie: You became almost like a buffer.

Anthony I.: Yeah. Exactly.

Jamie: Smooth it out a little bit so the day can continue and not be so [00:58:00] abrupt.

Anthony I.: Yeah. I feel I need that because I wish somebody did that with me. I've had people literally throw coffee at me. [inaudible 00:58:05] I came in as a grown man, so my pride was up. I wasn't 19. I was 27. I'm like "I've been around the world already. I've been here, here, here. I've done this. Who are you to say anything to me?" He's a journeyman. That's who he is. It's just like the military. You could be somebody, whoever you are. Once you get into the military, [00:58:30] they shave your head, and you're nobody again until you build yourself back up. That's the point. Being the buffer between the old ornery guy and the young green guy, I feel like that's my place now. I like that.

Jamie: You feel comfortable in your space.

Anthony I.: Yeah, whereas I was nervous as a cat in a rocking chair factory. Back when I was a young apprentice, I couldn't put a foot right. Everything was wrong. I was very nervous. You probably remember seeing me like that, [00:59:00] especially in the booth. The more you go, the more comfortable you become. You can tell the old guy "Calm down." Tell the young guy "Listen. Get off your phone. No more Facebook. Now we're doing wiring." You get to find your ground. Then a couple years, I'll be that old guy. I think I'll be all right.

Jamie: I think you'll be a little more chill, a little more [crosstalk 00:59:26]

Anthony I.: Of course. I'm not going to beat nobody up.

Barrie: Do you think your [00:59:30] path would have been more difficult if you were a woman?

Anthony I.: Yes. Absolutely. I do think so. People don't go out of the way to make it hard for women in the local anymore, but in the '80s ... When did they first come in? Late '80s, right?

Jamie: I'm not sure.

Anthony I.: It wasn't always that way. A woman would come on the job, and we'd all have to carry 100 feet of pipe at one time. [01:00:00] 100 feet of pipe on your shoulder, very heavy. You might not let your sister carry that. Then people start looking at that is "If I got to do it." Again, it goes with whose strengths and whose weaknesses. She might be able to do the panel 100 times better than you, neater, cleaner, and nicer. I feel that it would be difficult in a sense that you would have to, again, blaze your own trail since you're new. Since women are newer [01:00:30] to the local than men, I wouldn't say they have something to prove, but they want to prove to themselves that they're as capable as we are at doing anything. Me personally, I know I would make it harder on myself because I'm harder on myself, but we don't go out of our way to make it harder on the women.

Me personally, I would because I'm hard on myself. It's harder because it's physically demanding work. It's tough. A lot of times, my body, I come home beat up. I'm like [01:01:00] "Advil." It's tough on anyone. If you're 5'5", 100 pounds, it's going to be a little bit harder than if you're 5'10", 200. Basically that's it. Here, I've known a lot of proficient female journeymen that know their job well, and you can learn a lot from them. Whereas they might not have the bull strength [01:01:30] that everyone else does, it doesn't matter because you learn to work smarter and not harder. There's no need to lift. There's partners around. There's things. There's different trials that whether they put themselves through it or they have to go through it working with maybe close minded people that aren't so accepting, old school people that are stuck in their ways ... "Oh, they're going to give me the girl? Oh, man. [01:02:00] I'm working by myself today? Is that what it means?"

Which is the wrong attitude to have, but us, I'd say people that came in after 2005, 2002, we have more of an accepting attitude because the younger generation, we're used to being inclusive, whereas the older generation, they're used to working with all men. That's just how it is. They take their pants off in the shanty and change their clothes. Now that there's women on the job, [01:02:30] you have to go to the locker room, bathroom, whatever to change your clothes. Just things, off color jokes, are a little bit sensitive. You have to know who you can say what to and be careful. You might not mean an offense, but it might be taken that way.

As the years progress, and the culture becomes more and more inclusive, there's other cultures. Women are now just as much a part of the local [01:03:00] as we are, but there's the LGBT community that's unspoken about in the local. You can see it, but nobody says anything. Sometimes there's one or two transgender apprentices. No one says anything. Friends know. It's just the older generation isn't as accepting [01:03:30] and easy as we are. To me, I'm working with a human. That's all I care about, whereas the old guys are like "Did you see? That's a man." Please. You don't know ... Again, I keep referencing the old guy, Teddy. I won't give his last name, but he's really bad at that. He says things that I'm just like ... me as a normal grownup in this time, I things like

that I'm like, "Bro you can't say that. You [01:04:00] can't, how would you even believe that?"

60+ years old, they're stuck in their ways, and I feel that now since ... The women in the local are so accepted and so a part of the local as the men are now, I feel like years to come, other communities will also be just as accepted. That's what being part of a union is about. [01:04:30] We all make the same reference, we all open up our paychecks in front of each other, because we all make the same money. It's supposed to be equal playing field.

Setare: Do you think race would be a factor that make either easier or harder to become an electrician? Before and today.

Anthony I.: In the past it would have been harder. I feel that today the [01:05:00] door might be easier to push open because of acts. There's the NOW act for women. There's a ... is it NOW? I can't remember the acronym. New maybe? Possibly, I don't know. There's an avenue that female construction workers can take that might fast track their getting into the apprenticeship. [01:05:30] Whereas I don't know from my own experience but I hear back in the '70s there was something called the coalition, where their sole purpose was to bring more minorities onto the job. They would show up and be like, "Why are there no African Americans here? Why are there no Latinos here?" And they would try to even out the playing field. I feel like the path that they made in the '70s opened up doors for us now, whereas [01:06:00] our generation doesn't see that.

Our generation, we're just brothers, we're all brothers and sisters. The way in, the door was already opened by the people in the '70s, and back then it would have been very hard to get in. Like I said it's a lot of nepotism, father son, close the door, whereas now we're trying to be inclusive as possible, and we're trying to unionize as many people as possible. One of [01:06:30] the goals of the union is to find non-union shops, speak to them about fair wages, collective bargaining, rights, safety, and see if we can unionize them. A lot of people are saying we're flooding the market, they're saying, "If everybody's union then what's union?" But that [inaudible 01:06:50] goal was to give everyone fair wages, and give everyone rights, and benefits, [01:07:00] and safety.

Being as inclusive as possible is now the goal of the union I would say, and as the orders go out, [inaudible] stay stronger and continue that attitude of inclusion.

Setare: Thank you.

Barrie: Can you say a little bit about, if it's really hard to get in, and yet there's this desire to organize everyone, how does that work?

Anthony I.: [01:07:30] Non union shops are approached by organizers. They say to help this ... I don't want to say battle, I don't want to say struggle, but to help this situation that we're in, non-union versus union and educated, non-educated, safe, not safe.

Jamie: Well there's representation.

Anthony I.: Yeah. The representative will go to that shop, and they will say, "We're going to take [01:08:00] all of you guys in, you will all become part of the local, and continue the job you're on." Now that job is a union job. If you're not part of a company, if you're an individual, and you want to get in and start from the ground floor, you have to fill out the application, pass the aptitude test, pass the interview, which ... I showed up to my interview in construction clothes. No one told me, and I was pissed at my father for not telling me that. Everyone else in the interview [01:08:30] process were in suits, and I'm in boots and pants and I was like, "Isn't this what you're supposed to wear? I didn't know." Anyway, yeah if you want to start at the ground floor, it's a little bit more difficult because they choose when they open the books to bring in more classes, and government funding for the NJATC. The journeymen apprenticeship training program is a big part of it, so they have to get the money from Albany for another class, that also affects opening the doors.

Barrie: Different track.

Anthony I.: Yeah, different [01:09:00] track. There's different divisions for that. There's the M division, there's the AT division, so if we -

Barrie: What's that one mean?

Anthony I.: AT is telephone.

Jamie: A telephone.

Anthony I.: A telephone, meaning you're a journeymen but you'll play with phone lines and stuff.

Jamie: Journeymen are organized workers. They don't go to their apprenticeship but they still become mechanics.

Barrie: Union mechanics.

Jamie: [01:09:30] Right.

Anthony I.: Yeah. Awesome. Thank you guys.

Jamie: Thanks for putting in a couple extra minutes, the first generation thing