

Harold Garcia

Speaker 1: All right, Harry G.

So as you charge up, let's give you a little low down of the little spiel that I got going on over here. All right?

Harry Garcia: Sure.

Speaker 1: This project is based off of something that I always dreamed about doing as a young apprentice. I thought about going [00:00:30] from job to job as almost like a journalist and recording conversations with journey men and women. Those stories, when you have conversations on the job with your journeymen, they get real deep and they talk to you about all different kinds of things. I always wanted to record that stuff because I always felt like it got lost.

Harry Garcia: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 1: You can never [00:01:00] go back to those words or that emotion. This archive is like a piece of that or trying to recreate a piece of what happens on that job between workers and have workers tell their own story.

Harry Garcia: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 1: So, I'm going to ask you a few questions.

Harry Garcia: Sure.

Speaker 1: And we can start off by if you would please tell us your name and your job title and where you currently live.

Harry Garcia: My name is Harold [00:01:30] Garcia. I'm known in the business as Harry. My job title is, I am an A Journeyman Inside Wireman for Local 3 International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. And I live in a neighborhood that was built by Local 3 in an area of Queens known as Fresh Meadows, borderline Flushing, called Electchester. They took the [00:02:00] word "elect" from "electric" and added the "chester" to make Electchester. The neighborhood, if you fly overhead, the buildings, they form a journeyman bending a piece of pipe, which is incredibly creative going back to 1950s or whenever they designed it. That's where I live.

Speaker 1: Okay. A lot of the people ... You did a great job explaining where Electchester is, but a lot of people that are going [00:02:30] to be listening to this may not be electricians or may not know the exact terms or what you're speaking about, so

when we speak about certain things, maybe you can elaborate a little bit on the definition of certain terms?

Harry Garcia: Sure.

Speaker 1: That would be great.

Harry Garcia: Sure.

Speaker 1: Maybe we can come back to Electchester a little bit later. As for now, can you tell us about your background and where you were born, where your parents are from?

Harry Garcia: Sure. My parents, my [00:03:00] mother was born in Puerto Rico in 1930. My father was born in New York and then at four years old, was sent to Puerto Rico and he was there until he was 18. He was born in 1932. They both came here around 1950. Prior to the start of the Korean War, my father signed [00:03:30] up and fought in the Korean War and the role that the generation that my father came from where my mother, his wife, was concerned, was to wait for him to come home and alive in one piece and to start a family and start the process of a life as a married couple with children and raising those children [00:04:00] and getting them the best that they could possibly get them, of which I'm one of the recipients of that effort. In a time, historically, when the focus of a lot of the policies that the United States had, were to engender growth for working class people and to give them the opportunity to move forward and to make things accessible and feasible and reachable.

[00:04:30] To that end, my father worked in various factories and manufacturing jobs here in the New York City area but it wasn't until a very good friend of his suggested that he come to work for one of the ... a manufacturing establishments that had an agreement with a union. [00:05:00] It wasn't until that time that my father really understood the tremendous impact that that would have on his life with his wife and for his children. The important thing, as relates to my background, about my parents' background is that that moment in which my father went to work in ... I believe the name of the shop was called [Gotham 00:05:29] Lighting and it was in [00:05:30] Astoria.

The critical part of that was, because Gotham Lighting had a working agreement with Local Union #3, that means that my father and many of the workers that were there, which at the time were Puerto Ricans, Italians, Irish, African Americans, Jewish Americans, was the predominant mix we had in New York at that time. But for them, it really meant [00:06:00] that they can secure consistent wages, medical benefits, and the things they would need to raise a family and help them have more so they could participate more fully and nicer communities and educational endeavors and hopefully have the children move to another level that my father's generation couldn't. That, specifically, meant college.

As [00:06:30] one of those children, I was able to grow up in this neighborhood. Again, my father, as he became more aware of all the things that Harry Van Arsdale and Local 3 had put together for working people, he came to know about the neighborhood called Electchester that I mentioned earlier. He was able to move into Electchester in the [00:07:00] mid 60s. That was a tremendous, tremendous opportunity for my father and many, many people who were working class people. Electchester represented, truly, an opportunity to be in a great, safe community with great schools and it felt very much like you were in the suburbs. The important thing about that vision, as [00:07:30] was the case for Harry Van Arsdale and Local Union #3, was that this was becoming something that was being done by different unions and being copied around the world, which is to create working class communities built, owned, managed, and maintained by those workers and their labor organizations.

Electchester for me, as a kid now growing up, was [00:08:00] tremendously impactful because it took my father out of being in East Harlem, which had a specific type of ... had a certain set of challenges in the 60s for a young family. A man and a wife with young children in the 60s in East Harlem, there were a lot of challenges. They're typical things. We had the Civil Rights Movement going on, but the economics of living in East [00:08:30] Harlem put my parents in a very precarious scenario to protect their offspring from the dangers and the things that happened. Electchester took all of that risk, all of that danger, all of those worries, away. That was a huge, huge release, psychological burden they didn't have to deal with. The beautiful thing about that is that that really created a tremendous [00:09:00] sense of loyalty. The people that came through in that time had all of their prayers answered by Local 3 because they were able to, in many cases, have a better standard of living, have a great place to raise their kids, and have a great retirement package.

Those things are relevant today. It is just as relevant [00:09:30] today as it was in the 50s. I grew up under the beautiful happiness of the love of my mother and my father living in Electchester and they were so fulfilled and happy that they could be there and do this for their children. Those were impactful things for me as a child growing up because the way in which I was introduced into what [00:10:00] the world of a labor organization is, to a young child, was really by my father's dinner table discussions when we were kids about some of the battles that the union was taking on to improve the working conditions of men and women in New York City, as we were the recipients of the work he had done by living in Electchester.

So, he had this tremendous kind of [circum 00:10:30] [00:10:30] vitae of accomplishments. At the time that I come into this ... I'm born in 1961. I'm coming into the history of this after a lot of the legacy battles were fought and won. It wasn't until Roosevelt that the National Labor Relations Act was passed. That gave unions the right to bargain collectively. [00:11:00] My father doesn't come into it until the 50s, coming back from the Korean War and now I'm a kid in the 60s. So, 30 years before I'm born, there's all this history of all these great men who were fighting for 30 years later. Now I'm the young kid and receiving

the fruits of those battles that they fought. There were many great labor battles with [00:11:30] great, great, distinctive and genuine labor leaders who were able to vocalize to the United States and its capitalist passion and intoxication that there's got to be a way for working people to move up and move on and that the treatment of workers that was demonstrated was not healthy at all.

I often say, [00:12:00] if industry, if capital, if titans of industry, would have treated working people the right way, would have provided for their future, provided for their healthcare, provided for them to have great places to live, to change the working conditions so that they were safe and they had a certain number of hours and there was overtime and children were safe, there would never have been a labor movement. It's always the behavior of industry [00:12:30] unwatched, unfettered, that creates a scenario where the bottom line and things relevant to revenue supersede the conditions and the quality that we give the people doing the work.

Prior to me coming into my life in Electchester, all of those battles ... And they were bloody battles ... were fought and they were fought before 1932. 1932 is the point at which [00:13:00] it gets signed into law by Roosevelt. So, there's a long, long standing argument, philosophical debate, with the premise of what capitalism provides in terms of free markets and allowing people to manifest themselves freely. At the same time, capitalism has a dark side. The dark side is countered [00:13:30] by the labor movement. Whether people like it or not, you have to really go back in history to see how industry was treating working people, not only here in the United States, but because I'm an American, I'm talking about it in that context. There's a lot to discover in different parts of the world.

So, all of those things are relevant in shaping my background and who I am and the tone and tenor of my voice because I'm also a person of color. [00:14:00] I'm a Puerto Rican-American. That might be redundant because if you're born in Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico is a property of the United States. It's a commonwealth. I'm not going to get into that history so much. But more important that my father's participation, my participation here in New York and the United States, comes with the understanding that the United States was having issues with people of color internally and their [00:14:30] treatment of African Americans. That history, as we all know, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, we can go through the list, but the labor movement was in lockstep with the philosophical argument that the Civil Rights Movement was making and the argument about the quality of life that we provide for our American [00:15:00] people, was what the 60s were saying in the face of what was a very deeply divided black and white historical relationship, which the labor movement, at that time, was able to perfectly embrace people of color. Way back then.

My father was a beneficiary of that vision, that openness, that insight. They made it possible for people [00:15:30] to move up and to excel and to grow and to become and to speak and to have knowledge and to participate and to be

included and to have a voice that resonates with all the other voices, whether they're in opposition to the argument at the moment or whether they're in sync with the argument at the moment. All people, at that time, said, "Hey, I exist. It's not 300 years ago. We're here now [00:16:00] and we have to take a stand." That's why my childhood was very, very, very, very affected by the tone of those things. I grew up watching ... Even though I was a little kid ... watching the Civil Rights Movement. I grew up watching labor speeches. I grew up watching young people in colleges argue about what was right and what was wrong. I grew up watching the Black Panther Party. [00:16:30] I grew up watching the Young Lords.

I read lots of books at a very young age. There was an author named Piri Thomas. He wrote a book called *Down These Mean Streets* where he chronicles the story of Puerto Ricans in New York in the 50s, 60s, and early 70s. So, for me, the philosophy of what the labor movement was about was completely in the center of who I was. I believed in what labor was arguing and I believed in the leaders that came before it [00:17:00] because, essentially, they were saying, "Hey. You can't have something that's built on a constitution that elicits a framework for what we're doing here, in this country, because of what wasn't done in another country. And in the same breath, do the very wrong thing around that framework, which was to not allow people to participate."

So, the labor movement, [00:17:30] for me as a kid, I was very, very emboldened by standing up in a room with a group of people who were making the argument that we need better wages, hours, working conditions, and we need to negotiate in a collective bargaining agreement that our voice is important and how you consider us, our consideration, the good-will for us, has [00:18:00] to be discussed equally. And we have to have this process exist and flourish and grow and that's important for the balance. Growing up, I had a tremendous experience watching the young men, in Local 3, who were part of an organization called the Santiago Iglesias Educational Society, which is a working men's organization [00:18:30] predominantly populated by Puerto Rican men, but there were other men from the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and various parts of Latin America, but at the time, the predominant population were Puerto Ricans. I watched these young men who had families, grow this organization, develop the intellectual capacity to argue for things based on the leadership provided them by the great Local 3 and their example and [00:19:00] all the accomplishments that they had, which that was led by Harry Van Arsdale.

So, here you have a group of hard-working Puerto Rican men and Latino men and African Americans in Local 3 who are following this great man, Harry Van Arsdale, in the middle of the Civil Rights Movement. That was impressive because the truth of what was being said was the bottom line. [00:19:30] The results that were being delivered to families, again, of which I was a recipient, is the bottom line. So the reverence to, as people call it, the union, which is really the wrong word ... People say, "I developed the reverence for the arguments that made sense for the advancement of working people by Local 3 and Harry Van Arsdale and all of the people that [00:20:00] were on board with that

argument." It was a beautiful, beautiful thing growing up because everybody in that neighborhood had an association with Local 3.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Harry Garcia: It was a unique childhood.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Harry Garcia: There was this very, very distinctive quality about that childhood and one of the things that I loved, which was one of the traditions [00:20:30] that I got to witness was that on Sunday morning, you would see ... I would see and I witnessed and many times, I rode with them, the head of the labor organization, Local 3, Harry Van Arsdale, get on the bus on Sunday, take the bus and go to church. We would all get on that bus. And he would ride the bus. He didn't have to ride the bus, but, I'm a little kid and I [00:21:00] hear my father throughout my whole life talk about Harry Van Arsdale, the great accomplishments, and the argument that we're making as workers and the advancement of workers. He became like legend to me, the same way you think of a baseball player or president or anyone who has that charismatic but accomplished history.

I'd go down to the corner, there he'd be waiting for the bus. We would be lined up, on line for the bus like, "Oh my God, Mr. Van Arsdale's on [00:21:30] line with the bus," him and his wife, Margaret. It was amazing as a kid. It's like seeing the CEO get on the bus with you. What a statement.

This was impactful to me. He said, "I am just like you. I'm going to ride the bus. You ride the bus, I ride the bus and we're all going to church. And this is our neighborhood." I don't know that you can really quantify on a young person's mind ... You got [00:22:00] to imagine, now I'm 7, 8, 9, 10 years old, seeing this every Sunday ... mostly every Sunday ... the impact of that on a young mind. It taught me something phenomenal about leadership. And it was more that it wasn't an egalitarian position. It was a position of humility to be a leader of workers, which is in so much contrast to what we're seeing today, not in a labor movement, but in the private sector with CEOs.

I [00:22:30] really developed a philosophy, as I got older of inclusion. I really developed a philosophy of equality. I really developed a philosophy that everybody should participate in whatever, everybody has a voice and that, essentially, it's not in every case that you're going to agree on things. Somebody's going to have a different opinion about a way you're going to do something and you're going to have a different [00:23:00] opinion based on how you hear and see things. I walked into the world, from all of these childhood impressions that were made on me, being this type of person. I know that I looked at the concept that the neighborhood, the conversations at dinnertime, my father's fierce loyalty and allegiance to the truth [00:23:30] of what this man's life was and that I live there. I kind of felt like I was in the minor leagues.

Like Electchester was the minor leagues for Local 3 and the concept was, if we raised them and teach them right, they will be great union people and we cultivate them here. I was one of those kids. There were many of us.

But these weren't brainwashing tactics. It's nothing [00:24:00] like a speaker would come on in our house and Harry was up in his office and it was going through all our apartments. It wasn't anything like that at all. It was the results that my father was getting and those results were measured in Christmases and things purchased and in vacations had and private lessons that I could take to study music. And my mother was able to go back to school and accomplish a master's degree because there were benefits in the union [00:24:30] that we were able to take advantage of for her to get her education. That's how those things were measured.

From the time I'm born in 1961 to the time we leave East Harlem and I'm in Electchester, I'm 7 years old so it's 1968, both the Kennedy's had already been assassinated, Martin Luther King was about to be assassinated. I'm 8 years old, we had the Apollo, the first [00:25:00] rocket to the moon happening, we have tremendous chaos but tremendous accomplishment. Then we have tremendous failure because we had Watergate with Nixon in 1970, 71. Then we had the gas crisis. I'm a kid growing up and I'm watching all of this. The music changed from jazz in the 50s, the Beatles came and it was what the college kids did, which was rock and roll [00:25:30] through the 60s. But at the same time, we had tremendous fusion. Latin music was fused into rock and roll and Latin music was fused into jazz. Culturally, I was able to swim in all of these different things that were happening at that time. The history of which there's documentaries and stories that you can find online about it.

But my impression is these radical changes, these upheavals, social [00:26:00] upheavals, political upheavals, musical upheavals from jazz to rock and roll, tremendous accomplishment, the launch to the moon, the Apollo moon landings, tremendous failure, Nixon with Watergate, tremendous chaos, Martin Luther King getting shot, all of those things were from the time I'm born to the time I'm 11 years old and watching the Vietnam War on TV. But I'm in Electchester and my father [00:26:30] has a good job and we have a TV and we have a really nice community and a nice life.

Moving forward from that time, as I move into the 70s and high school, the most important moment that I recall moving forward from there is in 1980 when Ronald Reagan decided that he was going to use federal employees [00:27:00] to replace the air traffic controllers. That's in 1980. At that time, I'm a first-year apprentice. I'm finally now ... I've come into Local 3 and the first sonic boom that hits, for me as a member of Local 3 and as a trade unionist, is the PATCO strike. This has a massive impact, not only on myself, but on the entire labor movement because never before had something [00:27:30] like this happened.

I'm working, at that time, as a first-year apprentice at the Eastern Air Lines Shuttle terminal at LaGuardia Airport. All of this activities beginning to fester and bubble and turn into something prior to Reagan actually laying down that edict. I see Harry Van Arsdale walking with what are his staff and a variety of politicians and people in favor of arguing against Reagan. I see [00:28:00] them walking through the airport and all I could ... Where I was doing a construction job. I'm an apprentice at that time. All I can tell you about this moment is that it is permanently burned in my head that this issue took place, there was a debate about which way this was going to go and I saw Harry with his staff, [00:28:30] about to get on a plane to go argue this. It was an incredible thing for me because I realized the power of what the labor movement is about.

This is now not something that is just a little clip that you see on the news about politicians going through the airport. For me, it's far more involved because I grew up in Electchester, because my father [00:29:00] was reverent to Harry Van Arsdale because he provided opportunity for all of us, Puerto Ricans, African Americans, people of color, he embraced us. And that I became an electrician, as well. Now I'm on the job and here comes Harry with his group to go deal with this issue, which is a national issue. It was really impactful as a young person. Now, I'm 19 years old and now we're talking 1980. [00:29:30] I know that the outcome of that was not favorable to the labor movement and it created a ripple effect that resonates today, but I think, in reading back some articles that summarize the impact of that, what's being said is that Ronald Reagan never would have thought that that decision he made would have such a negative impact [00:30:00] today. And he probably would not have wanted it to turn into what it's turned into.

Moving forward from 1980 to today, as I've now been working from 1980 to now, 36 years, my life as a worker has seen the ability for labor to effect an argument that was received and was [00:30:30] properly tabled and decisions were made accordingly, whereas today, it seems like it's a much, much more rigid set of exercises that capital has with labor. There's almost a preset, predetermined, set of methods in which they decide to deal with labor. It's a much, much tougher accomplishment. I'm extremely [00:31:00] fortunate to be here 35, 36 years later, seeing how corporations have grown, how the labor movement in the eyes of the corporate sector represents something that they don't want to support in a world that has so much more abundance than it's ever had, in a world where working people have so much more need because they've inflated the price of the core things for life.

[00:31:30] Going back to my father, as I've said in the beginning, in the 50s, the policies were to help people move up. Today, food, clothing, shelter, health care, education are luxury items for people. If you have all of that, that's a luxury item, life that you're living as a working person, which it shouldn't be that way.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Right.

Harry Garcia:

So, I'm struck with the philosophical failure of what is [00:32:00] American capital to really not embrace the American worker and to really take a shot at the premise that some of the arguments that they have made about productivity and wages and similar things, which essentially, are an excuse to go abroad because there's a tax incentive and there's a cheaper labor rate in many cases where corporations [00:32:30] are manufacturing products. There are more details about those things, but certainly, I never thought ... and this is my point ... that the very, very America that I grew up in that I love so much, that my father fought for ... My father put on the uniform, went to the Korean War and he fought for this country, took bullets for it ... that they would turn on us in the way that they've turned on us. Coming out of the great accomplishments of what was [00:33:00] done before, the NLRA, coming into the 60s and up until today. It's really, really a statement of the failure of capitalism ... where working people are concerned, from a philosophical standpoint and from the exercise of how managers in corporations view us.

It's a failed leadership, to me, because with anything that involves people who are willing, [00:33:30] it's a question of how you lead people. I feel very strongly that the labor movement has to continue to shout, to shout about it, to scream, to make a loud noise about it and to continue to implant the philosophical premise of what American workers are about, is something that American corporations need [00:34:00] to hold in a higher regard because it's not all about profits and revenue in a world where there is an incredible amount of abundance today, more so, than ever before. I don't want to get into the deregulation of the banks and all of the legal things, maneuvers, that have been made. New York City, itself, was bailed out by Local 3. We had a tremendous fiscal failure here. Union money bailed the city out. In that, [00:34:30] there were many tax breaks that were given to the real estate developers. They're taking advantage of that today. There's lots of housing being built that is not for working people. That generates tremendous revenue in very complex legal ways for that.

Again, the intoxication of capital as it had been prior to the passage of the NLRA, mistreatment, misdirected ideas about working people, the core concepts [00:35:00] that they need, food, clothing, shelter, education, transportation, we had to fight for that in a way that really put capitalists on alert that the United States might possibly become a socialist or communist country if they didn't pass things that gave workers a chance to move up. Here we are again, knocking on the door of that same type of sentiment. It's incumbent upon those of us who have ridden this historical timeline [00:35:30] to express the danger of the behavior of capitalists. I am all for capitalism. I am not for the behavior that is exhibited by capitalists who do not regard working people as important in the equation.

I think [00:36:00] I'm a very proud brown-skinned, Puerto Rican man, raised in a beautiful community. The community comes from an idea that somebody had a long time ago that working people deserve a better way than what was being issued then. I'm very proud when I tell people I come from a union and my

father was in a union [00:36:30] and I was raised in a union community and I will die knowing the greatness of that because of the types of work and things that I've been able to accomplish in my life because of it.

Did you want more on that?

Speaker 1: No, I think that you're segueing yourself into the next thing. Can you elaborate a little bit on what you've done in your career work-wise and how you feel about [00:37:00] the things you've been able to accomplish?

Harry Garcia: The things I've accomplished and how I feel? As I said earlier, I had a unique kind of signature, philosophically, that evolved in me and I became very sensitized to things and the ability to express things through words and through [00:37:30] pictures and through film and through music captured me as a young man. I came into Local 3 and I became an A journeyman electrician. I started in 1980. 1985, I had gotten what's called the A Journeyman Inside Wireman card. It's a five and a half year process. I began to work in the construction of buildings here in New York. But I had also studied [00:38:00] music as a young person and I was blessed to listen to Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Charlie Parker, Sonny Stitt, as well as all the greats in Latin music, Tito Puente, Mario Bauza, all the great Cuban musicians, all the great Afro-Cuban musicians' music [inaudible 00:38:21], the cultural musics of Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, as well as all of the great American music, whether it was country music, [00:38:30] folk music, rock and roll, and all the fusions that came from that.

So I always had this tremendous passion, as I was an electrician, for the arts. It was around about 1988, I was given an opportunity to audition for a ... what's called a commercial ... that [00:39:00] was being sponsored by the McDonald's corporation. The way that audition happened, they sent out a PR blast to all the unions and they were looking for individuals to talk about being an electrician. It got to me through one of the working organizations. I went down to the audition. I met with the production company and I expressed to them that if this commercial is geared toward young people who are watching cartoons on Saturday morning, that [00:39:30] it would be great to get them excited about things that they don't know electricians do. For me, that was turning on the lights in the ballpark or turning the power on to a sound system at a rock concert or, in film, the guys who set up all the lighting and create sets.

When I discussed this with the production company, they really embraced the idea and thought it was great and asked if we could do something at one [00:40:00] of the ballparks. Fortunately, my union leaders, my business representatives, the business manager, the people managing the organization, were able to get involved in this conversation and we were able to green light shooting the spot at Shea Stadium. As a result of shooting that spot ... which was very successful. The spot ran for some ten years ... I was able [00:40:30] to work in a very unique field that Local 3 had a contract with. That work was to work in what is called ... the scoreboard control room.

Speaker 1: Before you go farther, can you express what happened in the commercial?

Harry Garcia: Oh, yeah. Yeah. The commercial was aptly titled, When I Grow Up. It might be on YouTube or something. I haven't looked. In that commercial, [00:41:00] the audience is taken into a job site and I'm on a construction site. At first, we're standing with some blueprints and I'm discussing reading blueprints and understanding how these blueprints affect the installation of conduit and wiring and that you have to understand how to do these things and math and science are important. The reason that's [00:41:30] all important is ... And then we're at the ballpark and I said, "Because when you turn the lights on in the ballpark," and the lights come on. You see a wide shot of all the lights coming on. Then I say something, "It's all of that hard work and dedication that makes it all worth it." I'm paraphrasing. I can't remember the exact script.

It's basically two scenes and those are the two scenes, the stadium and at the job site. Then we did. We did. We went into the switch gear room. We loosened [00:42:00] up one of the switch gear levers and I pulled it back and you hear a sound effect. Then the next scene I'm outside and the lights come on in a dark stadium. There's nobody in there but ... And the light come on. It's dramatic.

Speaker 1: Yeah. I'm sure.

Harry Garcia: It was like, "Wow. It's great to be an electrician. Look what this guy does." So, it was a beautiful, again, moment for me to tap into my creative side by [00:42:30] sharing concept, which is part of who I am. But I also knew that it was important for me to make sure that when they are photographing me, that I have a shirt on that says Local 3 IBEW, from my upbringing. Because what I didn't want was to have the commercial be shot and we're not saying that I'm a union member. We want young [00:43:00] people to become union members because to the importance of collective bargaining. Those two things happened and it was fantastic and everybody was very happy on both sides of it. It set me in a trajectory.

I started out, I was working construction. I got the opportunity to work for the New York Mets back in 1989, was when I started, in their scoreboard control room. The reason the timing for that was [00:43:30] critical where I was concerned, essentially, was because the beginning, the introduction of computer systems, was at that time. It was the first time they were using computers to turn light bulbs on and off because the scoreboards in 1989 were all, essentially, light bulbs. We were then using an industrial real-time software that's used [00:44:00] for robotics to tell robots, "Go here. Grab this, move it over, drop it down." We were using that software to tell light bulbs, "Turn on. Turn off."

The nature of how that software worked is they were able to create a matrix and maps and create cross points that you can technically go in and type in block fonts and you can scan some images to make some [00:44:30] animations. It was radical that the time. The name of the company at the time was White

Way Sign ... They were out of Chicago ... and they had that software. The reason they were called White Way Sign was because they used to do all the signs on Broadway, which was called the Great White Way because of all the lights. Interesting history there.

When I got into that control room, I remember being walked up into a control room and seeing what was [00:45:00] lots of equipment that I didn't understand fully but I knew I was excited, I was alive, the part of me that was creative and that was full of energy to participate and to show what I could do ... I always feel young people just want to show what they can do ... That that part of me really came alive. I went into that control room and I worked there from 1989, [00:45:30] just during baseball season, until now. I'm still there, working for the Mets, in 2017.

So, my career took a completely different path. The reason that's important is because from 1989 to 2017, I happened to ride the transition from the world of analog to the world of digital and the proliferation of what happens to become the transition from what was the analog world for all [00:46:00] things to the digital world. I learned every step of the way, as the equipment changed, as we went from ... when we finally got to HD and when we began to completely dive into the world of all things digital from an operational standpoint.

The knowledge that I received from the years of doing that, I was able to transfer to another [00:46:30] venue that Local 3 has a contract with, which is our convention center here in New York, the Jacob Javits Convention Center. For the last maybe 22 years, I've worked there as well. In there I have a double role. I have two roles. Many times I am an electrician installing branch wiring for the various setups, building structures that have [00:47:00] an electrical component to them alongside carpenters, but a lot of the time, I'm working as what they call a Lead Video Systems Integrator. In that capacity, all the knowledge I acquired is now useful for the electrical department because it's all the same digital equipment that I've been working on over the years at the Mets.

So, I am the most non-electrician electrician you've probably ever met because my life not only consists of working exclusively [00:47:30] in these two venues, convention center and a baseball stadium. I've been doing that now for some 25 years between the two places. It's been fascinating, very exciting. I've met lots of people and I've learned a tremendous amount. It's taken me to work in other places. I was able to be a video director for a DVD called Rough Around the Edges, which was a production done at Madison Square Garden [00:48:00] by a comedian named Dane Cook. If you look on the credits, you'll see that I'm the video director on the DVD, which they don't use DVDs anymore. And I've done lots and lots of great productions at the Javits Center, concerts and the like. I've been able to teach and share knowledge and make customers comfortable and make everyone [00:48:30] involved in the process feel really, really good that we can accomplish something a little bit more sophisticated, a little bit more of an engineering kind of platform that's not typical in the world of what electricians do where video integration's concerned.

It's been a beautiful, beautiful experience. Again, as I said earlier, I've been a person from my childhood, my formative years, understanding [00:49:00] the labor movement and the Civil Rights Movement and all those things, that gave me a voice that said, "Hey, let's all work together." So when I'm doing these types of integrations, I love to show somebody what to do. I love to take somebody who perhaps doesn't have as much experience or knowledge, show him how it's done, connect with the head engineer, look at what we have to build, accomplish it, work together so that the premise is more, look at the experience, the knowledge, and the togetherness as [00:49:30] opposed to something that could be less effective.

It's been wonderful. I didn't mention it but I grew up studying the flute and playing mostly jazz and popular music and Latin music. I studied classical music, because a flute is a classical instrument, for a short time. I did get to play at Carnegie Hall and the Lincoln Center here when I was in junior high [00:50:00] school and high school. I still play music. I'm a very, very avid proponent of the classics in the world of jazz and Latin jazz and music that is not necessarily contrived. I, personally, just get a lot from it, listening to great improvisers. That, honestly, it helps me at work. Sometimes I improvise how to do something at work. Sometimes I take a solo [00:50:30] to work on a system's integration. Those are the key things. Those are really the three key things.

People will say, "Why does this guy practice his flute at lunch every day?" I still do that, too.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Harry Garcia: Yeah. So, those are the things today.

Speaker 1: All right, Garcia, can I ask you, what is your title at the Mets, at Citi Field and what are some of the [00:51:00] responsibilities of that role?

Harry Garcia: At Citi Field, the new stadium construction happened in 2009 and from 2009 to 2017, I've been there at Citi Field and the capacity and title of Technical Director. The technical director in the world of broadcasting is the person responsible A, for making sure all of the [00:51:30] crew who's operating equipment has had the proper time to check in all their equipment, make sure it's all working, make sure everybody's there, make sure everybody's 100% ready to go. You're kind of the lead for all the operators. And then, from an actual work standpoint, I'm operating something called a switcher. The switcher is the piece of equipment which has all of the other sources tied into it. Cameras, [00:52:00] replay machines, graphics machines, all of the various elements that you visually see, they all go into the switcher because that's what the switcher does. It switches those sources.

There's a director who is, what we say, he's calling the show. I'm on headset as the technical director, making sure all the crew is set, ready to go. The director

gets on, he begins to call the show and it's a variety of calling cameras and replays [00:52:30] and all the things you see when you watch any sports broadcast on TV. It is different, though, than on TV in the sense that we're broadcasting it just in the stadium. But we're using pretty much all the same technology that they use for TV. It's become very, very, very, very sophisticated over the years. It's all networking and internet protocol and it's all file-based and file transfer systems. All the things of the digital [00:53:00] world are involved in how this gets done, which is, for me, a fascinating journey because I got to watch that entire transition.

I love it. I love what I do. I enjoy the technical challenges ... and there are a lot ... to make all that stuff work. And then I love doing the live show. I personally get something from doing a live show to a full stadium and event. It's a thing. [00:53:30] It's definitely a thing.

Speaker 1: Is there anything about the changes that you dislike? Of the evolution that you might not appreciate?

Harry Garcia: I think what I don't like is that I never know what the next shift is coming from the manufacturers. They're back in their labs, coming up with new things and we never get a heads up on what's coming. Then these things roll out [00:54:00] and they begin to show up. It's become the culture that you have to learn whatever they engineered and know how to implement it but also understand the subsystem of how to network it, how to design whatever it's supposed to do, figure out some of the technical drawbacks based on how your facility works. That's always like an "uh oh" moment, like, "By the way, we're getting this new piece of equipment." [00:54:30] Those things have just become that way. That's the way new equipment rolls out in the broadcast world.

So, yeah. I always kind of felt like that's not fun.

Speaker 1: In the future, do you think your children or members of your community would do the same type of work that you're doing today?

Harry Garcia: Yeah. Yeah. I think so. I mean, we're in the age now of automation and machine learning and big [00:55:00] data. The world is connected and it's a global scenario. We're in the world of 3-D printing and apps. We're in the world of remotely controlling and operating things. But it doesn't take away certain legacy things that still have to be done and would require hands-on. The work that is specific to my life is being an electrician and while the installation of systems [00:55:30] can be automated, you still need electricians to get the wires off the truck, make sure the wires are right, get them pulled through conduits, get the network rooms built and patched in and tested, and do all the branch circuiting. All of those things ... Unless we get to the point where we're doing wireless power transmission, I still see a very robust future for this industry and people who want to follow and continue [00:56:00] in this path. I don't see it going away any time soon.

Speaker 1: A final question that I have for you, in the essence of time, is what inspires you? I've heard about what were things that have inspired you in the past, but what inspires you today?

Harry Garcia: To me, I'm inspired to ... What inspires me today is to get to observe people who spend their entire life mastering one thing. [00:56:30] That's why I love the Olympics. That's why I love great virtuoso musicians or any person, for that matter, that has the foresight at a very early age to discover the thing he's passionate about and get the maximum education for his entire life until he gets to the point where he can execute that thing. To me, that's always very inspirational because we all have a champion inside of us. We all want [00:57:00] greatness in what we do. To be able to witness people who take that greatness to that ultimate level, for me, is always inspiring, almost emotional for me.

I can name athletes and musicians and people who have given me that feeling. For some very, I guess, specific reason I have been sensitive to that particular thing. [00:57:30] There's nothing greater than seeing a guy in the Olympics cross the finish line and win the gold because you know he spent his life trying to accomplish it. He finally did. He got there. That's always inspiring to me. And it could be in any category. It's the journey, discovering the passion, maximizing the education, then being on stage to do your thing. Those things inspire me.

Speaker 1: Is there anything else that you want to add [00:58:00] to this awesome interview or anything that you want to ask me or anything that we missed?

Harry Garcia: I really am curious about some things. I do have some thoughts of my own philosophical things that I would like to add. Those things really relate to the future. I [00:58:30] really wonder what the next hundred years will be like. A hundred years from now will be the year 2117, right?

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Harry Garcia: And I think a hundred years back was the year 1917. The thing that I would like to add is that we don't think of the people of 1917. We don't think of their worries, their arguments, their concerns, [00:59:00] their failures, their successes, because they're not here. But yet, all of those people from 1917 affected today, in 2017. I would hope that what I'm doing and other people in this particular time in history and our life, affects the people a hundred years from now in a way, even though they will not know that I ever existed and they will not know who I am. But [00:59:30] there is a positive, huge paradigm shift in how we view, care for, treat, and enable working people in this country and around the world.

Speaker 1: Thank you so much, Harry G.

Harry Garcia: You're welcome. My pleasure.

Speaker 1: It's been a pleasure to have you here.

Harry Garcia: My pleasure. Thank you for having me.

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