

AFT Oral History Project
Walter P. Reuther Library
Wayne State University

Tom Hobart Interview

Q: This is Dan Golodner, Wayne State University, Walter P. Reuther Library, AFT Archivist, May 23, 2006 interviewing Tom Hobart for the AFT Oral History Project. Thank you, Tom, for participating in our oral history project.

A: I'm happy to do it.

Q: Why don't we get started with where you were born, raised, and a bit about your mother and father.

A: OK. I was born in Buffalo at Sisters Hospital on Main Street in 1936 during the depression. Before the war, we had an unusual family. My dad was a college graduate. He graduated from the University of Michigan in 1928 with a degree in engineering. He was a civil engineer. He had worked in hydro, so he ended up building waterworks for cities. My mom even had been in college. My grandfather, who was the first Italian policeman in the Buffalo police force, they had to lower the heights requirement to hire him because they needed somebody to speak Italian to sign the mafia in town and to sign the mafia out of town because Buffalo was an R&R for the mafia in those days. So he worked all during the depression. My father's family worked too because his dad worked for his wife's family,

which he hated. He and my grandmother married very late in life. She was in her 30s, which in those days was unheard of for someone to be single that long. Her family had ties to Hopkins, who was on the upper deck on the Mayflower. They were in the gas and oil business. They were one of the oil wells that came in right after Titusville. They specialized in natural gas, and it was a very well-to-do family. Unfortunately, we were at the other branch. We got the land rights at a farm in Pennsylvania that was all rocks. And, somebody else got the gas and oil rigs.

Grandfather had lived in Iowa. He was born in New York State near the Finger Lakes, and I guess it got too crowded in that part of the world. So they had to go to Iowa where there was more elbowroom. Then, the depression. He managed a lumberyard, and it went broke and they had no way to support their family with the new child. So, they begged to work for my grandmother's family. That family ran it in that request that reminded them everyday that they had begged for the jobs. So, my grandfather didn't like it. But, he kept working during the depression. We did not suffer the way that other families had. Around 1940, my father went to work for the 1st Army working for the Corps of Engineers. He was exempted from the war for that and worked for the Corps of Engineers throughout the war. He

built waterworks in Albany, Georgia in an army camp. He, I guess, remodeled them in Albany. In Tullahoma, Tennessee, he finally got his dream. He built a waterworks for a camp of 30,000 men, and I guess that was a substantial city to build a waterworks from.

Then he ended up at 1st Army Headquarters in Jacksonville, Florida for the remainder of the war, and became the top civil service engineer in America. He was secretary of the Commandant of the Engineering Corps, and was part of a company that was going to do the Marshal Plan work. But, he had a relapse of tuberculosis. He was unable to go to Europe, and went to a sanitarium here, died four years later. I guess he would have made a lot of money because what happened, we had five million men and women to bring back. We didn't want to bring any equipment back, and it all got sold to this engineering company. They bought jeeps for a quarter, and trucks for 50 cents, and tanks for a dollar. Those became the assets of the engineering company that rebuilt Europe. And then, they were required to turn it over to locals within a short period of time under the Marshal Plan three or four years, had to be turned over. It had to be paid for by who they were turning it over to. So, these assets, a tank with a bulldozer on the front, was a bulldozer.

So, they all came back, as substantial engineering firms in America.

My mom who had been to pharmacy school but didn't graduate and had no business skills. There were not a lot of jobs for women. She was a clerk in the drug store. The only reason I guess we got by is we lived with my grandmother and my aunt. My grandmother had a \$25 a month pension from the police force. My aunt had a job. Between that and my mother's pay as a clerk, we got by.

In fact, the year I was 16 I got a job at the Buffalo News. That was the first full time job I had. Well, it was a part time job, but it was a substantial job. I stuck pins before that in a bowling alley for the pin setting machines. I got out before they invented the pin setting machines and was displaced. But the first summer, my mom cried when I came home with my paycheck. I was making a dollar a week more than she was, and that really hurt her. But anyway, we did all right. She remarried again, and so my brother and I survived fairly well, and I went on to --

Q: What kind of neighborhood did you grow up in?

A: It was a German neighborhood. Fortunately, it was a working class German neighborhood in 1946. It was not a place

for an Italian family to live since these were all Nazis during the war. They felt Mussolini had let Hitler down and they made sure they reminded us of that often in that neighborhood.

Buffalo was a very ethnic city. There was a German neighborhood, a Polish neighborhood, a black neighborhood, and then the WASP neighborhood that was there. There was a small Jewish community that grew up there, but everybody lived in their own sections. I remember my grandmother was just very upset the first time my cousin Patsy dated a German guy. "How dare you?" Well, my mom married an English guy. But (laughter) that was all right.

I went on to engineering school like everybody expected me to, and flunked out the first year.

Q: Not your thing?

A: Well, it was a Jesuit school, and the Jesuits had a conclave in which they tried to figure out why not enough catholic young men were taking their proper role in American society. They came to the conclusion it was because of the poor curriculum being offered in the Jesuit institutions. They came back and they made the curriculum a lot more difficult without telling us that there was a change. They fired all the professors that didn't have PhDs, and so those professors didn't

help us a lot. We didn't help ourselves either. So I joined the air force. I was going to be an air cadet, but --

Q: What year was that, that you joined the air force?

A: It was 1956. I got down to...Oh, I can't think of the air force base in Texas. I took one more eye exam, and they sent me home immediately. When I told him that the recruiting officer could grind my goggles to meet my prescription. The colonel said, "He told you what? They're going to let you fly?" I guess planes were only worth a couple hundred thousands dollars then, right? "I'll let you fly our fighters with grind goggles?" And so, I came back home, and I got a job. I was a fourth helper on the open hearth at Bethlehem Steel. Which was a terrific job because they had to break down the open hearths furnaces every 24 hours. If you had an eight hour shift, you missed a couple of break times, because it was a shitty job, it was hotter than hell. You had to take all the bricks down, clean out all the sludge, and then rebuild the furnace, all the bricks up, and go wait for the next application. Mom cried, she felt dad was a college graduate; she had a year of college. I was fourth helper on the open hearth.

I also had a job at the Buffalo News. So, I was rolling in money during that period. I mean, I was really well-to-do.

Q: What did you do at the Buffalo News?

A: I took care of the newsboys, stocked the paper, edited the paper, and delivered the paper if the newsboy didn't show up.

But mom was upset so my stepfather was on the Board of Directors for the pharmacy school at the University of Buffalo. He wanted me to go out there. I didn't like my stepfather. I wasn't about to become a pharmacist, primarily because he was one. So I went to Buffalo State, which, we used to go to the lunch hours when I was at Canisius College. That's where we used to get our dates for the weekend because it was an all-teacher college, and there were a lot of women there.

The dean was going down what division I wanted to go in. Well, Canisius only had one or two divisions. They had pre-med, pre-law, pre-engineering, and liberal arts. I didn't really know what he was talking about when -- he did it alphabetically: art education, exceptional children, home economics, industrial arts. I said, "What's that?" And he said, "You make bats." Now, there was a flashback. I remember walking in the street one day, and I went to the parochial school: one direction, and public school was the other way. And, there's some kids coming from the public school with a bat. Now, in our neighborhood, nobody owned anything. You know, we had an old ball that was a

lot. You had to get bat at school or something. The kid had his own bat. And I said, "Where'd you get that from?" He said, "I made it." And, I had always tried to envision, "How the hell would you make a bat, you know?" Carve it? Sand it? How would you make a bat? So this guy happened to use, as his description, "You know they make bats." And I said, "Geeze, I'll take that." That's how I started into industrial arts education. I tried to move over to manual arts therapy. This was the end of the Korean War, and I really was interested in manual arts therapy. But, they wouldn't let me enter the program because they said I wasn't mature enough. You would have to be dealing with veterans, and I was not a veteran. They had a lot of veterans at school, but they were all older than we were.

They said, "No." So, I didn't move out of it. But, I was not enamored with being a teacher at this point. Mom had stopped crying as I was going to school. That was a good thing. It wasn't until I practiced taught that I said, "Wow. This could be a career. This is really great stuff." I finished practiced teaching, and I was in my senior year. I didn't get along with the metal shop teacher. He was a pompous man, and I guess it foreshadowed what the future was. He was the vice president of the state school board's association, president of

the school board on (inaudible). I didn't know really what that meant, but later on I was very happy that I didn't like him. He had a friend that used to run a sports car club. What it was, was this guy brought in all his sports cars. He was a professor there. He brought in all the sports cars. We had to polish them, and display them, and tune them up, and all this. I thought that he was really putting a burden on us that we shouldn't have because you were required to go in there. Metal shop teachers had if you don't do that you don't pass this course, and we had to go down there and do it.

There came up an interview for the city of Buffalo. We were doing a lot of interviews at that time. The city of Buffalo was coming in to interview. Both these guys had said "We don't want to see anybody going to those interviews. We're not wasting money training people to work in the city." So, I thought, "Well, that's a pretty good endorsement. I think I'll go to the interview." There was only two of us there. Oh and I was in an accelerated program. The vets from Korea at this program where they started in August and they finished in June, three and a half years later. I started in September, so I had to finish at the end of January. This was a mid semester interview. The interviewer said that if we would sign up for a teaching position on February 1st that they would give us an

adult education job immediately which paid \$8 an hour. Back then, in a federal program, "Wow." It was big, big money. I signed up, and I had a job at school 54 in the city of Buffalo, which, to my surprise, was a minority school when I was in high school all my friends were from that area. And, it was a solid German neighborhood.

I found out that in about four or five year's time, they had gone from one African American student to one white student; a total switchover of the school. Of course, I had no training to deal with the kids. I had done practice teaching; one was in the suburb, and one was in a rural area. The kids brought a lot of problems such as I remember disciplining a child for falling asleep in the shop, which is a hard thing to do because the machine's going, and everything. We had coatrooms off of every classroom, and he had gone back to the coatroom, made a nest out of some coats and gone to sleep in. When the mother came in, she explained that her child was sleeping during the day because they lived in shifts in the apartment that they had. Their shift was 4:00 pm to midnight. At midnight, they had to leave the apartment. The kids are on the street from midnight until they went to school in the morning. And it's cold in Buffalo. So, the kids outside all night. I learned that there was an awful lot that you had to know of culture. The children -- you know, it wasn't the parochial school that I'd gone to where if

anybody acted up, they threw them out and sent them to a public school.

So, that was my beginning. There was a minimum salary law in Buffalo; I think it was \$3,500 a year. The association had lobbied to increase it to \$4,000. They were successful in doing that. Because of that, Buffalo laid off eight industrial arts teachers. And then, there were eight retirements that year, so I got laid off.

Q: The first one?

A: I was the only one, the first one, the only one to get laid off.

Q: What year was this?

A: This was 1960. This was after I completed one semester. I started in February, quick semester. I went down to the personnel office, and the director of personnel, Jack Didilori had said, "Now, I've got a special ed class you could teach." I said, "Well, I'm not really prepared for that." "I've got an English class to teach." I said, "Well, I don't think I have strength in English." He said, "Well, why don't you join the army?" So, I went down and joined the reserves. I went off for almost immediately to basic training and did my six months reserve time, and came back home in the middle of a semester again. I substituted for a while. I did an awful lot of

substituting, saw a lot of the inner city. I learned a lot about kids. My first Spanish-speaking child, you know, she didn't speak any English. I went to the office to tell them that she didn't speak English, and I was having difficulty instructing her. And they said, "Is she causing you trouble?" And I said, "No," and they said, "Well, what's your complaint?" (laughter)

Q: This is basically your guidance into urban education --

A: Yes.

Q: -- basically straight off the boat in a way.

A: Yeah, and then I made a racist decision. An industrial arts job opening up. You know, the big thing in industrial arts is wood and metal. And, a wood and metal shop opened up at an inner city school. And, a printing job opened up at Bennett High School, which was the premier high school in Buffalo. It was protected. All the kids that went there were bright. It was a 'Lake Wobegon'. All the kids were above average, and I didn't know a damn thing about teaching printing. I took the printing job, and I went to Bennett High School. So, I started in September teaching printing, and fortunately for me, I still had the job at the Buffalo Evening News. The head of the Linotype Department at the news was a great guy. He used to help me do lesson plans for the next day all the time.

We had two platinum presses, and we were supposed to do etching and linoleum block carving, and all of this, photography. It also had a ceramics section, which I immediately gave off to the art teacher because type and ceramics don't go together. It was a mess in that place, and dusty. The type boxes were full of dust. So I started, and things were going well. I kept the job at the News. I was making more at the news than I was making teaching.

Then, we had a radio station, WKBW, and they used to announce the breaking news with a gong. And it'd go (gong noise) "Bulletin! Bulletin! 423rd ordinance company been activated." I call up the sergeant to say, "What the hell does activated mean?" "Activated means you get your ass down here 8:00." I said, "I've got to teach school tomorrow morning. I can't come down." (laughter) "Maybe you didn't hear me." So, the next day I called in for a substitute, went down there, and I was one of the few that showed up down there. So, they took pity on me, and they let me finish out the week at school before I had to report again. Then we were off for the Berlin crisis. I moved to Fort Devens outside of Massachusetts, and during those days, what happened was that the reserve replaced a ready army unit that went over. The automobile ordinance unit left Fort Devens, went over to Germany to support the Berlin Wall,

and we moved in, and we took over their duties on the post, which was a bad duty because we had to do our basic training all over again. We had to do that at night. We'd work all day. We had to do basic training at night. It was a pretty intense time there, and a time I wasn't prepared for. When I had gone into basic training, I had known I was there for six months. It was going to be a tough time, and you weren't getting paid very much. We got \$78 a month. It wasn't much money to go around. You did your six months. You went back into civilian life, and did your reserve duty on weekends. But now, this time you went in, and you're spending money all the time. I was into hock up to my ears about it. So, I figured, I've got to get the hell out of here because Cape Cod is only about 45 miles away. We were coming back at 4:30 in the morning from Cape Cod to get in line to fall in for the reveling in the morning.

So, they had a unit going up to Alaska to support the war games. A national guard up in Alaska, they were paid when they walk north to look left. And, when they walked south to look right. And, if they saw the Russians coming, to report. Once a year there was an engagement between the Alaskan scouts and the US forces. We went up to take the vehicles out of cold storage, make them ready for combat, and then we stayed longer, put them back in cold storage for the next time. I did a lot of time up there.

I got a direct commission while I was there. I had a cousin that was joining the reserves in 1939. When it came to separation in '45, all the reserves were kept in to separate the troops. You didn't get off until '46. So, he was in for seven years, and most people were already in for five. And I thought, "Oh, boy, I don't want to be doing KP for seven years. So, I applied for the medical service corps for a direct commission with Congress. And, I got it. But, in the interim, I was separated from active duty. Dottie and I had been going together, and that's when the commission came in. All you had to do was get it signed by any US officer and you were in and you were a Second Lieutenant.

The problem was I was 26. When you turn 26, automatically Second Lieutenants were made First Lieutenants. But, if you came in as a Second Lieutenant, you get your full two years before you became a First Lieutenant. I was going to be one of the old guys that was the bottom of the rung, and Dottie wasn't interested in a military career. I've still got the papers. I've never had them signed to go in. I had a plan. I was going to go in. The Medical Service Corps is a shit job. The doctors had it established because they didn't want to pull duty. The highest-ranking medical officer is the officer in command. So,

you can only go to a full Colonel in the Medical Service Corps. You couldn't go to a general officer. So, if you got in, you were an officer. You could go to school as a student officer rather than as an officer cadet. That was a big difference. And so, that's why I had gone for it. I thought I could always go to ranger school, and then move out of the Medical Service Corps into one of the active branches. But, that would have entailed a full military career then we got married instead.

I left the army as a Staff Sergeant because when we were separate from duty, everybody who had had at least two full years is allowed to go in at the reserves. So, there's only 18 of us left in the unit. We made rapid advancement in the unit. So I was in charge of the motor pool. And, I finally was discharged from the army.

Back to Bennett High School, and printing shop, and regular life, when my jewel, my daughter Elizabeth was born. And then three wise men appeared again and my daughter Catherine was born. And then, they came back once more, and my son was born. I kept the job with the news because we had to feed the family, and Dottie was making more money than I was as a teacher in the suburbs. So when she became pregnant, our income was cut in half. If you want a shock in your marriage life, you've got to

experience that. You have so much less money to get by. I would complain a lot about it, and one day somebody said, hey, you've got a big mouth. Why don't you go down to the Buffalo Teacher's Federation?

Q: The beginning of teacher union career.

A: Yeah, so I went to faculty meeting, and my principal announced that the alternate delegate had quit. He was appointing the science teachers and the science teachers said, "No way. I've got tenure. I'm not going to do that."

Q: How'd you join?

A: Well, everybody was a member.

Q: Everybody was a member too?

A: When I was at my first assignment, and there were double doors. I was shocked. They came flying open. The principal stood there and she said, "We're a 100% school and you're ruining it for us." And I said, "Well, what am I doing?" She said, "You're not a member of you're a professional organization." I said, "Yes, I am. I'm a member of the International Industrial Arts Association." She said, "I don't know what that is." You're going to join the Buffalo Teacher's Federation, and a New York State Teacher's Association. And, by the way, we don't join that radical NEA."

Q: Oh, really?

A: So, I paid \$17. Dottie wasn't too happy about \$17. That was a lot of money then. You had to pay it cash up front. It was \$11 to the state, and for that, you got the magazine. And, \$6 for the Buffalo Teacher's Federation. For that, I got the right to go to the fashion show. So when I got to Bennett and there was an opening, I volunteered for it. I took a lot of hazing from people that volunteered to go down to the association. I said to the ranking delegate, Bennett was a big school, and everybody was a member of the Buffalo Teacher's Federation there. So I said to the ranking delegate, "Where's the meeting?" and she said to me, "Why would you want to know?" I said, "So, I could go." She said, "Why would you want to go?" I said, "Well, because I got elected alternate delegate." "You were appointed by the principal," she said. "And, he's appointed me as the ranking delegate, and I go for the whole delegation." He had four delegates and four alternates, and she was the only one that went to any of the meetings. So, I went to the first meeting. I found out where it was, and we went down there. The first issue that to come up was -- that I paid attention to anyway, because I didn't know what was going on in the room." Somebody made motion that there should be at least 50 teachers on every committee. I asked the lady sitting next to me, "Who else are on the committee?" She says, "Well, the administrators." There was a parade of administrators who were

all past presidents of the Buffalo Teacher's Federation who said how upset they were that after all the work they'd done for teachers, that teachers were slapping them in the face. I said, "Geeze, just the majority is teachers." So, the vote came, and I don't remember the exact vote, but I know there were only four votes yes. There were about 200 delegates in the meeting: four yes votes. After it failed, a motion was made that the schools of these four people should be notified of how they voted. So, that didn't bother me too much because when you're young --

Q: Nothing mattered.

A: Yeah, if I got fired, I'd get another job. I mean, I wasn't too concerned.

They'd have a picnic during the summer at the former principal's house. After we had all eaten, he announced that the new teachers would do the dishes. I said, "Wait a minute. Who decided this?" And he said, "I decided that." I said, "Who are you? You know, you're the host here. I'll do my dish and I'll do yours. I'm not doing everybody's dishes."

So, from the beginning, I had a feeling that you shouldn't have to put up with something that was unfair. I went down to my second meeting, and I was sitting there, and I went and I signed up as a delegate. I was sitting there, and somebody

tapped me on the shoulder. And they said, "You have to go behind the theater robe." I said, "Well, why?" "That's where the alternate sits, and all four of the delegates have come tonight." They made sure that I was not going to vote anymore. So, my only ambition in the movement was to become a full delegate so nobody could tap me on the shoulder and send me behind the theater robe.

As things progressed, pretty soon I became a delegate. I got in with a group of guys. We would meet. The meetings were on Thursday once a month. The Tuesday before the Thursday we would meet, and we would make our plans. We weren't very good at it. That was the night that they the executive committee meeting, and the executive committee made far better plans than we ever made. So, we got killed. In everything we tried to do, we got killed including the first election. We had it all figured out that you only voted by the section that you were in. We figured out you could win a seat on the executive committee with 40 votes. There were 11 of us. So, all we had to do was if everybody got four of their votes out themselves in the section we were in, we could probably win. And we got killed. In fact, I only got six votes. So, at the next meeting, I was really upset. I didn't get the votes of some of the guys I was meeting with. I learned about politics pretty fast then. I

lost a couple of times to the executive committee. I came in the highest to lose once. Somebody resigned from the executive committee. The president was a pretty good guy. He was an administrator, but he was a pretty good guy. He appointed me to the executive committee. That's how I got started.

I moved very rapidly. There were three vice presidents. The third, second, and first. I was third vice president. The second vice president was a very nice lady who did membership by hand, and I felt I didn't want to run against her, and somebody else ran against her and beat her. So next time I ran for first vice president. I figure, "Well, I might as well start from the beginning." And, I became president, not easily. Every election that I was in I had to go to a runoff. I never won on the first ballot.

I became the president of the Buffalo Teacher's Federation. When I was first vice president was the year the Taylor Law passed in New York, and I was the Chairman on the Negotiating Committee. Three years later I was president. The next contract came up. They had only gotten a two-year contract. I was there for two contracts, and I went on the board of the state association, which everybody advised me against. They said that at that time it was a cafeteria study. You didn't

have to belong to any of a joining state and at the local or the national, not anything with the local, and not any of the other two. I led a committee for what they call unification. Everybody in Buffalo would have to join the local, state, and the national. I won on that. It was close, but I won. I went on the state board and the fellow -- we had two great vice presidents. Catherine Barrett was president, who was later president of the NEA.

The two vice presidents were terrific, but since the Taylor Law passed, we had opened a lot of regional offices in the state. The second vice president, Jim Conti became the staff director. So, there was an opening for second vice president. And, we assumed -- there was about eight of us that voted together on the board. And, we always lost. The scenario was that we would have these great arguments. It looked like we convinced the whole board. Somebody would move to close debate. Catherine Barrett would say, "But we have to hear from the executive secretary before we vote." He would come on, and the vote would be always the same: eight yes. So, we said, "We've got to capture this vice presidency because we're never going to get anywhere in the operation unless we're able to move this ahead. The other seven guys, and one woman, they all said they didn't want to run this time. They wanted to run next time.

Q: Why not this time?

A: Well, this time would have been -- there never was a contest for the first vice president or president. It was only a contest for second vice president. Since one year of a term had been used...I'm sorry, there only were one-year terms, but everybody served two one-year terms. We assumed we'd have to put together a statewide operation politically in order to win the election. It was an election among the delegates. We thought the first year would be to build the structure. And, we'd lose to whoever was nominated by the nominating committee. But then, we would have the structure in place, and we'd have somebody run the second year. That person would win for first vice president, and then be in position to move up. So, everybody said no, and then they all wanted me to run not because anybody thought I was the best candidate, but they thought that Buffalo teachers had the biggest treasury, and that I really didn't have a concern about being president. So one of them could fill in next term. So, I ran, and I won.

Q: They were wrong.

A: They were wrong and we won. It was overwhelming. It had always been a rotation: man, woman. When Catherine Barrett ran, she ran against a man, Don Nixon from Lockport, who was an

administrator. Her campaign was that this was a time of coming to teachers to the forefront that shouldn't be an administrator, which baffles me why Catherine took that position because she didn't believe that. But anyway, she did, and she won. So, there was two women in a row. There was a man that was first vice president who was going to become president. And then, she wanted to go back to the man-woman rotation. So, she wanted a woman to run. Almost all the women except one was an administrator. Most of our board was administrators. One woman who was not an administrator finally agreed to run, and I felt very bad about it. She was a very nice lady. She was from Thousand Island Central. Her name was Florence Vincent. When she talked to the delegate, she told them she knew nothing about finances, but her husband agreed to tell her what to do on financial matters. She wanted everybody to come to her suite. She wanted everyone to know she was temperance, and there would be no alcohol in her suite. We had the convention at the Waldorf, and she hadn't thought to call ahead to reserve a suite. So, I don't know if you know the Waldorf, but it has a separate tower where you go up 20 floors, and then you have to walk down the hallway and another bank of elevators to go up in that tower. That's where the suite was. Nobody could find the place. So, the lady did not have a campaign that was a winner. Catherine Barrett wouldn't release the results of the election.

It turned out to be exactly 1,000 delegates. She released the percentage. She must not have known there were 1,000 delegates. She said there was a pool of it, and they finally convinced her she had to release something. So, she released the percentage. And, it was high 80s or low 90s. I mean, this lady got --

Q: Creamed.

A: Got creamed because this was a time of militancy, and the law had just passed, and people were coming forth. We were starting to have strikes in the state, which were a violation of the law. It was a changing time. This lady was from a different era. Catherine, I guess, had not wanted to embarrass her to make people unaware what the vote was. That's the first election I ever won on the first ballot.

So, then the next year, when I was first vice president I won that without anybody running against me, but then when I ran for president, there were three candidates. Paul Cole was one, and --

Q: This was '71?

A: Yes. November... The time the convention was November. We were moving the convention from November to the spring so that we could have protests at the legislature. We never met in Albany. So, it was kind of a bad idea to do it. In the off year, this Carl Headstrom from Great Neck had run against Tom

Smith, who was our second vice president. I was now first vice president. Headstrom had become second vice president. I was having a very difficult time. We had an airplane, and they have a lot of demand for speakers. They would call me in the afternoon saying, "You've got to go to Long Island. (inaudible) plane for you," and I'd get home at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning.

Q: Were you still teaching at this time?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Whoa.

A: Also, I was Chairman of the Teacher Rights committee. We would have two hour long conference calls. Now, the high school I was in only had five comp lines. The principal would keep a log of how long I was on the telephone for the organization or business. He probably wouldn't have had a good case because up until this time, they always gave a plush job to whoever was a state officer. I had tried to get us released full time, and Headstrom spoke against it, gave a speech to the convention where we had this resolution about how we had to be with the children in this classroom, and so we didn't do any of this. I mean, it seems that he is always with his children and didn't do anything.

But, then when I ran for president, they were very upset at the Buffalo Teacher's Federation. The delegates said, "What are you doing? You can't be president of a this organization... We

need a president down here, we've got so many problems, and how are you going to win this presidency?" You know, there's two guys running against me. If I do win, I will not run again for president of Buffalo Teacher's Federation. So, I won.

Q: (laughter) You weren't expecting to win?

A: I wasn't expecting to win.

Q: Why do you think that?

A: Well, this was the vice presidency that I told you about. But, that would put your line to become president. So, I dropped out, that is, the vice president dropped out. I didn't -- anyway, but then when I ran for president, it was a good spirited campaign. I expected to win, but it was a runoff. I didn't win on the first ballot. We had a lot of time to politic because a guy by the name of Mel Chensky, who was from North Syracuse had made a motion that Al be invited to come to the convention.

Q: Shanker?

A: Shanker. The president, Manny Kafka, had ruled that constitutionally one of the powers of the president was to invite guests to the convention, and that delegates could have a constitutional amendment. The next year the delegates can decide who to invite to the election. But, at this convention, it's up to the president to decide who was going to be invited. So, Mel Chensky said that Al was over at... in Syracuse for some

reason, and over at the hotel had come across the street to talk to us. It turns out that Al was in Europe or some place that.

It took two hours in his challenge to the chair about whether they could get Shanker to come to the convention. Now, all of the candidates were pro-merger. Toni Cortese was the candidate, and everybody was for a merger but not at any cost. We all had the same story: merger, but not at any cost. So in this two-hour period of time, Toni and I were the best ones working the audience to win, and we won. So then we started off with a brand new group. It was strange, because this was a time that this intense feeling of teachers -- and I was a guidance counselor. Rogers, who was first vice president, was a social worker, or was attendance teacher. Toni was a social worker. I mean, we were a people personnel team. In this time of teacher awareness, that got elected. It was pretty well known that the executive secretary had pushed for Paul to be president. We think that Ned Hopkins had written a lot of stuff for Paul, and but we ended up waiting, and the executive secretary of 19 years had just retired. I had been his first vice president and chairman of the selection committee for the new executive secretary. I won't get into the story, but we got the wrong guy. It was a miscalculation on my part on a power move to get the guy that I wanted. Catherine Barrett seized upon this to

get the guy that she wanted. And, the two titans ran into each other, and we got this dud. He was really pompous.

Q: Was his last name White?

A: White.

Q: It was White? OK.

A: So, he called a meeting for the new officers. He laid down the law to the new officers, which Toni and Ed said, "You're going to let him do this?" I said, "No, he's not going to do that."

Q: Did he say? "I run..."

A: Yes, yes, I'm in charge. "You're in charge of policy. I'm in charge of implementation. Policy occurs only at the board meeting or in between. Board meetings: I run the operation. You stay out of the way." No, no, he's not going to do that. So, the first thing we had: we collected money for a teacher local that was out on strike in Hudson, New York. The delegates had collected the money and instructed a new president to deliver the money on a Monday. I told Dottie I was going to take her home at the end of the convention, you know? The guy before me had come in on Monday, stayed over Monday night, worked Tuesday, got home Tuesday night. He was from Long Island. He worked Long Island on Wednesday. He would come in Thursday morning. He's stay over Thursday night. He'd work Friday, go home, no weekend meetings except for the board. So,

I told Dottie, "That's the schedule." So, throughout the years, she would always say, "By the way, you going to be home on Wednesday?"

Q: (laughter)

A: So, I went back, and the executive secretary did not want to get involved in the strike. The word had come back that the teachers were going to go in on Tuesday. One more day of striking on Monday, then they were going to go in. All of the advisors to the executive secretary, except for this Ned Hopkins and this little fellow, Freddy Lambert, had said, "We've got to save the rest of the organization. This is a lost cause. We're not going to support these people." White had explained to him that he'd made a huge concession. The new president was in town because he was going to go down to deliver this money in Hudson, and that he had invited me to come to a staff meeting so I could see what was happening. White said, "Let's ask the president what he thinks." I said, "I just got elected. We're not going to advise these people (laughter) to go back in the school. We're going to support them so they stay off." White said, "Well, the president's spoken, and I guess he's going to take care of that." The meeting was over. So, me and these other two guys said, "I don't know what the hell we're going to do," you know? So, we drove down to Hudson. It's about 30 miles south of Albany. We came out with a program to buy a double

truck and Life Magazine, which was still being published at that time, and print the picture of every scab who crossed the picket line. We'd bring 10,000 teachers into Hudson so that no merchant could make a sale, and we would hire private detectives to find out dirt on every board member, and run every board member out of town.

Q: You're doing radical union stuff here. (laughter)

A: So, we went to the meeting. We laid this out. Six people in the audience walked out of it, walked out. But, the rest of the people stood and cheered. So after the meeting, there was a call from the publisher of the newspaper who ran the town. We went over there, and he was screaming, "You Goddamn carpet bagger. You come into my town, and you stir up the teachers. We had them all set to go back to school, and you're at fault." So, I tell him. "Well, I got a lot of work to do. I got to make arrangements with this Life Magazine for this double truck. I've got to hire a private detective agency. By the way, I'm putting your name on the list too along with the board members. I've got to get 10,000 teachers here by tomorrow morning. We would really like to work this out tonight. But, if we don't, we'll see you tomorrow morning." So, off I left, and left a guy there. By about 3 or 4 o'clock, there was a settlement, and the teachers were back in school the next day. I had to pay a \$25,000 fine because the Taylor Law says you can neither

encourage condone or support a public employee work stoppage. That was unfortunate because the president before me had paid a fine once because we had always contended that we didn't support or condone we were only there to try to get a settlement so teachers would go back to school because the fine -- there's been a court case that said its against the size of the treasury. So, if we got convicted, with the states full treasurer. But, we'd never had a conviction after that. So, we learned a lot from that conviction, that we've got to live by the (inaudible). So, that was the start of my presidency. Of course, all the delegates were ecstatic because they collected money for this, and this local got a settlement over this new president who went down and did something, and everything worked out.

Then we decided we had to live up to this pledge we had on merger. This was November. So, we called for Al to -- President Johnson had just said negotiation on any ship on any sea for a settlement in Vietnam. So, we called upon Al to come to any ship on any sea to talk about teaching unity at New York State. Al wrote back a very nice letter saying, "George Meany asked him to be an AFL-CIO representative in some African nation," and something like that. We sent back a shit letter that said, "Are you not aware that there are African Americans

in New York State? You should be here talking about the community," which later on I said to Al, "I'm really sorry (laughter) I sent that letter," and pragmatic Al said, "Oh, we were in a dispute. I thought that was a pretty good move right there." (laughter) I said, "Well, thanks, Al. I'm still sorry that I sent you the letter."

Q: These were basically volley shots to each other --

A: Yes. On the 6th of December, we had the first meeting. Frank White had sat down and said, "Now, this is a staff operation. The board sets policy that we should pursue a merger. It's a staff operation to set down the details. Then we will bring back the best deal we can, and the board will decide if that's good enough to set policy." And he said, "So, I'll take care of this meeting." I said, "Well, just make sure my calendar's free." "Oh, yes, certainly. Well, I'll make sure that you're involved too, Tom." I said, "And, make sure Toni and Ed's calendars are free too." "Oh, no, no, no, we cannot have the vice presidents there." I says, "Frank, they're going to be there. I'm sure their calendars are free."

Now, they're teaching full time. I'm on full time release now, which is a good thing because in the fall, when we started school, I'm no longer president of the Buffalo Teacher's Federation. The election has been in May. I'd been replaced as

president there. Coming in September, when we come in to school, the assistant principal has quit because there's a force on the faculty that's disruptive. We all thought it was Ms. McCarthy. Ms. McCarthy had terrible BO, and she didn't teach.

The assistant principal refused to identify the disruptive force until the faculty in unison demanded to know. And he says, "Well, its Hobart." I was, "Me? What is it about me?" and, the principal had been very upset. When I got to the school, I had wanted to be a guidance counselor in a high school. I was a guidance counselor in kindergarten and first grade. I was just not cut out for it. Kid says "I'm having a bad day." "Well why are you having a bad day." "Oh, Uncle Johnny won't let me sleep with him and mom. Uncle George will let me sleep with him and mom. Uncle Pete will let me sleep with him and mom, but I have a bad day whenever I..." I don't want to hear this stuff, you know? So, finally this guy, Conners, at South Park, said, "I found out later that the principal meeting where they had said, "Look, this is the president of the teacher's federation, and we can't keep saying no to him. There's openings. Somebody's got to take him." And, Conner says that I can handle it. Send him to me. So that's the way it went then.

The first thing I did was I had an under-the-contract lead building committee that would try to head off grievances. Well, he refused to meet with us. "You'll meet with my advisory committee. I will not meet with you." "Can I use your phone?" "My phone? There's a phone out there." I said, "This one's right here. Can I use your phone?" "Who you going to call?" I said, "The superintendent." "What are you going to call him for?" I said, "This contract matter." "Well, I'll call." He called the superintendent. "I have this teacher standing here in front of me who wants to talk to you." The superintendent says, "OK, put him on the phone." I said, "He won't meet with us. The contract says to meet with us." I said, "Is this going to be our first arbitration?" The superintendent says, "Let me talk to the principal." He turns bright red. "I will not. I will not. I will not. All right, I'll meet with him." Boom, hangs up.

So, we're at Bennett, and everybody was in the Buffalo Teacher's Federation. I find that at South Park, there's 125 of the faculty --

END OF FILE 1

It's the largest faculty in the city. But, 20 members of the BTF, Buffalo Teacher's Federation -- about 20 members of the Buffalo Federation of Teachers, which was an AFT affiliate --

and everybody else is a non-member. And, they all say that Hobart got transferred to this school to organize. That's what he's going to be doing here. Well, I didn't have anytime to organize this building because I've got a full time job there, and I'm out in the other 99 buildings that are all in the city. So I get my 20 members together, and I said, "The principal is really giving us a hard time, and we've got a right to meet with him with all the grievances. I've got all these grievances. They said, "Well, they're from non-members." I said, "Well, you know, we've got to take care of non-members too." I said, "So, who's going to go in with me?" So, it was two people who finally agreed to go in with me.

So, I got the date to go in there, and there's the principal sitting there, and behind him are about nine or ten people who say are his advisory committee. They're all my members, every one of them. And, whatever I say -- and we want this -- he said, "Sir," he turns around and he says, "What is the advisory committee's decision?" and they'll say yes or no. Whatever they said, he goes yes or no. So, we got nothing because everything went to the third level grievance because we didn't get a thing from this committee. But then, we go to the next level, and we win everything. This guy got madder and madder and madder, and then I'm on these long phone calls. So September rolls around,

and the assistant regional says he's quitting. He's getting to school, like, at 6 o'clock in the morning because I'm trying to get in to see him before he locks it. He goes in his office and locks the door. He won't answer the door. You know, he's in there, and he stays there. I stay late at night, and you'd never get to see this guy. There's going to be an election in the city of Buffalo for the at-large members of the common council there are four at-large members and I think there were 12 districts that were there. It just so happened that three of the at-large are up for election next year, and I become the issue in three campaigns. Some of them support me. Some of them support the principal, and Dottie's mother, who lives within the school district, calls up and says, "What the hell did you do?"

About three teachers wrote letters saying what a bad guidance counselor I was, and they were the worst teachers in the building. The German teacher said he is advising everybody against going into German. Well, the truth was that I couldn't get kids. There were very few kids going to college out of this. There was like 2,500 there. We had 50 kids that indicated any interest in the senior class of post-secondary education. The few that wanted science backgrounds, I wanted to take German because at that time there were a lot of the

technical manuals that were in German, and it was a good background to have. Kids would not go into this guy's class. So, he writes, "Bad guidance counselor, disruptive force..." They all use the word disruptive force, disruptive force... So, the principal is saying, "All right, I'm going to transfer you to this school." I said, "I'm not going to take a transfer." "Yes you are. I've got to get you out of there. I've got to get you out of there. You won't have to come to school. You can take care of your state work. You don't have to come to school at all. I'll transfer you to city hall. I'll make you my assistant. You don't have to come to work." I said, "No, you're not transferring me out of here. I'm staying here."

Finally he calls and says, "Report to my office tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock." I said, "I can't. I've got appointments with kids." "I'm giving you a direct order. You appear in my office at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning. You appear in the Associate Superintendent for Instruction's office at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning. And that's an order -- insubordination if you don't show up." So, 9 o'clock in the morning, down I go, and I get there and the secretary goes, "He's been in there for an hour." I said, "Who?" "Your principal has been there for an hour."

The Assistant Superintendent for Instruction had been the assistant principal at the first school I'd been at. You know, he'd moved up the ranks. He ended up superintendent, and he ended up being consultants all over the country. He was really a great guy. This is his first month on the job as the Associate Superintendent for Instruction. So, the door opens, and he comes out, and he goes, "I can't tell you what happened, but come on to my office." And so, in I go. The principal goes, "Tom, how are you?" He puts his arm around me and says, "I'm so glad we settled this." He said, "I want you to know I think you do a great job as a guidance counselor." He said, "But the issue was whether I would be backed up or not. And, I had to use you as the issue because you were the highest profile for me to say that if I wanted you transferred, I would be backed up. And, as soon as he said he would transfer you, I told him I want to keep you." He goes, "Now, I'm going to go back and have a faculty meeting, and explain this to the faculty." He said, "So, you take the rest of the day off."

He leaves, and I say to the associate super, "What the hell happened?" "It's just like he said." He said, "I finally said, OK, we'll transfer." This guy had had a history of -- at that point, we had a lot of what was called permanent substitutes. In our case, the permanent substitutes were people who had

graduated from a normal school, two years degree. When Buffalo accepted that for certification, Buffalo was its own certifying agent. There were three certifying agents in the states: New York City, Buffalo, and the State. So, Buffalo used to accept those as fully certified people. Most of them were women who left for maternity leave. There wasn't a maternity leave -- who left to have a baby. When they came back, the state had imposed state-certified standards on the city. And so, they never could become a certified teacher. As a substitute -- as a permanent substitute -- and then for four years as a permanent substitute, you could be dismissed on 24 hours notice. He would keep half of his faculty as permanent substitutes. He would transfer these people out every year to make sure he kept that balance. And, he had these few people that were his advisory committee that had tenure, and all these people that didn't have tenure. That's what he said, and I said to my friends when I went back, the few that I had at school were -- and what happened? He said, "There wasn't a sound in the faculty meeting," because he told them exactly what he had told me. He said, "Especially these people who wrote the letters about you..." They were, like, crawling under the table (laughter).

Later on I figured out what it was. He had assumed that I was going to be elected president of NYSTA in November and I'd

be gone. This was the end of September. He only had to put up with me for six or seven weeks. But, this was an iron principal that he had as a history teacher -- an iron person -- and it destroyed him and he retired in the middle of that spring semester.

Q: Really?

A: He left, yeah. So, I was out of South Park, and we were in on the merger talks. Toni and Ed come running down the hall, and they see me and I'd say, "Yeah, what's going on?" And they said, "You betrayed us." "What the hell did I do?" They said, "The meeting's going to be at the Fort Orange Club."

Q: The Fort Orange Club?

A: Yeah. I said, "Yeah, so what?" "The Fort Orange Club doesn't allow women inside on the property." Obviously, Toni can't go to the meeting at the Fort Orange Club. So, I went to go see Frank. I said, "Frank, what the hell are you doing down there?" He goes, "Oh, I never thought of that." I said, "Well then, just change the meeting." "Oh, no, I can't do that." I said, "Frank, I'll change the meeting. I'll call Shanker. I'll set up the place. I'll find a place." "No, no, no, I do all the arranging of places." So, the meeting was moved over to the University Club, and so Toni and Ed came, and before each of the meetings, Ned Hopkins would sit down with us, and we would work out the Break Off News Release. And, good intentions got your

Break Off Press Release already there. So, we met with Al. It was the first time I met Al, the first time I met Sandy, the first time --

Q: So, this was the first time you meet the radical New York City UFT people?

A: Yep, yep, well, you know, to me coming out of Buffalo, Al was a hero. You know, Jesus, we wanted collective bargaining like Al had, you know? I didn't know him, but we came close at a collective bargaining election at Niagara Falls. He was there before I got there, and had left already. I just had never met him. So, we had the first meeting, and --

Q: Who else was there? There was Dan Sanders --

A: Walter Tice, Abel Blattman, Sandy Feldman, Ken Deedy, and Al. I don't think there's any staff there. I guess Sandy was staff.

Q: Sandy was staff.

A: On our side, it was Toni, Ed, and I, Frank White, Ned Hopkins, and Fred Lambert. Now, Lambert, it turned out, had written a doctorial thesis for White in Massachusetts at Harvard, whose topic was the merger talks in Massachusetts, which Al had done for Selden. White was a phony. He didn't write his own dissertation. He had Lambert there again, and later on Fred was a good friend of Franks. He never would have admitted, but he was always very sheepish about it, so I assumed

it was correct. He had Lambert there to write a book on merger, which White put his name on. We started out there, and we didn't get very far. AFL-CIO was a problem. How the president related to his staff was a problem. All the normal problems were there at the first meeting. So, we had another meeting. I don't know how many went on, but we finally had one at a place called Motel on the Mountain.

Al had said they have a good chef at Motel on the Mountain. So, we got there. You know where it is? As you come up from New York City, I think it's in Westchester County at the northern part of Westchester County. It's sort of a big turn on thruway you see this place up on the hill that's there. So, the chef was in Europe. The meals were shitty, and when I took a shower in the morning, it looked like there was a light in the drain in the bathtub. After I got out, I bent over to see what it was. But it wasn't in the drain. It drained out onto the mountain. It was sunlight that was coming in through there.

Q: Nice place.

A: So, we moved to Ardian House. You know what Ardian House is?

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: What was significant about this meeting is that in the middle of the meeting, White got a call from his family, I think his uncle -- a very close uncle -- had died in Massachusetts.

And, he excused himself. The important part wasn't that we moved from Motel on the Mountain to the Ardian House, but that White was an obstructionist. He would interrupt. If you started going off, he'd be off onto a tangent. Obviously, he was there to prevent this from happening. So White left, and that's the first day. We were there for the night. There wasn't anything to do there. They brought in a bartender, so we were all at the bar. We got to know Tice and Deedy, and Feldman, and all of a sudden, as Tice always used to say to the NEA people, "Look, feel, no horns." And, we got along pretty good. We went over to the Ardian House, and we made a lot of progress. Things were starting to really, really come together. A couple more meetings, White was there. At one of them, White threatened to sue us.

Q: Sue...?

A: Us. The association.

Q: The association's board?

A: Officers, because he said we were negotiating away his constitutional powers. Rogers had said, "Well, OK, Frank, sue us. We'll see you in court. You probably shouldn't work for us, while you're suing us." So, White got all flustered, but I took it more seriously. I felt that I should protect the organization against frivolous suits, and I read the constitution pretty closely. In the association the president

had about four responsibilities: chair the convention, and be the spokesman, and there were a few other things. The executive secretary used to have two pages: hire the staff, fire the staff, negotiate with the staff, direct the staff, and very specific. White had all of those in there. One difference in NYSTA was one of the powers of the president was to be the chief executive officer. NYSTA also didn't have a term limit-- well, that's wrong, NYSTA had a term limit because I'd been chairman of the constitution revision committee. And, I won on every issue, which really converted us into a union-type organization, including this chief executive officer. The one thing I lost then was term limits. So, I just sort of said, "Look, go call your lawyer. I'm the chief executive officer. You work for me." And, he said, "No, he didn't." It had come to a head because we were moving from the building that we own to a rental building. On his recommendation, and the board had only agreed to do it if we reduce the costs of occupancy. I knew we were running way over the costs, but he had not figured in the moving costs. The renovation of the building is costing a lot more. I mean it was just going sky high. We always debate over whose office we'd go to: his or mine. He'd say "We'd have to come to my office because I'm waiting for a call from the governor. I'm waiting for a call from the commissioner." I said, "Frank, that's bullshit. I'm in your office a lot. You never get a

call from any of these people." "They call you?" The only calls he ever got were from his wife, which was always a huge fight, which I would have thought he wouldn't want somebody in his office while this is happening. I would just assume be in my office and then go back to his office, be in private. At any rate, that was -- and so, it wasn't that big of a thing for me. I was going to do it just for the principle of the thing because I didn't really have anything to do with this person: nothing, nothing to do.

He was always very upset with me because my plane got in from Buffalo at about 7:00 in the morning. So, I was down there at 7:30. By 9 o'clock when the staff started coming, I was bored stiff. I had done everything possible that you could do. I'd walk around and talk to the staff. He had come to my office once to say how disrupting this was. The staff didn't know whether to answer my questions or not.

He's in there on the phone with his wife, arguing with his wife. I've got nothing to do. He's got no magazines or newspapers or books on the shelf, you know? It's all knick-knacks. I've got nothing to do there. I'm walking around. Behind his bookcase, there is a parcel board. And, I pull it out, and turn around and look at it. It says, "Designer's Concept for Dr. White's Office." I said, "What's this?" He

said, "Well, that's personal. I'd prefer that you not go through my personal things. Thank you." "It says 'office'. What the hell is this?" "Well, my office has to be as nice as the Commissioner of Educations." "Cancel it since you're way over budget. "I was going to have your office done too." I said, "Frank, you're canceling both. You're way over budget." "You can't tell me to do that." I said, "Yeah? I'm the chief executive officer. I'm telling you, cancel it." I said, "The next thing I'll do is I'll call the sheriff and have you put out of the office." So, he said, "I demand a meeting of the board." So, I call a special meeting of the board. I knew it was going to be a disaster because they hated him.

Q: Oh, OK.

A: The one reason that the board supported me over Paul and Carl Headstrom was they thought Paul and Carl Headstrom wanted to be NEA president, and that they would be gone all the time, and Frank would be left to run the organization. And, they supported me to keep Frank in line. And, I was going to live up to that responsibility, as I was going to keep Frank in line whether they wanted it or not. We get a special board meeting up in Glens Falls. One of the board members says, "Well, why are we here? What's this, a special board meeting?" I said, "Well, this is the situation. We're way over budget on the move from what the board authorized. Frank had this interior

decorator go into his office. I have ordered him to cancel it. He says I don't have the power to cancel it. And, Frank wanted a special board meeting. That's why we're here. Frank?"

Frank said, "Well, you know, I have these constitutional powers, and we can go through all this bullshit." And, they're steaming out there. So, Ciero Matarazzo, one of the board members, raised his hand and said, "So, Frank, if you don't work for the president, who do you work for? Do you work for the board?" White says, "No, I do not work for the board. I work for the members." Ciero says, "Well, can you then tell us, what is the role of the board in your employment?" He said, "Well, when my contract comes to an end, shortly before that, the board will decide on the conditions for an extension of that contract or not. But, once you decide on that, then I work for the members."

Q: Interesting.

A: There were some other questions in there, but really that question is really what set the stage. In the reception -- I don't know if it was a formal reception or just some guys came up to my room afterwards, and now were drinking there. And so, the board members are saying, "You made us come all the way up here. You should have fired that bastard." That really set the stage for it. We'd come across some information that we had

rental cars in two separate cities on the same day that he had reimbursed himself for as an organizational expense. It was the only thing he ever did for himself. He used to fill out his own voucher, carry it down to finance, and stand there and wait while they cut the check and then leave with the check. Everything else, the secretary did.

So, we had this, and I said, "Well, Frank, we're going to fire you." And he said, "Well, I demand to meet with the immediate past president." I said, "Sure." I'm not going to argue over that. So, I got Manny to come in, and Manny Kafka's there, and I think Frank thought that Manny would support him in whatever he wanted to do. Frank came in with a briefcase and said, "Manny, what do you think of this?" Manny said, "It's obvious. The board wants you fired." And he walked out. The meeting lasted four minutes, five minutes. His attorney contacted us, and we had an attorney sit down with him. Rogers and I were sitting in meeting, and he was waiting for the attorney. The attorney came in and he goes, "You caught this guy on something big." He said, "Oh, you mean on the cars?" He goes, "Oh, that's bullshit." He says, "If you get a jury of traveling salesmen. They're going to laugh you right out of court. But, you caught him on something big. We'll never know what it is. But, you caught him on something big because he's got an iron-

clad contract." I think he had 17 months left on his three-year contract. Or, no, he had, like 25 months left on his three-year contract. And, he's willing to settle for 17 months. The other condition was that he be able to come and go from his office for the next two weeks. This was St. Patrick's Day. We were moving to the new building on the first of April. He wanted to be able to come in until whatever the Friday was before the 1st of April. We accepted it, and he was gone. Toni Cortese said to me afterwards: she says, "Who lost? We're sending his check to some beach in Portugal. Who lost on this?"

The next board meeting, the board said, "Well, who's going to assume his responsibilities?" I said, "Well, we've already established that I'm the guy that oversees the organization. I will."

The 1st of April also was the first day of the merger, and the board took a position that before the merger came about that we were to hire a new executive secretary because the board wanted an executive secretary in place before the merger occurred so that this will be the highest staff person in the new merged organization. One of the guys that was very responsible for the merger was Dean Schieff. He was one of the Assistant Executive

Secretaries for Field Services. He had replaced Lambert. Oh, the other guy in our sight was Ken Laeb.

Q: Ken...?

A: Ken Laeb. He was a long time NEA staff guy that we had gotten from Connecticut. Dean had replaced those two, and Dean was the one that came up with the idea that the difference between the AFT and the NEA dues is the NEA charged \$25 and the AFT charged \$18. How are we going to pay those dues? The members, the NYSTA members would get \$18 dues increase. The AFT members would get \$25 dues increase. This was a hell of a whack, and we didn't know -- there was no agency fee. We didn't know if we'd have any members that would embrace this? So, Dean came up with the idea that we would pay the national dues out of the state treasury because Dean said that we would have a great increase in membership. I was, "Dean, you're smoking something here." I'm like, "I'm hoping we'd just get Al at 85,000. We had 105,000. I was just hoping for 190,000." You know, Dean says, "This is an increase in membership."

But Dean had the vision, and so we got the board to accept all of that. I wanted Dean to be the executive secretary. The board evidently felt that Dean was too close to me, and what I was finding out that they had supported me on one issue only. That was getting rid of Frank.

Q: Get rid of Frank.

A: Once Frank was gone --

Q: They didn't want you?

A: They bailed out. I mean, they were gone. So, we did a survey round of the board members, and we did not have a majority to elect Dean. Dean was very, very disappointed. So, Toni, Ed, and I got together and I said, "What the hell are we going to do? We don't want to screw up this merger." The intent obviously is to prevent this from taking off. So we had gotten to know some of Al's staff. And, I had an idea. I said, "What about Vito?" They said, "They'll never accept Vito." I said, "But how are they going to turn him down? He's a director of staff at the UFT. He's got the experience, and he's one of us. How are they going to turn him down? Al's not recommending him. I'm recommending him." So, Toni and Ed said, "Well, let's try it."

So, we called up Vito. Vito said, "What, are you out of your fucking mind?" I said, "It means you got to work in Albany." "I ain't working in Albany. I'll work down here." I said, "Ahh no you have to work in Albany." So he said, "Well, let's try it." So, we go to the board meeting, and this is the board meeting when they want to fire Hopkins. They had found out that at the vote for merger, that Hopkins had printed

material about things the board had done that would have been helpful in breaking up the NYSUT membership, allowing UTNY to organize it."

I didn't tell you about the convention. We had to get a vote of the delegates on this merger. Once we had signed it --

Q: You sign the merger, but then you have to go to --

A: Right, had to go to the board. The board turns it down 31-4. Two of the four I absolutely know are Toni Cortese and Ed Rogers. Those are two -- I'm certain about a guy, Dave Whitelaw, who is from my area. I'm certain that he was there, and I'm 99% sure about a guy named Doug Matousek from Syracuse was there. And, there was a guy, Bill Sweet, that always started off every speech he had by, "I was one of the ones that voted for merger." I think I remember him on the other side. But I never challenged Bill on that. It was 31-4. We got killed. The other conspirator was Clyde Cook, who was our treasurer, who was going to meet with us to help us prepare how to influence the board. We never could find him, and we finally moved over to the other side.

Q: Oh, he was supposed to meet with you that day or that morning or that night?

A: Yeah, yeah, and he went to the other side. So, the meeting is going to be a disaster. We'd invited Al up to talk. Al's

out in the hallway, as I'm getting killed. I often wondered why Al took a chance on us, because in that election, which had been in November, we're now in April. We're only five months away. Only Ed had won on the first ballot, and that was challenged because he didn't get -- the constitution said a majority of the ballots cast. He didn't get a majority of all of those voting. He got a majority of the ballots cast, and won by six. There were a lot of people that abstained. So Ed won on the first ballot. Toni and I went to a second ballot. So, five months later, Al's putting his faith in three people who maybe can't bring anybody with him, or a bare majority that he could bring with him maybe.

So, Al's out in the hall, and we're getting our ass kicked. And so it ends, and I said, "Well, you know, Al's out in the hall. He's going to talk to us." I said, "Well, if he's invited up there, we're polite people. We'll listen to him." I said, "No I invited him to the special convention. He's going to vote on this." So, now, I told you to about the year before, we'd had this big thing about who invites people to the convention. So, these guys, some of my friends, some of them are these eight that I had been conspiring with in the old organization. They're pretty sharp people. Its been

established you can invite who ever you want. "But we would advise you to be very careful in who you will..." (break in audio)

And, they're tight. They also say that the officers can't -- they're not going to let the officers go out and try to sell this merger.

Q: Is this how they're slowing down the merger the NYSTA board? I mean, did they want the merger to happen?

A: Evidently not. You know, it was merger, but not at any cost. So, they elected an executive committee on their initiative. The purpose of the executive committee is to ensure the officers don't sell this merger.

Q: That's its logo?

A: Yeah, and to ensure they don't use the periodicals of the association to sell this merger.

Q: So you could not use the 'Challenger'?

A: Right.

Q: Could you use stationery?

A: No.

Q: Nothing?

A: Nothing. So, we walk out. Toni and Ed are furious with me, "How dare you agree to that!" I said, "Well, we signed the merger agreement, right? They're going to publicize that we signed the merger? Let's see what will happen." "You threw

this whole thing away." "Well lets see what happens." So, we go to the conventions at the Concord and Catherine Barrett notifies us she is now president of the NEA.

Q: Is this before that article came out, the interview with you that you never gave about the AFL-CIO?

A: That was during the merger discussions that came up. Ned wrote that. I got a call from Catherine's office about summonsing me to Washington. I think it's the only time that the NEA ever summoned a state president. State presidents are really a higher level, and I got summoned to Washington. Charles' the chauffer met me with the NEA Cadillac at the airport for our weekly meeting. She and Terry Herndon said, "Admit it. Ned wrote this." I said, "What? He's the assistant executive secretary for communications. Yeah, he helped." "No, no, Ned did this. You didn't know anything about this." "Are you saying I don't know what goes on in my organization?" "You did this? He didn't do this?" "Yes."

So, Toni and Ed were very pleased with it because they had thought it was bullshit to be arguing about the AFL-CIO. I had said to him, "Are you kidding? That's our biggest lever on Al. When we give on that, we get everything else we want. We're not going to give that up."

Now, originally I had been anti-union. I got started at the Buffalo Teacher's Federation and there were three organizations: High School Organization, the Elementary School Teachers, and the Buffalo Teacher's Federation. I said very simply, "The high school teachers and the elementary school teachers, they don't organize everybody." And, the Buffalo Teacher's Federation does. The Buffalo Federation of Teachers, the AFL-CIO affiliate doesn't even have an office. The Buffalo Teacher's Federation has a printing machine. That's where I'm going. But, I was always opposed to the word "union." I accepted the professionalism idea, and one day my mom -- and my mom was a great lady. But, she wasn't really astute politically. She says to me, "What's your union doing today?" "Wait a minute, I've got to take this from the editorial writers at the Buffalo Evening News because they tell me union is shorter than trying to explain what an association is. But, I don't have to take this from you, Mom." And so, she goes and opens up a dictionary and she says, "Well, Webster says that a union fights for better benefits for its members and protect the rights. What is it that you do?" So, I thought, "Well, I guess --"

Q: There's a union.

A: I guess I better accept this, you know?

Q: But, Catherine --

A: So, she summons you down to DC?

Q: Yeah, down to DC, get this interrogation. She's very unhappy when I say, "Is Charles going to drive me back to the airport?" And she says, "No." So, I didn't get a ride back to the airport with Charles. She says she's coming to the convention. Now, Catherine in my opinion was an outstanding politician. I told you that she ran a campaign that there shouldn't be an administrator, and she didn't believe that, and she was just an astute politician. She had a low, Greta Garbo type voice that she was -- I mean, she spun magic when she talked to people, and she got all the way to NEA President. So, I mean, she was good. So, I figured, "That's going to be a problem."

We get to the convention, and we had gone all over the state, and people had said, "Is it true the officers had been gagged?" I said, "No, not true." "Well, tell us about this?" I said, "I'll answer any questions that you have about it." "Well, what do you think of it?" I'd say, "I signed the agreement. I negotiated it." "Oh, oh," well and then they'd ask me questions. We had been going all around the state and it appeared to have gone fairly well. So, I was confident going into the meeting, but I'm confident going into every meeting. I'm probably overconfident. I've been very fortunate that I

haven't had some of these meetings backfire. We went into the meeting. Catherine's going to be there. I'm willing to take Catherine on, see what happens. At breakfast, Ned Hopkins says to me, "I'd gotten Paul Cole to make the motion to accept the merger." Now, Paul had been Catherine's campaign manager.

Q: Yeah, and he ran against you --

A: He ran against me. I said, "Are you sure?" He goes, "Yeah, call on him first." So, I get up there, people run to the microphones. I call on microphone one. Paul's smart enough to microphone one. When Paul moves for the merger the place is stunned. Their assuming Paul's the leader against the merger. Paul moves away. The second lady I was very happy not to call on her first, Lorraine -- now it's 30 years ago. I've missed her name. Maybe Paul knows her name. But anyway she gets up and she says, "Why is the Board of Directors against this merger?" So, I respond, "I haven't got the faintest idea. Why don't we ask the board members to come up and tell you?" So, Toni says, "What are you, crazy? Giving them the microphone...? We've got the microphone, and you're giving it away!" So, the first guy to come up is Herberto Carlone -- Herb Carlone. So, Herberto comes up, and says, "We told Tom that he could not have a board any bigger than 50. And, he let us down." So, Herberto starts to leave. I say, "Hey, Herb, how big is the board?" So, Herb says, "53." So, laughter out in the audience...

Q: Yeah, right, right.

A: The next one to come up is Tom Pisa. He's the guy that's replacing the president of the Buffalo Teacher's Federation. He's leading the opposition, I guess. Paul was in town, and so, he comes up and he says, "I'm opposed to this merger because it allows the president to have assistance, and that will make him too powerful." So he starts to walk away. So I say "What was your position when I was President of the Buffalo Teacher's Federation?" So, he comes back and says, "I was your assistant."

More chuckling in the audience, you know? (laughter) And so, four or five of them come up, and they start doing this. One is worse than another. I mean one lady came up about some little thing, maybe some word that a word shouldn't have been 'may' and not 'shall' but some little thing. "So now any other board members?" And, no other board members. "How about people in the audience? No. Well, let's go back to the debate." Some guy gets up and he said, "I demand that we not vote until we hear from Catherine Barrett." So, I said, "I agree with you." So, Antonia says, "There you go again?" So, by the way, Toni for 30 years was my strongest supporter, except for these couple of things she was normally right, and I was wrong. There's a difference of opinion. But, I always felt very comfortable

running meetings, and so I said, "Well, I'll assure you, we're going to talk to Catherine."

So, I sent a couple of people up to her room. Tell her to come down right away." So, these people are debating, and there's one guy in the front row. I don't know if you ever were in the great room at the Concord. When they'd set it up for the comedians to come in and all that, that was a round stage, and the front tables would elongate into the stage. So, the front row tables would have 20 people ahead of it sitting this way. It was one of the guys that was right at the first seat at the table who was heckling me at the whole convention all these comments, you know, which were uncomplimentary. So, the people come back. They say she won't answer her phone, and she won't answer the door. We know she's in there. The debate goes on for a while, and I said, "Well, just keep somebody out there. Keep somebody knocking on the door and tell her I want her down here as soon as possible." This thing's ready to vote. I want to vote as soon as possible. So somebody rises and they said, "Well, I move to close debate and move to a vote." I said, "Well, you can't. I'm ruling you out of order. I told the body that we won't vote until we hear from Catherine. We've got a national president here. We're going to hear from her before we vote." So, whoever this guy was said, "Well, I challenge the

ruling of the chair. And, I've got a privileged motion here, and I want to vote now." I said, "Well, our reason is that I have told the body that we won't vote until Catherine comes down. Let's go to a vote. All those who support the chair, stand." And, I got crushed at this thing. There was hardly anybody standing. So, "Sit down. All those that oppose the chair, stand." Like, the whole place stands up. I thought, "Oh, well, you know, at least nobody's going to challenge that we do this." But then Catherine comes in the back of the hall and starts walking down the aisle. All these people standing must have been struck with embarrassment because they start to applaud. As they applaud, her smile gets bigger and bigger and bigger. She goes down the aisle, and she comes up to the stage. And, I introduce her "President of the National Education Association, Catherine Barrett, former president of NYSTA." She walks up there. She says, "I've always appreciated this gathering of delegates, and I know you'll do the right thing. My only word to you is move carefully, and make sure the decision you make is the right decision. Thank you for having me." And this guy that's been heckling me all the while says, "Well, Tom, if Catherine's for it, I guess I'm for it." We had the vote, and I'll tell you, it was overwhelming. So, the merger merges into place.

Q: Geeze, and all in about six or seven months.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: That's amazing.

A: The merger agreement said that we would be merged on April 1st, and the merger would take effect April 1st and, we'd merge in all aspects of organizational operations by May 1st, 1973. We've debated that language over the years, what the hell that means. And, the NYSUT conventions are one short because the lady that was in charge of the conventions before, Bifferough?, didn't count the first one. So, I served 34 years as president, and I was at the 33rd convention. The first board meeting was going to be in August. I was going to be a WCOTP meeting, which is World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession.

I had left Toni and Ed in charge of putting together the first budget. I called the NYSUT Executive Committee together. And, I said to them, "What are the important things? I'll make sure that Ed and Toni get whatever you guys think is important. If we have an agreement, I'll make sure that we get those things." And, one of them, I don't remember which one, said, "We want UTNY's stipend. Al paid the vice presidents \$1,000 a year. I said, "Anything else?" They said, "No," which as far as I was concerned was golden. I mean, if they wanted creature comforts over members' needs, I mean, that's blackmail one-o-one.

I told Toni and Ed I said, "Put this all together. We're going to have a board meeting in August. It's got to be accepted by both sides to make sure that UTNY says they can deliver what they agreed to." So, I went off to London, and came back and we had the board meeting. And, I presented -- no, I'm missing one. We had one board meeting before that. That's where I presented Vito's name as the executive secretary. And, it was either the recommendation of Vito that caught them off guard, or the fact that we made the recommendation at all caught them off guard because there wasn't any opposition to Vito. Vito got up and said, "I want you to know that I don't accept any of this bullshit in the constitution. I work for the president."

Q: (laughter).

A: Al was satisfied that we would have structure. Al was willing to work with whatever ever we came up with in the end. He said, "Look, if there's certain things we need in order to get the upstate people to join, we're going to do them. But, at the first convention, I'm going to overturn, like the term limits." I said, "Look Al, I just have no credibility at all. If the only thing I didn't get as chairman of the constitution convention committee is no term limits, and we have a merger, and I come back with no term limits." So, Al said, "Well, will you work with me at the next convention to do it?" I said, "Yeah, I'll tell people up front. Rather than a majority vote,

I'm willing to take it to a 2/3 vote in order to have no term limits." And Al said, "Well, so am I." I had said to Al, "Al, when you go upstate, you can't say union." "Don't say union!" So, Al said, "OK, it's good advice. You know, it's all right. We won't use union. Can I talk about other unions?" I go, "Yeah, you can talk about other unions. Don't call this one a union."

So the board came together. We had devised a voting situation where Al had 50 vice presidents on the executive council. UTNY had 85,000 members, and we had 35 members on our Board of Directors. And, we had 105,000 members. So, the breakdown was that every NYSTA board member got 1.5 votes, and every UTNY vice president got 0.9 votes. And we gave them signs, and I should remember but one was a red sign, and one was a green sign. We had an official counter. We put up the signs, and somebody would come and use a calculator, tell us what the vote was.

By this second or third meeting, we had people trading signs. Two green signs for one red sign, and (laughter) back and forth. So, the boards came together without any difficulty. Staff was a little --

Q: Was this because they realized that we're all here together? We're here for the same issues basically?

A: I don't think that they were altruistic at all. I think they counted the vote at the convention. It was so overwhelming, and by the way, after the convention voted, it had to go to a vote of the members. The vote of the members was 72,000-19,000 or something. It was so overwhelming that I believe that they were getting ahead of the race rather... And then, the board changed very rapidly. Those that were militant on the board stayed, and those that weren't got beat. UTTY people won these district races. And we had to compromise that there would be 35 districts elected in the districts, and there would be one at large for every two districts. They would be elected at large. I think Al would have always said that the UTTY people won more than their share of the district races, you know, where they were competing with the NYSTA people.

So, it was overwhelming, and, while I held my breath, Dean had been absolutely right. We had 214,000 members the first year. We had all those people who had never joined before that caught up in this merger idea, and so now we've got to perform. The first thing coming forward is the Senate race in New York to replace -- I don't remember who Moynihan was replacing. There might have been -- no, it wasn't Javitz. It might have been Keating. It might have been Buckley. There were four candidates in the democratic race: Bella Abzug, Ramsey Clarke,

Paul O'Dwyer, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Moynihan was seen as the least likely to get elected.

Q: Moynihan was?

A: Yep. Bella Abzug was by far the stronger candidate since New York City votes in a larger proportion in the primary than the rest of the state. I think O'Dwyer, as former mayor, was seen as -- and I think Ramsey Clarke was from New York, and so was Moynihan. He said he had a farm in Delaware County.

Everybody thought he was from New York. He talked about Hell's Angels, or I mean Hell's Kitchen --

Q: Hell's Kitchen, yeah.

A: Al liked Moynihan. I guess he knew he was going to be a social democrat someday. And so we talked about it. Everybody agreed with Al, and we had to kill Bella Abzug.

Q: Too radical?

A: No, she broke open the school during the 68 strike.

Q: She scabbed.

A: And she would campaign about it, and I mean she never repented for doing it. They always said it was the right thing to do. So, we knew we had to beat Bella. And, I don't know Ramsey Clarke, or Paul O'Dwyer at all. Moynihan was OK with me. We had gotten pretty active in politics. But, mostly in the senatorial or assembly races in the state, we had not really done anything on the higher level. I had been a co-chair for

Teachers for McGovern, but I got killed at the political action committee. I had to resign from that. (laughter). It was like, "Ugh," because nobody was for McGovern except me, (laughter) it was -- so, we went with Moynihan, and Al made the famous quip afterwards. He said, "Every race has to be like this. They have to win by less votes than we have members." Moynihan went everywhere and said it was the teachers that are the reason he won the primary. With the split in New York City, it's probably true. I mean, upstate had no reason to vote for Abzug, or O'Dwyer, or for Moynihan. I mean, every political club around the state had a candidate, but they weren't affected.

So we had full credit for it. Whether it was deserved or not, we got full credit for Moynihan.

Q: This puts NYSUT on the political map?

A: Right.

Q: There you are.

A: Now, the next gubernatorial race is against Malcolm Wilson. Rockefeller is retired, invested governorship in Malcolm Wilson, and we had called to Long Island to Joe Magliato, who's the head of the Nassau County Republican Party, at that time the top fundraiser in the republican party. Magliato was an assemblyman from Long Island. Our first attempt as an association and political action was to run a huge campaign against Milt Jonese, Nassau County Senator who's chair of the Senate Education

Committee. Jonese wins 2-1. But, he should have won 9-1. Magliato says that it's the most costly race he's ever run in Nassau County in order to beat the teachers, and that no teacher issue will get a republican vote in the assembly. I'm not speaking for this Senate. So, Manny Kafka is one of our legislative reps. He's the past president of NYSTA. And, Manny's from Long Island. Manny knows Magliato. He knows Jonese, tells me and says, "They won't let us in their office."

At that time we were staying in a motel across the street down the street from the office building on Wolf Road. It was called Round Towner. It's now a Sheraton. It has a swimming pool, and Ed Rogers, who's from Long Island, came and he said, "Magliato is having a staff meeting every morning in the pool." I said he said "he won't meet with us." Manny said, "We're not going to try to meet with them. Every morning, we'd come down and we would swim one lap in the pool, end of the lap, we'd say, "Good morning, Mr. Magliato." We'd go in, and go about our day. "Ed," I said, "this ain't working." Ed say "Let's just keep doing it." Let's just keep doing it." One morning I said, "Good morning, Mr. Magliato." And Joe says, "Good morning. Why don't you send somebody down to my office?"

Q: Nice.

A: We gave him enough deference that he was going to work with this, and after that, I'll tell you, he was the best friend to have. He never voted with us on a damn thing. But, we always got enough republican votes to pass whatever the hell we wanted to pass.

Q: (laughter).

A: So, we had started out on that. We started to fix things up. That race was a disaster. We had met with Stanley Stiangard who was the speaker in the assembly before the races began. And, Stanley had said, "Don't give any money to my guys." He said, "Please, give the money to me." He says, "You're going to come to me to deliver votes. If you give the money to my guys, my guys are going to be independent of me. I can't deliver anything." So, Manny and I went to our first political action committee. Our group is called VOTE Voice of Teachers in Education. Now we call it Vote Cope. So, we had to combine two --

Q: Another merger?

A: Yeah, and we fought hard for that, and finally won the issue. On very close call, we won that the money would be given to a --

END OF FILE 2

...the leader of the party and then there was one little amendment, except in extenuating circumstances. Most of the money had been raised on Long Island we had a huge meeting at Hofstra University, and tied up traffic and everything, we raised \$50,000 or \$60,000: I mean, unheard of at that particular time. Most assemblies and Senate race would run for \$1,000 or \$2,000 a year. So, assembly district number one: now, Lin Costello gets up and says "This is an extraordinary circumstance, and we should give money to this candidate. And, I just want to say to the upstate people, if you support us on this, we'll support you on any extenuating circumstances that you have." All the money was spent. So, it took us a long time to repair that. And, what a waste! We had television ads on Long Island. Before that, there was nothing more than signs on the side of the road. There were television ads that were going to Connecticut and New Jersey. They're running for the assembly in New York, and Magliato's said he spent \$75,000 on Jonese's race.

Now, the next election is for governor, and it's against Malcolm Wilson, who I guess made Rockefeller. He drove Rockefeller around the state and made Rockefeller the winner, and then served as a loyal Lieutenant Governor all the years.

Rockefeller leaves to go to -- did you ever read Rockefeller's book, I Never Want to Be Vice President of Anything?

Q: No, I haven't read it.

A: Good book. Anyway, so Wilson, of course, is an extreme conservative. But, Wilson was responsible for teachers getting social security coverage in New York State. He delivered that through the Senate, and so Magliato calls us down and says to come in the room, "Don't listen to anything he says. I will be right there next to him. Teachers will get whatever they want." OK, so Malcolm Wilson was walking in the room, and he goes, "Hobart, you are going to help me put these outlawed teachers in jail that go out on strike." And, Magliato says, "Remember what I told you. Tom, remember what I told you." So, we meet with Wilson, and afterwards I say to Joe, "Joe, he's going to say that on the campaign trail." Joe says, "I know. I know, Tom. I tried to tell him not to say that. I tried to tell him not to say that."

Before that, we had gone to the first convention in Montreal. And, Wilson had come up. He had done this to me once before about outlaw teachers. He had come in. He had flew in to Montreal, and he came in and said the same thing to me and said, "Governor, with all due respect, let me tell the delegates you're sick." You can't say that to our delegates. So, Dan

Sanders said to me, "Look, go down and start the convention. Let me work with him for a while." Magliato was there at that time, and they worked together. Wilson came down, and Sanders said to me, "It's fixed." Wilson got up, and he said, "I just had an interesting meeting with your officers. They thanked me for coming to Montreal. I just want you to know, if you had gone to Saskatchewan, I would have come to your convention. And another thing," -- there was a bill that was rushed through the two houses which was called the Jarabek Bills. There were 72 bills, very conservative. One of them was, moved a probationary period to five years. The law used to say probationary period shall be from three to five years. It took off, "From three to...". The probationary period shall be five years. It was the third year that that law had been in effect.

Wilson stands up there and says, "And another thing, I was looking at this law. It says it takes five years for a superintendent to decide whether a teacher is good or not. Let me tell you, if any superintendent can't decide whether a teacher's good after three years isn't superintending, we should get rid of them, not the teacher." So, it brings down the house. "And, another thing. This legislative hearing." There was no finality to the Taylor Law. It's said that if the two sides do not come together, that the governmental body should

meet in a post-contract. So, in a school district, the board hires an administrative staff. They negotiate the contract. If you can't come to an agreement, the board decides which side is best. So, we were being killed on this. So he says, "And another thing. This legislative hearing, who ever heard of anything so unfair. We're getting rid of that. And finally, the schools are under-funded. We're going to have 15% increase in state aid." We never got more than a 4-5% increase ever. You know, 15%... The delegates were flying high. The Governor comes and says this, now in a gubernatorial race -- that Wilson, he's just said that at the convention. The democrats nominate Howard Samuels.

So, Al says, "This is the bastard that broke the garbage truck in New York City. We can't go with him." I said, "Well, who are we going to go with? We can't go with Wilson. We don't have anybody." He goes, "Oh, there's this guy this congressman Hugh Carey. So, maybe we can go with him." So, we go down we meet with Carey, and Carey seems like a good guy. We don't like Samuels and we don't like Wilson. It seems like better you lose than you support one of these guys. So, we go with that. The chairman of the state democratic party at that time was Joe Cranglin?, who's the Buffalo County Chairman for a long time. I get a call from Joe, and he says he's got the convention in Niagara Falls. He says, "Look, Tom, if you'll go with Samuels,

we'll assure you that you get what you want." And, I'd been hearing this stuff from everybody. I heard this from Magliato, from Wilson, from everybody. "And, I'll also make [John Lafalse?] Lieutenant Governor. I said, "What does Lieutenant Governor do?" "It's an important job, might become governor someday." I said, "That isn't enough. We're going to go with this guy, Hugh Carey." He says, "You don't have a chance. You're going to get laughed out."

So, Carey beat Samuels in the primary by less votes than we got members in the state. And, he goes on to beat Wilson, and we're made as an organization. Everybody says, well, in fact, a guy that ran for attorney general, Oliver Capell, he was appointed, and he ran, and he got beat by Spitzer in the primaries. He said to me, "I don't understand it. I don't understand it. My whole political life, whoever the teachers endorses, wins."

(laughter) So, those were those things. Whether we were the sole reason or not, we got credit for each one of those, and that really moved us along. Everybody thought that we were invincible, that our endorsement was really important. We did some good things on a local level too. We support a lot of republicans. We had a lot of republican members upstate, so, especially in the Senate. You know, Stiengard used to always say, "There's no such thing as a one-House law. We support a

lot of republicans in the Senate, and this year we're going to fight hard for Gerald Bruno because I would rather not have all one party in government. I've been around long enough that Rockefeller had two houses of republicans. And, we couldn't get a meeting in the Senate or the Assembly. They would say, "Why bother? The governor's not in town." It just makes the governor super powerful in the state. So, it's not in our interest to do it. But, because we've done this, we can go and I can show you places where we've had republicans calling for democrats, democrats calling for republicans, Bruno stand up at any meeting we want him to stand up and say, "The teachers are my best friends," and sometimes he gets antsy. We don't support anybody -- almost never support anybody in a primary for the Senate or the Assembly. We say, "You know, that's up to the party to decide who it is. We then pick the person who is most on our side."

The other thing was that we got way out ahead of the boards of education on contract negotiations. The boards used to send the superintendent in to negotiate their contracts. We have a master contract that was pretty good, that Buffalo contract Kay Schiller negotiated for us. When we won that collective bargaining election, some guy said to me in a bar while we were celebrating, "What do we do now?" I said, "Jesus, I don't

know." And so, the association sent in Kay Schiller, and they did a contract for Buffalo. We used that contract all across the state, you know?

Q: What was so unique about the contract?

A: Oh, it covered so many different areas. You know, it's not a normal labor contract. That is, vacation, leaves and pay. I know this is textbooks and, I mean, we have 30-40 page contracts that cover every aspect of the Board of Education's policymaking.

So, that was NYSUT. Now, NYSUT got into the AFT. Right after the merger, Al said we should sit down with Dave Selden, and his -- I don't know what John Schmidt's title was. He was the chief organizer.

Q: Assistant to the President Chief of...

A: Yeah, yeah, and he said that we worked out with Dave how we would come in as an organization because at that point, I don't even remember the numbers, but let me make up numbers. AFT had about 215,000 members, and we had 214,000.

Q: Something like that, yeah.

A: Yeah. Let me cut it down. The UFT was in there, so, the AFT had 200,000, and we had 200,000 with the AFT, and 50,000 were from the AFT. So, we were coming to the convention with a huge, huge load. We worked out with Dave how we would do it,

and that's how the 25 cents per member per month going to state federations came about. That was money they were sending back to us to make up for the difference between the \$18 AFT dues, and \$25 NEA dues. So Al brought us to the Minnesota St. Paul convention.

Q: This is your first AFT convention?

A: Yep. And, we had to vote. The AFT voted at that convention. We had to vote in June to accept the merger. And, in July we went to the AFT convention. Al says, "It's very important that you speak on the merger." So, we had a plane going back to New York. We had something going on in New York, and Al says, "You've got to speak at the convention." "All right." So we'll stay at the convention and leave the same day with Ed and Toni because we were the only delegates from the NYSTA side that were there. We said, "This is totally different from what we were used to." It was a real battle for the microphone. At the association there was a real etiquette. You say excuse me. Were you here first? Geez.

Q: You're slugging it out to get to the microphone. (laughter)

A: So, I'm watching this show, and they go, "Clear the microphones." Then someone charges at it. Something happens that doesn't come up when it's supposed to come up. It's delayed for a while. Eddie and Toni said, "We're going to miss our plane. You've got to be first at the microphone or we're

going to miss this plane." So, there was a guy, Herrick Roth who was the president from Colorado. He was the President of the AFL-CIO in Colorado, who was for McGovern too. Meany had a big convention to beat him down. So he's across the aisle from me. He's opposed to the merger, and so there's a false start. He gets the microphone first. But, there's a false start. Selden says, "Clear the microphones. Everybody sit down." And I say, "He's got it. He's closer to the microphone than I am, and he's going to get it." So, I gotta catch that plane, so I figured, "I think if I can rip that tape off the floor. I can move the microphone." So, he's up. I'm up. I get the tape off the microphone and put it in front of me. It's no longer in front of him. Now, he objects. He objects. He says that, "You moved the microphone!" I say "Mr. Chairman, I don't know what he's talking about. I'm in front of the microphone. I'm first here." So Selden rules that I'm the first one to the microphone. I give my pitch and now the UFT is going crazy on this. You know, Al says, "You know, you really impressed my guys at the UFT. (laughter) "You know how to fight and win."

Q: No upstate softy are you? (laughter)

A: But, we saw Dave perform, and also Dave was beyond his time. It really wasn't at the interest of members. He had his own agenda. The time before this convention, down in New Orleans -- I guess it was one before that. It was a two-year

term. McElroy was on the opposite side of Selden. McElroy talks about how he tried to get Al to run. Al wouldn't run.

Q: Yeah, this is '73 or '72?

A: '72. The convention I'm talking about is '70, and a guy from the staff ran against Mielsen.

Q: Oh, Mielsen, yeah.

A: They said that Dave grew a beard, and went on a sailing trip around the Cape of Good Horn or something like that, and Al did all the campaigning for it. So it was pretty much decided by 74 that we would run Al. Our slogan was the AFT wants what New York has. And, we had won, won big. Dave got about 30% of the vote. Dave didn't get very much. Al was overwhelmed, and Al had submitted a constitutional amendment to increase the executive counsel by ten. So, eight New Yorkers were on: Toni Cortese, I, Sandy, Paul Cole -- I don't remember the whole list. But, a lot of people around from New York. It was a --

Q: Velma Hill was on it?

A: Yeah, Velma Hill was on it. Jules Kolodny went back on. Jules got knocked off. Watler Tice went on in '70. Jules got knocked off in '70, and Jules went back on. We started a new operation. That was a terrible convention because we went to the caucus meeting after Al's lecture. The whole convention is euphoric. The AFT is on the move. We've got a new leader.

We're going everywhere. We're going to the caucus to elect the caucus officers and Philadelphia walks out.

Q: Philadelphia walk out?

A: No minorities on the slate. John Ryan leads the charge. Fred Sullivan is president. But, there's really a three-member group that runs at Sonny something. I forget what Sonny's name was. It was a woman. John Ryan and Frank Sullivan, and Ryan leads them out. This has huge ramifications because in order to get them back we expand the executive committee of the caucus. And, we put everybody that's a worker in the caucus on the executive committee. And, Ryan outmaneuvers us, and he gets all those positions whether your in Philadelphia or Delaware, and Philadelphia owns Delaware -- so, two years later, Al wants Al Fondy on the executive committee. We get beat. Ryan goes on the executive committee instead of Fondy. Al's comment was, "Well, we're going to turn this around. The guy that operates a mimeograph machine just outvoted Hobart." So, there were big changes that were made in the caucus.

Q: Did this also involve Bill Simonson?

A: Simon?

Q: Simon?

A: It might have been Sonny Simonson. I don't know what Sonny's name is, but Bill Simon was in '70 when he was elected to the executive council, and Al figured out that George

Altomari, I guess, is the one that figured out the vote, and that Simonson didn't deliver his validation to vote for Kolodny. That was '70. It might have been by '74 that we let Simon back on. If they're not back with them, he could be opposed to secret. He could be in favor of secret ballot, and he would support the caucus in all their aspects.

Q: OK. So you're going to NEA RA and AFT conventions?

A: NEA, and, yes, we got an organization called the National Council for Teaching Unity. NEA is big on what they call sub-governance groups. Sub-governance groups are like the National Council of Urban Education Associations, NCUEA, National Council of State Education Organization, National Council on Human Rights. I was a member of all those things, and I went to a lot of conventions. Have bags will travel. So we started National Council for Teacher Unity. We had to take our merger to the NEA convention in '72 and have it approved. And, I should say it was approved well. There wasn't any doubt on -- there were 5,000 votes. There was 3,000-2,000 or something to something. So, the next year we ran Toni Cortese for President of the NEA. Her campaign slogan was a very interdependent organization because the NEA said it was independent of the AF of L-CIO. We were very interdependent. The NEA was big on quotas, and she was the first Yugoslav candidate for NEA president.

At one of these sub-groups, we ran a huge party, and spent way too much money, \$10,000. I had never signed a voucher for \$10,000 for anything other than attorneys, you know? But, we had this at the Playboy Club in Chicago, which always reminded her of -- she didn't have any qualms about going to the Playboy Club to have this party. We felt we were going to make real progress. There were three candidates. There was Tim Gonnerson from California and Jim Harris from Iowa. Toni came in third, but she had less votes than we had gotten for the approval of the merger the year before.

We decided to lay low for the convention, and it must have been '74 that Toni ran, so '75 we laid low. It must have been '73 that Toni -- '74 we laid low. '75, I ran for the executive committee. I got 889 votes, which was far less than Tony had gotten for the president. Another candidate from New York ran and got more votes than I had gotten. But, there were 789 delegates from New York. Now, I know I had all the New York votes, but I didn't get this guy's vote who also ran against me. But, the numbers were the same. So, the buzz in the hall was that 'Hobart controls absolutely as controlled by Shanker.'

It was the first days of cellular phones. They came in suitcases, long antennas. Dean Schieff had a cellular phone,

and he said to me, "Can we get a phone?" I said, "Sure." Every meeting he'd come, he'd open up his briefcase, and up goes the antenna. This was about a 20-foot antenna. It would go way up. And so, everybody would heckle us on this.

The vote of the convention comes down, and there's a tie between Ryor and Harris. Harris is an incumbent. Now, during the campaign, we were very close to Ryor's campaign manager, Ron Derario from Rhode Island, a friend of Ed's, and Roberta Hickman is from Texas. Her campaign manager, Joe Pistorius, I think his name was, from Michigan. Derario would say, as we would run into him, "Get away from me. We don't want to be tainted by the New York people. We're going to win this election because of you." "What does that mean?" "Well, you'll find out." But, Joe Pistorius said to us, "Look. It's already been decided within the executive committee, that you're going to get thrown out. We're going to throw you out for not having minority quotas, for not having secret ballot for election of officers," which is part of the NEA constitution.

Q: And, anything with AFL-CIO was OK with them?

A: Yeah, yeah, that was --

Q: Because Los Angeles already did it, and --

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah, OK.

A: But, they'd approved our merger. These were constitutional violations. So we assumed we were going to get thrown out. We go to Al's favorite restaurant in Los Angeles, Magreb I think it was called. It was a Persian restaurant or something. You ate with your hands. There's a great Bayard Rustin story about that. He went over to advise Gandhi on nonviolent demonstrations. So, he said they bring out all the food, and everybody's eating. And, Bayard reaches in to eat. And, the room goes quiet. The wait staff comes running out, takes all the food, all the napkins, everything out. A few minutes later, they're bring out all new stuff. Bayard says, "I didn't know what I did, but I know I did something. I just didn't eat. I just sat there. Afterwards," he said, "I asked the guy, 'What did I do?' and the guy says, 'We eat with our right hand. We wipe our ass with the left hand.'" (laughter)

But anyway, we go to this restaurant. Dean sits down, and he puts down his briefcase, opens it up, up goes the antenna, and this place is filled with NEA people. They're all booing us, you know? We had a couple of drinks, and pretty soon the phone rings. The place goes quiet. I don't remember Jim Harris' campaign manager's name, but anyway, Dean says, "Hello?" Mr. Whatever the name is? The place gets quiet. "Absolutely. We'd be very happy to come over for a meeting. Yes, sir. See you in

about a half hour." Down comes the antenna. We paid the bill, out we go. Harris has a plan for us. The merger between the NEA and the ATA, the American Teacher's Association was a black association, grandfathered their constitution. Harris says, "I will consider you part of the ATA merger. Whatever's in your constitution's grandfathering, I'll deliver the entire black vote to you, if you'll deliver your 889 votes to me."

Q: Wow.

A: And, we said yes. But, Ryor won. Harris said that he was sure that we got all the black vote, but it was just that Gonnenson wasn't candidate. Roberta Hickman spoke to all them too. Ryor and Harris said that they thought it was because people got word that Harris made a deal with us. So, we're off to Hawaii now. We're at the AFT convention in Hawaii.

Q: It was '75.

A: The best attended AFT convention that there ever was: Shanker, master politician, says on the first day, "Surroundings are awfully nice here," and he said, "I'd like to be outside as much as you will be. If you all agree to come on time and work hard, we can finish this five day convention in four." I'll tell you, he started at 9:00 and he ended at whatever the time - he also gave us two hours for lunch. That was the other part of the deal, two hours for lunch. I'll tell you, that was the happiest delegation you ever saw. We get back to New York now.

It's rubber meets the road time. We know the NEA's going to throw us out. We're trying to think of how we're going to preserve the organization. We have no idea how much loyalty still remains from the time that people were in the NEA. We think it's not much because when NYSUT had 105,000 members, there were only 35,000 from the NEA. And we feel some of those have died. But we know that some people who were not members of the NEA then have become involved in the NEA now. So, "What are we going to do?" The attorneys tell us that we are vulnerable because our constitution requires affiliation with the NEA. And theirs doesn't require them to affiliate us.

So, they can pick the time to throw us out, and we can only leave during the convention. We decide to remove the requirement that says that the organization shall be affiliated with the AFT and the NEA. So, we submit a resolution. It takes out 'and the NEA', and we had no intention of leaving the NEA. We're just getting set for this fight. We thought we could always fall back on the Harris side. The NEA could guarantee us or grandfather us under the ATA, and we could stay in. So we think we're going to come out of this OK.

Now, we notice that there's a group of people that are going around the state, campaigning for the NEA. We only have one

negative vote on the executive committee. It was Tom Pisa from Buffalo.

Q: You're old local?

A: My old local. Pisa was mad at me. He felt I was disloyal. In the BTF constitution, I'd never taken out that clause for the immediate past president. The guy that I replaced pleaded with me not to take it out. He wanted to serve one more year as immediate past president, so I didn't. But, when I became immediate past president I kept telling the executive committee that they should eliminate it. That was a bad position. I said, "I'll tell you, my philosophy is that as long as I'm here, I'm going to support the president. Therefore, I'm not an independent voice. And, if it's somebody else, I wouldn't want somebody that was opposing the president here. As far as organizational history, call me on the phone I'll tell you anything you want to know." Pisa said that was disloyal. And, you know, I'm trying to find out if it was because he wouldn't be immediate past president or what.

But I got it out, and he also told me that Buffalo, by virtue of its size should be as important in New York State as is UFT. And, really the pecking order was the UFT, NYSUT, and Buffalo. I said, "Well, I don't think everybody would agree with you that UFT is the highest order in the state. Al wouldn't agree with

you." "But, what are we taking away from it?" "Well, it makes you more prominent in the state than it makes me." So, we had that rub that was going on.

There also was a very strong -- the NEA, I told you about sub-governance. They also had the undercurrent cultures that were in there. There was a while that there was a feeling that the NEA was run by the Mormons that were on the staff. Most of the high staff positions were Mormons in the NEA. That was a fact. Whether they were running from the Mormon Church or not, I mean, I never had that feeling. We had disagreements, but I never thought that they were Mormon versus non-Mormon disagreements. They also had a very large culture of gays, of which Pisa was a member, and the executive secretary that I hired was also a member of that group. I thought that that was a great influence on Tom. Tom is openly gay now. So, I mean, I don't think it's a betrayal of them to talk about it. I thought that that was one of the reasons that he felt he had to stay with the NEA.

So, we feel -- I never could validate this -- but the conversations I had with Terry Hernan and with others: Ken Melly, I think the NEA's feeling -- now, the NEA wanted to do this, but they were also an organization that weighed the consequences. I think Pisa convinced the NEA that they could

win in the state. The theme was that they would have 30,000 members by June, and they would have 50,000 members by September. A number of the staff who left -- it was just a difficult time in my life. I would come in, in the morning, and the white envelopes would be on my desk. To Tom Hobart, and there would be staff members saying that they left to go to the NEA.

Q: So, you had a lot of defections, once or twice a day?

A: Yeah, 19 or 20 left a staff of 160 or 170. The operation against us was operated out of Buffalo. You have members who come into Buffalo, get their assignments, go around the state, and this group -- I'm trying to think of names -- Ryon Bushwilder is one. Ed Robish was another. And, Pisa was from Buffalo. They'd go around the state, and we were wondering how they were funding themselves to go around the state. It was expensive. They'd fly. Now, they have to have substitutes in their schools. They would eat, host others -- I'll tell you how they did it later in the story. We go into the convention, and when the constitutional amendment comes up, there's vigorous debate on it. It goes to a vote, and by more than a 2/3 vote, it easily passes to remove the NEA from a constitution as a required affiliate. And a group walks out of the Hilton. They walk down to the Sheraton, which is across the street in a pre-arranged ballroom. And they set up New York Educator's

Association, and NYEA -- no, it isn't NEA. Well, I forget the name.

Q: No, they left out the EA part. They didn't want any association with them at first.

A: Yeah, yeah, it was New York -- well, whatever.

Q: I can't remember the name either.

A: They set it up. They elect Robish as president. I get a telegram minutes later from Ken Melly from the NEA staff. He's the high-ranking person -- I know what his role is -- informing me that the Uniserve money, which was monies that each state got to hire staff, were suspended. So I sent back a telegram saying, "Well, we're going to suspend sending any of the dues that we owe you." They suspended \$900,000 and I held on to \$6 million. I thought they hadn't thought about the consequences of this.

Q: Isn't that how much the NEA sued you for?

A: Well, they sued us for an amount in excess of \$10,000, which is the federal requirement in court, but if we added it up from the merger agreement, it appears that it was about \$12 million I think because it was a percentage of something. If you didn't stay affiliated for five years, our claim was we didn't disaffiliate.

Q: They suffered the consequences?

A: Yes. We start going to the NEA conventions, and we start talking about the \$3.15 New York tax on every NEA member because they're giving New York \$5 million to operate with out of NEA funds. After two or three years we stopped going to the NEA convention because we've heard from enough NEA delegates that said, "Good. You know, we paid twice that amount." Well, this isn't working. So, we cut this out.

They never got to 50,000. It took them a long time to get to 30,000. It wasn't until they started organizing para-professionals that they crossed 30,000. They're up to about 40,000 now that they said they're bringing into NYSUT. So, we'll see how much they bring in.

It wasn't broken. We said that there was no breaking of the merger. All the leaders on both sides were still intact, and a preponderance of the membership was still intact. So, the merger never was broken up we remain merged in New York. We just didn't send any dues money to the NEA, which I used to always have to try to not be pushy with, but remind Minnesota, and Montana, and Florida: you know we're still merged.

But, the suit came about, and as I said, federal requirements for the suits in an amount in excess of \$10,000. If we had a

merger agreement, I'd go through and show you how it came out, but I think it comes down to \$10 or \$12 million was the indemnity for the breaking of the merger. We paid about a half a million dollars to the Shay and Gardner Law Firm to defend us. These are corporate contract people, and a lot of discovery. I went down to testify so often. They always had attorneys up in their office going through our files, but through a discovery, we got the minutes of the NEA executive committee. Now, the Board of Directors never got the minutes of the executive committee. The Board of Directors was not allowed to know what the salaries of the Executive Secretary of the top staff were. The executive committee decided all that. It never was passed on, or ratified by the board or anything. Whatever the executive committee did was sealed. So, we got their minutes. I think, 1973, the NEA executive committee began by allocating \$50,000 to the New York project to run a political campaign against us. It was specifically said to pay for substitutes, hotel rooms, dinners, and airfare or travel expenses. So, that's where they were getting their money.

One other thing I should tell you: in the fall of '74, the Orchard Park teachers were on strike. I arranged for both Al and John Ryor to come to New York to talk to the Orchard Park teachers. Bitter, bitter strike... On the way back to the

airport, I was driving Al and John. New York was going through the crisis that -- we were about to go bankrupt in New York City. I told Ryor that we didn't call on the NEA for very much. I had known that he was very sensitive about that. But, if we were going to call upon him, I needed an economic plan that would challenge Carey's economic plan that would preserve the schools in the state, and I was asking him to put together a team of economists that could come up with a plan for us that we could promote. He said he would think about it.

It came back to me, or we met with him in New York City: Dan Sanders, Toni Cortese, and I. It was this NEA in New York project. I don't remember the specifics of it, but it was like they were going to send 500,000 pieces of mail directly to New York members. We were going to bring 100 activists to Washington to train them in political action. Then we're going to do something else, which we read to mean that we're going to train people to be our opponents in the next election. They were going to talk to the members directly about dropping the AFT. They said that they didn't get enough publications, and they wanted us to pay for half of it. I said, "What, are you out of your mind? What do you think, we are stupid?" Now, Ryor came to explain that to the NYSUT board in Syracuse. He got a very bad reception. He had Tom Pisa, and the guy from Katonah,

which is in Westchester County -- I can't think of his name -- are the only ones that supported. The rest of the board, I mean, just ripped him apart.

So we published minutes in the meeting in a newspaper, and they shot back that we misrepresented the meeting. I got to tell you, we did not. I pulled out all the stuff that Ned Hopkins had put in that I felt was stretching the truth. I mean, it was all truth, I thought we could go with the bare truth, and it was a winner for us. We didn't have to defend anything that we put in this. They called us to Washington, and sent me letters saying that they would pay full expenses for who ever I wanted to bring so we could talk about the situation's development in New York. Fred Lambert came with us, and Ed and Toni, Dan Sanders, Al, and I went. Fred brought a tape recorder. He said, "We're not ever going to take a challenge again that we misrepresent in a meeting."

We sat down at the meeting, brought out the tape recorder. Fred turned on the tape recorder. Everybody from the NEA side got up and went outside. We turned off the tape recorder. They came back in, turned on the tape recorder, they went out again. They came back in, turned on the tape recorder. I said, "Well, wait a minute guys. You said we misrepresented what went on. We'll

give you a copy of the tape. You'll have a copy of the tape. You'll have the copy of a tape. If you want your own tape recording, get your own tape recorder." So, they would never meet with us. We walked out of the NEA building, and Al said, "Well, let's go to the Madison Hotel for lunch." We went to the Madison Hotel. We spent about four hours at the Madison Hotel. We must have paid \$200 a piece for lunch back at the '70s. I mean, we had a guy that made a Caesar salad that did everything except climb in the bowl. I mean, it was magnificent. I sent them the bill, and they sent back the reimbursement for it, and I sent a copy of the letter that said they would pay full expenses. They said that, "We realize our letter had said full expenses, but it was the most expensive lunch that the NEA had ever reimbursed." We didn't do it to jab at them. We just thought that we had expended more in our time in flying to Washington than they were, than reimbursing us for the time at lunch. So, that's how we came to the break up.

After that, we just shut them out of the state. They never were appointed to any committees. They got some press coverage, but it was normally in the minor newspapers. They never made much of a splash, and then we started to talk on merger. I think they initiated them. I don't see any reason why I would have initiated it. Greg Nash, Sandy Feldman thought was an

exceptional leader. He had great respect for Greg too. We had started the national merger talks. They had gone sour at one point, and --

Q: Was it over the usual issues: open ballot vs. closed ballot, affirmative action, and AFL-CIO?

A: It was more than that. They felt obliged to have a balanced negotiating team. Some people were in favor of mergers. Some people were opposed. Some people were neutral. Then they made a unanimous decision not to do anything. And, the people who were opposed were opposed to everything. Keith Geiger might have pushed too hard at the end because as with most places where there are term limits, the incumbent always says that the person that's about to come on is disloyal, not going to do this. So, he said Bob Chase was probably going to torpedo this. We had to get it done while he was president.

Now, Keith and I were board members together on the NEA board back in the '70s. I knew Keith very well. At the Detroit convention, he came to see us. I got a car to come down to our convention. "Well, it was the least I could do for you." Keith was a good guy, but I don't think Keith had the political ability to move the merger. Remember, Chase started off on the new type of unionism. He already had people upset over something out here. Then he started on merger, and I think he

had more political capital. He certainly moved the process along. The difficulty was that he and his officers never sold the principals of unity. They felt that their role was simply to answer questions. I was a little slow to criticize them since on the New York merger, we were told we couldn't sell the merger, and we went out to do it. But, I don't know if he ever said, "Well, I signed it." (laughter)

Q: Right. So you never concentrated on the Pennsylvanias, the New Jerseys, and the Michigans, the more hardcore anti-merger people?

A: Or the Connecticut.

Q: Or the Connecticut.

A: He had lost Connecticut. They told us they didn't think they could get the 2/3 vote, but they thought they could get in the low 60s. Obviously they didn't have a good hold on the organization, but during that period of time, Greg Nash was on the negotiating team. He wanted to start it up again -- slow it down and start it up again. Sandy was becoming more the leader of the group. She encouraged me with Greg. She didn't have to encourage a lot. I mean, we should have Al's idea that we should have one organization fully embraced. And so, we worked with Greg on it. The problem for us was the staff. The staff had an agreement which said that -- it was Appendix B I think said that -- if any one of the following items in the

opinion of the staff is not properly negotiated, the staff can call in an arbitrator on the single issue of, "Is the staff happy with the agreement?" And, I'm paraphrasing somewhat on this, but that's really what it broke down to. They could go to an arbitrator, and they could stop the organization from approving a merger with us if they weren't happy with the agreement.

I told Greg he had to get it out. I said, "Look, this is a strike issue. If you want to merge, you take the strike. We're not going to take the strike after the merger. There's going to be enough turmoil after the merger. We're not going to start off with a staff strike." It probably doesn't have to go to a staff, right, because the court's going to enjoin us for merging because this arbitration is ironclad. Greg kept saying that the staff had assured him they would not implement it. I said, "You know, look, I believe you. But, the board doesn't think that I should believe you. You've got to get it out." He then came to me in one last attempt, and he said, "Well, look, I've arranged for you to meet with the President of the Staff Union." The President of the Staff Union was Tom Pisa. I said, "I have no relationship with your staff union, none at all. There's no reason for me to meet with them. You get it out of the contract. That's what you got to do." So, Robin Rapperport got

it out. I'm not sure I agreed he had it out, but Dick Iannuzzi said that he was satisfied that it was not going to come up. So far it hasn't come up with his staff member. I had asked our attorneys to assure me that it was a union decision and not a member decision. I didn't want the union giving us a guarantee, and any member invoking it.

At the end of February in 2005, we were having a meeting scheduled, and I told Dick Iannuzzi, I said, "You know, at some point, I've got to move out of this process." And, today's a day I really could use for not important stuff. It was packing my stuff to come back to Buffalo. So, I said, "I think today's a good day for you to continue on without me at the meeting." So, we went into the meeting and I said good-bye to their team, and I left. They brought it to fruition, and passed both boards. It's passed both delegate bodies. And, on September first, there would be one organization in New York. Dick did a great job.

Q: Yeah. It took a long, long time, but you got a full merger.

A: We didn't give them much. Greg Nash used to say to me, "Tom, you got to get me something that I can go back and say, 'We won.'" I said, "Well, you can go back and you tell your members you won a much improved service program, that they would

be welcomed with open arms into our organization, that they are coming into the organization and make the organization far stronger. You can tell them all those things." They said to me at one point -- Robin said -- "Well, now what's the name going to be?" I said, "Well, it seems to me that we're in New York. So, we have to say New York State. And, what we're doing is uniting teachers. So, it seems to me the new name should be the New York State United Teachers/NEAAFT. I want to negotiate whether it should be NEAAFT or AFTNEA, you know?" (laughter)

Q: Is Buffalo going to stay?

A: Mike Prescott from the Buffalo office talks to people on their executive committee, and they say that Rumore has said that they should be the last one that joins the new organization. We had a long debate about whether NEA New York could bring all of its locals, or every local has to have a vote. None of the NYSUT locals will have to vote because they voted a constitutional amendment at the convention. Outside of that, there's no change for them. I believe they've decided that every local has to vote, but they've done it in the negative, that any local who doesn't vote not to come aboard is considered an affiliate. The information we have is that Phil wants to be the last one so he can negotiate the best deal. Now, I don't know what he means. Over the years, I've tried to talk to Phil, and he's always said to me, "I can't join you

because Dean from New York and the NEA, I can get anything I want." And I've always said to him, "Well, tell me what you want. Maybe we can give you what you want. Maybe we can't, but tell me what you want." And he goes, "Well, we don't need anything." So, he sent out a letter. He said that the reason that they shouldn't join is that he met me at a rally that we had at May 3rd a couple of years ago. When he came up to say, Hello, to paraphrase, that I didn't treat him with respect, and that I blurted out that he was trying to get a \$50 million loan from the state, and that we would block the loan, and that the reason we were going to do it is because he wasn't paying dues. Well, the not paying dues part, I remember. The way I remember it, it was not a significant discussion. So, it wasn't something that I would write down in my notes about. But, as I remember, what I said to him was -- or he had said we should work together on some things. I said, "Not while your not paying dues?"

END OF FILE 3

... and you're wanting to hitchhike on us and you're not paying dues. So, the not paying dues part, I didn't say. I would stand behind he wasn't paying dues. We're not going to work with him, and he took credit for beating the principles of unity. I mean, why would I work with him? He is not working in the best interest of our members, and I don't think his members.

I don't remember ever giving anybody a \$50 million loan. We got the loan anyway. I certainly would have known about it if Buffalo got a loan. We've gotten some loans for locals that have overspent. We've gotten \$1 million, which, for their size, would have been a significant amount of money as compared to Buffalo. But, normally the governor has vetoed those things because once you do it for one, you're open for others. So, he's pinned me with it. But, if they want to say that the merger only happened because Hobart retired, that's OK with me as long as it happens.

Q: It'll happen. Let me stop this.

END OF FILE 4

BEGINNING OF FILE 5

Q: This is Dan Golodner, Walter P. Reuther, Wayne State University. Interviewing Thomas Hobart, Boston, Massachusetts at the AFT convention. July 22, 2006. So this is your first convention where you are not participating to much.

A: I'm just sitting back. Usually I walk around the convention so I know where everybody from New York is because I want to catch people. Now I am just sitting and watching. Some very kind people have come over to me and that's very kind.

But to education reform. The 70s is pretty much trying to build the operation that we had and then Ronald Reagan appointed a committee - recently I heard that the chairman of the committee did all these things, but it was really Terrel Bell, the secretary of education, had done it. The Nation At Risk came out and has had been our modus operandi anybody who criticizes any part of education we started to gear up. Now this report came out several days before the NYSUT convention so our delegates started coming in and our delegates really expected us to lambaste this and we were prepared. Shanker said to me, "I am going to do something different at the convention." Al had been executive vice president and then became AFT president and stepped down from executive vice president but we still had him come every year to the convention and speak. He would try to talk about some book that came out or if we had a particular problem we had he would re-enforce what we were trying to do. But he said, "Tom, I'm going to do something different this time. And it might be controversial." So, this is Al Shanker you don't say no and take him off the agenda. So it was ok. And with Al, Al had a thousand ideas a week and by the next week Al would realize that 990 of those ideas were not good ideas and Al would drop them. We never had to pressure Al to drop any thing, he came to that conclusion. The other ten were terrific ideas so I figured this is one of those. It's like when he went to

the press club and said that we should have charter schools or the national board for teaching or something like that. I figured that is what he wants to come out with and if doesn't want to tell me a head of time that's ok so there is suspense. Al gets up and he starts talking about his report and saying they're right. I'm thinking, "Geez, this isn't going to go over very well." Al is usually interrupted 20 or 30 times in his speeches with applauses but there were no interruptions while Al was talking.

Q: There in stunned silence?

A: Yea. His message was if we want more money for the schools - if the schools aren't doing the job they are supposed to do and we expect more money we better be in the forefront of trying to change those schools and then we can justify the money we ask for. And we have this obligation to the kids. So if it was a trail balloon it was a lead balloon.

But when Al was on a role - Al's great ability was that he was able to explain things so well that he answered all your questions. He was a magnificent large audience teacher. He could carry that audience. Everybody afterwards was saying to themselves, well what the hell is Al doing. He is undercutting

us. And doing this and doing that. He's right but he shouldn't say that, it undercuts us. But as more time went by, people were saying he is right, it carried the day. That started education reform for us. We were no longer defending what we had out there, but moving ahead on how we will try to improve the schools and not being embarrassed about the fact that we had some of the best schools in the world in New York but that wasn't all of our schools and we had to start to go to work on that.

Antonia Cortese, Toni took off, Chuck Santelli was our Director of Research, supported her very strongly. They really started working with the commissioner of education. Gordon Onboch was the commissioner at that time, and Gordon was one that always kept -- I like Gordon, I'm not being critical of Gordon. But, Gordon kept his finger in the air because the Commissioner of Education in New York is very political. It's not an appointment of the governor. It's an appointment by the Board of Regents. You've got to know what's happening, and so they did an awful lot to convince Gordon that New York should be in the forefront of this. We shouldn't be lagging behind. That's how we got started in education reform.

Q: Excellent. What was some of the first education reform issues you tackled?

A: Well, it was very, very difficult. We had a commission in the late '70s on teacher education and certification in practice, which had recommended a number of changes in the certification process of teachers. The difference between license and certification of licensing your practice uncertified, unsupervised -- certified practice supervised. And, so the commission had recommended an entrance exam for all the teachers in the master's degree related area. A lot of teachers in New York had master's degrees, but they were all over the park. They were not in related areas. So, that was one of the first things that to improve the teacher corps that we had in the state, both as far as prospective candidates for the teaching, and also in-service-wise for the teachers that were in place. So, that was the first thing that we really started out to do. It took quite a while in order to accomplish it. But, New York is now one of the few states that has both a licensing exam and a requirement for a master's degree in a related area, which works almost every place except when you get to elementary, and then you've got to say, "What the hell is the related area for elementary schoolteachers?" If your biology teacher, it's easy, if you get a master's degree in biology, right? But, if you're an elementary schoolteacher, that's harder: maybe reading, and get something in reading or guidance, or something. But, we've still got that piece to go, and

really, what is the next educational level for an elementary schoolteacher in order to be able to help them improve their practice in the classroom?

Then the other reforms started to come, and of course now we're in the No Child Left Behind, and trying to improve that. Now, the AFT was never opposed to being accountable. Shanker always said from the beginning that we got to prove to the taxpayers that they want to give us money. We've got to make the case. If we don't make the case, if the pundits are out there knocking us down, why wouldn't the taxpayers believe them? So, the accountability, Antonia worked an awful lot on assessments about how we get these assessments to be coordinated with the curriculum. We still haven't done that in New York. We haven't convinced the current commissioner that we have to have a statewide curriculum. Rick Mills says, "I don't want to interfere with creative teachers. Now, if we restrict them to what they have to teach, they can't be creative." We're saying, "Well, there has to be a body of knowledge that every sixth grader should have at the end of sixth grade because we have a very mobile population in New York. A sixth grader on Long Island moves to Niagara Falls, starts seventh grade, you know? We don't want them learning all over what they learned in sixth grade, and we don't want them missing a whole contingent of

knowledge when they start seventh grade. So, there's got to be some standard, but it doesn't have to be 100%. We would be willing to negotiate on what percentage, you know, 50%, 60%, 70%. Then, the rest of the percentage you could leave to the local school district, and they could decide what is relevant for that school district, maybe in urban school districts they would want more emphasis on African history. Or, if you go up into a Holly Wasp area, maybe they want a Euro-centric history or something like that. But, we would have that basic whatever it is, 60-70% of the curriculum that every child that's being brought up to that level, when they left that grade, and then in the next grade they're going to go on. Then, they get something that is more colloquial that they would be able to have.

Then, if we get a curriculum that is in place, then we can have statewide tests that test that if they've made that progress that we want, and the other is the local part: if they want to test that, that's all right. They can test that in some other way. It would be different from other school districts. But, we would have that basic knowledge for every child so that we weren't going to be losing kids, either because they were repeating what they already learned, or because they were missing an important ingredient to what they should learn. We're still working on that in New York, and the AFT now has a

report that's coming out about the coordination of the assessments to the curriculum, and what states are doing a good job of it. I'm very happy to say New York is one of the 11 that the AFT has identified at the assessments to reflect.

Now New York had a leg up because we always have had the Regents Exams. Which were recognized from the time I was in elementary school as a standard, and which had to be taught to us. I mean, the --

Q: Yeah, I always thought it was a standard.

A: Regents review book was something that -- you went down that Regents review book in order to make sure that you knew what the questions were going to be, because, as a social studies teacher, I knew there were going to be two questions on Greek and Rome, you know? And, on World War II, there was going to be an awful lot of material. So that's the next step that we have got to get to: establish what the curriculum is, test that curriculum, and then we will know if kids are coming up to that level. We simply still got some work to do, but we are prodding along, and things are improving.

Q: How are you getting the teachers to understand this? Can you do it through the teacher centers? Do you do it through publications? Or the whole thing probably?

A: Well, all of the above, you don't get any teacher doing all of the things that you have. You might only have one of them, where a teacher attends that. They might read a periodical, and they might go to a teacher center. They might not do them all. So, you'd better have these -- teachers are very upset about the testing requirement because one thing it does: it deemphasizes a lot of the important areas. There's going to be a testing component in science, but right now there's no testing component in science, and so therefore, science is being deemphasized for reading and math. Those are the two big things. So, if you run out of time, what are you going to drop? Well, you drop art, music, phys ed, science, history, because you're not testing for those things.

Q: Someone mentioned the other day, "I'm sneaking in social studies."

A: So, yeah, it's very tough. We don't want a curriculum that's a mile wide and an inch deep. We do want a child to experience all of these things. Maybe you as a student hate school but you love drawing. And so, you drag yourself in everyday to draw. Or, you hate school and you come in everyday because you're going to get your saxophone less. Something that brings you to school, and you know you've got to do the other things in order to get this piece that you want. Maybe we will have some great saxophone players, some great artists that come

out of that, which really didn't have a lot of interest in math, and science, and reading, and writing, and all of these other things. But, it's the education of the whole child. The reason that we spend the money on education in America and probably in all the other countries is, first of all, we have to train the citizen. Hopefully, we're not socialistic so we're not training them for the state, but we're training them for democracy.

We have to make them prepared for the workforce, and for those two reasons, government is willing to give us a lot of money. We're probably able to sneak in the other pieces like the arts, and phys ed, and the other parts of it to have the whole person being developed within a school system. We have a lot of work to go. There's also the problem that everybody is in favor of equal education opportunity except we want our kids to have a little more. We moved to the suburbs, and where there's a good education system, we forget about the needs that we have in the city. So we're going to have to care about those places that are being forgotten. We can even take our African American middle class population today. I mean, they want the best for their children. They want their children to have more than they had as far as education. They know that they have a responsibility to their African American community, but not at the sacrifice of the child. They're going to move to the

suburbs. And, once they do, they're going to have less time for what went on back in the old neighborhood. My parents came out of an Italian neighborhood, and we moved out of it. Once we did, there was a little less emphasis on the Italian culture. Because we were now assimilating to all the other new neighbors that we had, and we still had St. Joseph say that we celebrated what your neighbors didn't celebrate. It was like one day a year, whereas it used to be everyday. It's the same for the new cultures that we had that's going to happen.

I'm on the National Commission at the Aspen Institute for No Child Left Behind, and we're trying to see what's good about No Child Left Behind -- what should be changed?

Q: What should be changed? I kind of know what the good is. AFT's been saying the good part, but what needs to be changed now?

A: Well, there's some very obvious things. With every federal program, the parts just say, "God, how did this happen?" Like the disabled child is required to be tested. Now, there's another piece of legislation: IDEA, and I forget what IDEA stands for. But it's for the handicapped child. It says that each child should have an individual learning profile. The teacher has to sit down with the administration of the parents and all that, and say, "What does this child need? Could it be

severely handicapped? Could it be mentally challenged?" You know, "What should this child have?" And, they work up, "What would be progress for that child?" which is different from all the other children. This is an individual. That's what it's there for. It's for the individual. Then No Child Left Behind comes out and says, "Every child has to be tested."

So, we're given these tests, these grade level tests, kids that can't do them. We've had people testify that the child comes home and hides under the bed because the child thought they were doing well. They were meeting their IEP, but then they took a test and they couldn't answer any of the questions on the test. All the work that had been done to motivate this child to move ahead and to be able to do much more in society than they would have been able to do is lost because we're testing them. The ELL, or the Limited Language Learner -- no that would be LLL. Well, anyway, it's ELL, whatever the acronym comes out. The child comes in and says that they have three years before they have to take the test. We were hearing all this testimony about all the research says it takes seven years to become comfortable in a language. You go back in the history and say, "How the hell did we get to three years if everybody agrees seven years is the minimum?" I think it says five to seven. Nobody agrees on that. How did we get to three? Well,

conservatives in Congress wanted one. "Now, everybody that didn't learn English gets shipped back." Progressives wanted the child to have a more liberal education. So, a compromise was three. So, it has nothing to do with the reality. But, it's compromised. That should be changed.

There are a number of these things. A commission is going to have a meeting, and I think what will come out of the meeting, because I've listened closely to the other commission members, is that they're going to think that it should be moving towards a national standard. Right now, every state sets their own standard, and so we have a situation where New York has 1,000 failing schools and Alabama has none. The difference is that Alabama's standard is a lot lower than New York's standard. In evaluating the use of the federal funds is that -- what we should have, or should we say that the kids from Alabama might be working in New York one day, and so they should have the same standard as the New Yorkers have. Those are some of the things that the commission is looking at to change because we recognize it's a bipartisan bill. There were democrats. Miller from California was a democrat who pushed as hard for this as any of the republicans pushed for it. You're going to have it. We have a resolution that was out there on the floor to get rid of No Child Left Behind. Well, No Child Left Behind is the update

of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We get rid of that, it's like \$34 billion. I mean cut off \$34 billion the schools in America? So, we have to be realistic on how we move towards this.

Q: Well, once again, AFT is working with the administration, working with the seats in power to make education better basically, not ignoring everything. Like, NEA pretty much wanted to sue NCLB out of the way. So, AFT's still taking that progressive view of saying, "We need to change education within, better for the kids -- not fight it."

A: Yep.

Q: OK, why don't we go into international issues?

A: OK.

Q: Why don't you tell me first starting what the democracy committee is at AFT that can move in with some of your activities?

A: Well, the democracy committee is one that was set up at the AFT to try to help trade unions in other countries. It's a very positive thing. I remember the congressional committee, the un-American Activities Committee which was not a positive thing. They were about to point the finger at anybody that disagreed with them and call them a communist. But, this is to find places where there are already emerging democracies, and to give them help because if they get an emerging democracy, if you've

had a dictator for a long period of time, maybe your whole lifetime, how do you relate to democratic institutions? "You and I disagree. I'm not going to let you have your way. What do you mean because you had more votes than I had?"

So, there has to be an experience that, yeah, I lost this one, but I'm going to win the next one. I'm going to get more of what I wanted because I supported the one I lost on the outside. That's the democracy committee. Al Shanker was always very much for human rights and social justice. He marched with Martin Luther King, he collected UFT money to buy station wagons for the voter registration. I mean, if you trace Al, even though he had people that said he was a racist, they would be very hard to refute all of the things that Al Shanker did that made him somebody who recognized social justice, and was a staunch defender of human rights.

Al got involved early, and at the AFL-CIO he was on an international affairs committee, and he got involved in what happened in other countries. I used to always dread it when my secretary would say Al was on the phone, because Al was having one of these ideas. I already had a full workday. I had every minute planned right to the time I was going to go to sleep. Then that day would be changed when Al's on the phone, and Al's

going to have an idea. So, Al would start off, "Tom... they just declared Marshal Law in Poland. And, a number of the activists have escaped. And, they need an office. Do you have room in the NYSUT office?" "Jesus, Al. Is our staff going to get shot at if we bring people in there?" Al says, "Well, I hope not." But, he didn't say no. (laughter). We had room on the eighth floor of the building at 260 Park Avenue South, we had the New York Teacher at the editorial offices and we had extra room that was there. It was always decided we'd get money. Legitimately, we'd give money to the UFT who was supporting so much of our programs, and didn't need the kind of support we gave back to the locals. But, how do you recognize that, and help them in their needs? They had a floor empty in their building. So, we rented the whole floor. In case we needed space, when you needed it, it's there, right? So, we had extra space.

That's where we put the Solidarnosc office that was in exile in America. And then, of course, another call came, "Tom, they need printing machines in Poland. You must have some extra machines." So, we had to disassemble machines with these instructions on how to assemble them again and mail the parts in separately.

Q: You were mailing parts (laughter) --

A: Yeah, so international affairs was something that was extremely important to Al. We had the debate on support of Israel yesterday, and when I got a chance to be at the microphone, I thought it was important for me to talk about the issue of, "Why do we as a professional union take important convention time to deal with Israel's problem?" You know, "Why are we doing that? Why aren't we dealing with class size, and all that?" I experienced that in upstate New York. People would go to the convention and say, "Why is the time being spent on international affairs?" The easy answer to that is that in our church, or synagogue, or our classroom, or our family, or everywhere else, social justice is very important to us. Borders don't really make a difference on social justice because if I've got it, and across the street is another country, they don't have it. Certainly, maybe, we can push ours over the border that way, but if we don't, maybe they'll push theirs over the border on our side. Social justice wants to find something that we have to stand up for. In this particular debate who should set the conditions for the world, the terrorists or the democratic institutions that care about human rights? And, that's not Hamas. Hamas doesn't care about their citizens. They're not spending all their time on economic development and job creation. They're sneaking missiles out to shoot into Israel. So, Israel gets taken over, and what does that mean to

us? Well, now Hamas has got the missiles to shoot someplace else. They don't have to shoot them in Israel, and maybe they're going to shoot them where we have troops. And, pretty soon something else is going to happen. International affairs is something we all should be concerned about, and we should define social justice. Once we've defined it, we should work to spread it. And, in every case that I know of -- and I don't want to be too definite because maybe somebody will come up with some new theory I never thought of, but every case that I am aware of, we don't have good social justice unless we have a democratic institution. We should be trying to spread democratic institutions and support those that are in place where they're in.

That's our international affairs. And, I've been very fortunate. I've been an unofficial observer in Nicaragua for the election. The Ortega brothers identified us as unofficial observers, "And they should be ignored. They have no business in our country."

Q: Did that put the fear in you?

A: Yeah, well the Carter center was the official observer for that election. But, Carter stayed in Managua. So, what we did, we were the AFL-CIO observers. We went out to the countryside. And, it was amazing. There were disputes. I'm not talking

about ideological disputes. There were procedural disputes that were coming up at the polling stations that somebody had to decide. Anybody that they would perceive as a neutral they would accept. Even the guy with the Russian-made rifle that was sitting there, hey thought that was a good idea, you know? One of the guys from our side was claiming that it was an unfair election because they put a stamp on your hand if you voted because they had let soldiers vote anywhere in the country. So, there had to be some way to identify that you had voted once. So, you didn't vote a second time. They put a stamp on your hand. Once you had an indelible stamp you couldn't vote again. This guy was claiming that the indelible stamp didn't work because he had rubbed off the skin on his hand to show that he had voted once, and now he didn't have the indelible mark and he could vote again. So, we'd say, "Well, yeah, but that's an extreme, you know?" and ask the guy at the polling place, "How many people came with a scab right here on their hand?" If there's somebody with a scab, we're going to be suspicious of them. But, if they don't have a scab on there, they have a right to vote.

Of course that was a scary election because we had dubbed the Europeans and the Americans that came down San Dolistas because they all had sandals. The Ortega brothers had taken the square

in front of the cathedral, and they had these big speakers. They were going to have a rock concert, and they were going to have a big celebration after they won the election. And, they didn't win. So we went to the airport to leave the next day, they herded us all into one room. We had boarding passes. Those are the days that you could get your boarding pass beforehand. We had our boarding pass, and everybody with a boarding pass in this room, they put us all in the room, and then they locked us in because they still controlled the airport. Then they gave out duplicate boarding passes to all their San Dolistas who now wanted to leave the country because there wasn't going to be any party. That was a little bit scary. As it turned out to be, the next day we got on planes, and we got out.

Q: So, you were locked in this room overnight?

A: No. They had a guard at the door but you could get out to go to the john. You could get out for things. That's how we found out what was going on. But what I did with some of my friends from New York is we caught a plane to Costa Rica, which was south. Nobody wanted to go south. And then, we got on a plane from Costa Rica to go back to New York. We got off that day. But, the next day the rest of the people were on the flights and out.

Then we went to Chile. Al had found in Chile that there was a group that was going to challenge Pinochet. And, if you remember, he had written a constitution that gave him the first eight years of the presidency. When you pass the constitution, he was president for eight years and then was in a free election at the end of eight years.

So, we had what was called the campaign of the "NO". That got a little antsy too. We were in this room, and the President of the Teachers was giving a speech, and it was being translated for us after. The translator was a little bit delayed. And so, he said something, and everybody looked around. We didn't know. We waited for the translation. The translation was, "You see the bullet holes in the wall? That was last week when Pinochet sent his men in to break up our meeting." It was like, "Holy geeze. Last week they were shooting up the walls. Oh, there's a bullet hole about this high right here." Our main problem there was to teach them how to fold the ballots because in democratic procedures that we never think about, how do you put the square paper into the slot in the box this small with the square paper? We have to fold it. Well, how do you fold it? Well, you fold it in eighths. Which ballots are ballots? Only those that are folded correctly. We had to have these classes in how you folded the ballot to make sure that people were going

to have a valid vote. As the headline said in Santiago the morning after the election, "He ran unopposed and he lost."

(laughter)

I can tell you about all the wins. I'm not sure my life would have been as exciting if I lost all the time. But, these were two big wins. And then, I was finally an official observer in the South African election where Mandela had won. I got to be an observer in Zululand, which was where all the problems were. Mandela made the decision that it was a stolen election in the province and that in order to bring the Zulus into the government, which was so important, that he would have to accept that. We observed a lot of irregularities and reported them, but it was an official decision to accept it anyway, that the AMC had won the election. In Zulu land, what happened was the police came and confiscated all the ballot boxes, took them back to the police headquarters, and then the results were announced police headquarters.

But, Mandela was right. Now they have a country that I don't think will ever retreat from where they're at, and he got the country started the way that -- and he didn't have one section breaking off and trying to go independent. I've had some terrific experiences, others that were not as exciting as

being an observer in the election that we won. But, we'd worked with a lot of people. I went on an EI mission to Russia when EI was set up as a merger between IFFTU and WCOTP, how the constitution called for an only-democratic organization to go in. There was a third organization. That was the Warsaw Block Organization where there was not democracies.

Q: This was basically the iron curtain?

A: Yes, and so it was very explicit that only democracies could come in. So, the Russian teachers wanted to come in: 5 million members, it did not appear that they were a democratic institution. Ed McElroy and I were the two in America that were a part of the mission. We went over there. We got outvoted 3-2 by the Europeans who wanted the Russians in. There did appear to be a democratic organization. No, we were not able to succeed on that. And, the Russians came in. It was important to Europe. It was important to the European Union. They don't seem to have done any damage. I don't know if they're any more democratic than they are now, but they haven't done any damage EI that they're in.

Q: Hopefully they would learn more about democratic trade unions that way.

A: Yep, yep. I'd been to Bulgaria on training sessions, and to the European countries, and we went to Japan, and to the educational -- the reason we went there is the government had

invited the Reagan administration to send a delegation over. The Japanese teachers have always been opposed to their government, and never had a government that they supported. They wanted to try to have an alternative to the government's group. So, they invited the AFT to send people over. We learned a lot. A lot of people think the Japanese educational system is so great because they go to school longer than our kids go to school. Well, we found out they don't study subjects longer than our kids study because if you take, like, Tokyo, land is so expensive. It has no place for kids to play. You can't go out in the street when you play. There's no place to go. The roof of the school is the playground. School goes until the Junctas start, the special schools, which do remediation for kids. The school goes that long, and the kids go up on the roof and play. Yeah, it's a longer school day, a longer school year. But, there's a purpose for that. They don't have custodial staffs. Kids clean the school. That's during the school day that that goes out. So, we were able to learn more. At EI and IFFTU before, we were able to learn that a lot of countries will set their educational policies by what the international organization does.

So, it's hard for us to participate in a discussion on class size where you're trying to change the official position

of class size from 47 to 45 because we think that if you have more than 18 kids in an early elementary class, the kids aren't going to learn. But, if we pass the policy of 18, then none of these countries would pay any attention to it. But, if we reduce it by two, there's a good chance that many of these countries, we'll reduce their class size by two because EI has said that. The next time you reduce it by two more, and the next time you reduce it by two more. We've learned how to be diplomats on our own little sphere, and how to go in international affairs. Hopefully we've helped a lot of these countries. There's many things like the issue of -- if you've never participated in a democratic institution, how are you going to do it?

I went out to dinner the other night with Tony Cortese. They wanted Mr. Han to explain to the French and to the Norwegians what it's like in China because the Europeans are saying, "Well China looks like it's all right. It's adopted entrepreneurial ways." Well it has but it hasn't improved the human rights of anybody. Americans come in and buy and set up companies. But, they're making their people as the video said today, work 13 hours, seven days a week in dangerous conditions and all of that. International affairs is an attempt to try to bring those things that are good about our country into some of

the other countries, and to hopefully improve the social justice as we go throughout.

Q: Not only was it done through AFT and other state feds, but did this work that you did overseas go along also with the National Education for Democracy? Was that all tied together?

A: Well, NED has the advantage of having a lot of money. Congress gives a lot of money, so AFT doesn't have that kind of money to -- maybe we can bring a couple people over for training, but we can't set up an office with staff to help the country. NED has a very important purpose. NED is a late time entrance of the United States, and the Europeans have done this for along time. They've had these institutions, which have supported democracies very strongly. That's what NED's goal is. When there's an emerging democracy to try to help them -- when we went over to Warsaw, Poland, under the communist system, and we went to Romania too, under the Communist system the union was a branch of the government. The union had government desks, government telephones, government paper, government pens -- they could have the normal operation to operate on. Once communism fell, and they no longer were part of the government, there still was the union that used to be a part of the government. It maintained the building, the desks, the chair, the phone. The democratic organization had to start from scratch. That's a lot of what you have to do. You have to help those that are

starting from scratch. Members never had to pay dues because government supported it. Now you're going to have to collect dues from somebody, and you're the little smaller organization. So, all these things intermesh.

Q: OK. I think we've covered international, a little education reform. Is there anything else you'd like to say as part of this oral history?

A: No. I'm anxious to see what you produce out of this.

Q: (laughter) Well, thanks Tom. I appreciate it.

END OF FILE 5