



Jim McGarvey

AFT Oral history project

Q: This is Dan Golodner, Wayne State University, Walter P. Reuther Library, AFT archivist in Helena, Montana, October 2, 2007, talking with Jim McGarvey. How are you doing, Jim?

A: I'm doing good, Dan! Welcome to Montana!

Q: Thank you. Glad to be here. Why don't we just get started with basically where you're born and raised, a bit about your family?

A: I was born and raised in Butte, Montana. Went to St. Lawrence Grade School and Blaine Public School, and I went to Butte Central High School, and I graduated from Carol College. I went back to Butte after finishing up at Carol College and taught at Butte High School for six years. I was a member of the Mine Mill Smelt Workers and the Labors Union when I was growing up. One of my first jobs was as a laborer when I was 14; I worked highway construction at 17.

Q: And you had your union card at 14?

A: Yeah, and then I went to work for the Mine Mill and Smelt Workers, which later through a merger became the Steel Workers.

Q: What did you do there?

A: Mine Mill?

Q: Yeah, what was your job?

A: I was a surface laborer, a swaper. I worked for a department called Salvage. There was hundreds of mines in Butte, and as technology got bigger -- and I say technology was your rails -- as the rails got bigger, the cars got bigger, the tunnels got bigger, they used to salvage out the smaller cars and the rails and sell them to -- we called them leasers. They were contract miners. And basically I worked in all the mines of Butte during this time on the surface, hauling stuff from mine to mine, and in many cases if we needed equipment for another mine we virtually destroyed the first mine. I helped load William Clark's records into trucks that were dumped into the pit, covered over, had a supervisor riding with the truck that took them there.

Q: Dumped it right back in the pit!

A: Dumped it right back in the pit. I don't know if they were historical or just bills...

Q: Were you going to school at this time?

A: Yes.

Q: So a full day at school, then --

A: No, no, no. I used to go back, like I'd leave school and I'd leave Carol at, say, the beginning of December, I'd go to work either in the pit or on the hill somewhere, and then I'd come back and spend some time at school. They'd hold my time, and then I'd work all during the holidays, and then I'd come back to school and then go back and work a few more weekends, long weekends, and then they turned in my time. I was connected.

Q: (laughter) You had the connections. That helps.

A: They took good care of us. My generation, I don't think very many of us ever flipped a hamburger. We, through the sweat and the friendships and our own hard work we always had good union jobs from age 14 on up for me.

Q: Still are.

A: Hmm?

Q: Still are a union member.

A: Still working for the union. Back then it was just a good union job. I liked construction. I'd say if this one

supervisor hadn't died at a young age, that's probably where I'd be today. He took very good care of me.

Q: That's excellent.

A: Was my next-door neighbor, by the way.

Q: Oh, that was the next-door neighbor?

A: Mm-hmm, and my uncle was the timekeeper in the pit when I worked there over the holidays.

Q: So it was a whole neighborhood.

A: My uncle was also on the school board when I went to work teaching in Butte.

Q: (laughter) That must've been nice!

A: Very nice.

Q: So you started teaching right after Carol College?

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: What did you teach?

A: I taught senior sociology at Butte High School, and then I coached at the University of Montana, Montana Tech, in Butte for a couple years.

Q: OK. What was teaching like, this was '65, '66?

A: I taught from '66-71.

Q: What was the classroom like then?

A: I had all seniors. I'd say I probably never really, except for study hall, saw nothing but the good side of teaching. Had good students, ones that wanted to learn. I think their training, most of them had developed good habits, and even the few students that I had that didn't seem to care, I had no problems in my classroom whatsoever.

Q: Lucky!

A: Yeah, very lucky. I mean, I don't think many people could say it, but these were seniors, and it was fun. It was hard because it was sociology, a moving target. At the time I found it very hard, and interestingly enough much of what I learned from sociology I don't know that I could've used any other major with my union activities, but it was not planned.

Q: (laughter) No, that's true! You use sociology all the time with union issues. Did you immediately join the union, or was it like you had to join the union when you became a teacher?

A: Well, yeah, both. I mean, I had been in two unions by the time I became a teacher. The Butte Teachers Union -- I never knew anything about MEA or anything like that through my whole college career. I had been in two unions. By the way, the Mine Mill and Smelt Workers was not an AFL-CIO

union at that time, but, I mean, I never knew that in terms of -- I just knew... And we were encouraged by our peers to go to the union meetings, and we used to get stamps in our books that we'd go. We'd go there on Friday when we picked up our checks and get our union books stamped and stop at the local beer tavern on our way back to work and have a few beers, and...

Q: (laughter) You still have your union book?

A: I do. Mine Mill and Smelt Workers. I wish I had it right here, I'd show it to you. I'll show it to you tomorrow.

Q: I leave at 6:00.

A: Oh, OK, well, I'll show it to you next time.

Q: I'd love to see that.

A: But anyway, I grew up in Butte, and virtually grew up on a mine dump. Mine dumps were, in the early days, where they just took the earth out that they would be hydrating, and they would find a rock and the gold and the silver close to surface, and the rest was just thrown off to the side, and that's where the houses were built up and built on, and close to the mines, and we knew no different.

Q: Just knew mining.

A: That's all we knew. They were our playgrounds, and baseball fields, and ice skating rinks, and we knew no difference.

Q: (laughter) Sounds good, though!

A: It was good. It was... We were poor. I remember once when there was a big strike we had an anonymous \$100 bill left at our house to help us through the strike, but I guess we were like so many other people in Butte in the country; you didn't know you were poor. We made the best, and the mine yards were our playgrounds. I mean, we hitched rides on the trains, and put our rafts in copper pools and fell in the water.

Q: Oh, jeez!

A: Knew no different.

Q: Right. Sounds good, though. So were you the first in your family to go to college?

A: I was. In fact, of my siblings I was the only one that went to college. I have one other sister that went to a two-year school and one that went to a business college, and never thought about it like that, but I was the first in my whole generation to go to college.

Q: When you graduated did you say "I'm going to college," or...?

A: No, I was working in the mines and had a very good job and wasn't sure what I wanted to do, but some of my buddies in the mines encouraged me to go to school, and my family, and I basically made the decision that I'd give it a look. And other than going back and working in the summers and working at Christmastime, that was the beginning of the end, and this was in the '70s, and by the '80s the mines were closed down, so it was a good decision. And it helped me get on the football team and a lot of other stuff. You must be tough if he worked in the mines. I was a surface miner, not a contract miner.

Q: Still, they hear you're a miner, gotta be tough on the line.

A: That's what they said, and 165 pounds!

Q: (laughter) 165?

A: Yeah.

Q: And you're playing --

A: My roommate was the biggest man on the team, and he weighed 220. That was as big as we got back in those days.

Q: Back in those days, yeah! Nowadays you guys are puny!

A: Well, they wouldn't even risk having you bumped into!

Q: So college was the first experience -- they must have saw something in you that said you should go to college, get out of here.

A: I'm not sure. We were told, one, our parents didn't want us going down the mines and our relatives, and like they say, a lot of us were connected, and we had these surface jobs, and we were encouraged to go to school, but I don't think we were really -- because I'm a union leader -- that we were really educated and that it was explained to us the importance of what the union did for our upbringing. We were told that we should move on but we were never told the sacrifices that were made, and I think our parents talked about that with each other but they never instilled it in us as kids that... I mean, they all had high reverence for the union and there were many unions, and each union had its own territory, and there was a lot of respect for it, but it wasn't like the industrial unions and the unions that I'm used to where everybody knows everybody else's business. If you were a boilermaker that's all you were, that's all you were for your life. Well, my dad was a boilermaker. I had never been encouraged or trained to become a boilermaker. I could weld. I could cut. But we learned all that stuff 'cause we wanted to learn it just to take our cars apart and...

Q: And the equipment was laying around, and do it. So graduating Carol College, why teaching?

A: You know, I'm not sure. I applied for three jobs, one in Clark County, Nevada, one back in Butte, and one in Helena -- I liked Helena. Going to school, and then the job came open in Butte and I took it, and I ended up being Vice President of the union my second year of teaching. I was President of the union before I had tenure, not by design but more by accident.

Q: That's how it usually happens. It's all accident. They just saw young McGarvey would be Vice President...?

A: No, I shot off my mouth back in those days in the teacher rooms. We would talk about insurance. Back then, if you had to pay out of pocket 85 cents it was a big fight. The insurance told that we had full pay, and so there was always discuss about the insurance and the different benefits, and then we had composite rate. I didn't know composite rate from a horse, but so I kind of took the side of the single teachers that it should be a tiered structure, and I was told that if I know so much I should go to the union meetings. Well, as soon as I went to the union meetings I became a firm believer in the composite rate, and then at that time I met one of the people who

probably made one of the biggest marks on my personal and union life was an insurance man, who was a hard worker, and he helped us -- we owned our own insurance, the union owned the insurance, so we didn't have experts, and he felt that the composite rate was good and how we were only probably paying \$40 a month, if that, and everybody had the same benefits, family and all, and that was real insurance, and I grew up with that, and I promoted the composite rate wherever I could, because that was real insurance. After that it was just basically the insurance company giving you a cheaper way out, and deductibles growing higher all the time, and in fact, the union here, which is a very small one, in the Montana AFL-CIO has a composite rate.

Q: Hmm, still. Was this through MFT or for the Butte Teachers Union?

A: It started out as the Butte Teachers Union, and the Butte Teachers Union and the Anaconda Teachers Union we owned. We negotiated with the insurance companies. They came to us. They never came to the school district. They dealt with us, and they dealt with us as union rep. Then in Butte -- a lot of people would be surprised -- Butte had the first contract, but when I became President I couldn't understand why some people weren't paying union dues and

others were, and so there was no law for public employees then, so it was basically whatever you negotiated, but the law was a good one, the law of the jungle. That meant we struck when we felt like it, and we came back to work when we felt like it, and nobody crossed the picket line, and there was a lot of camaraderie and unity and, I must say, sensibility in terms of knowing what we were after and not lingering out there on strike and getting it done and getting our raises, but back then it was hard, no salary. The insurance was easy and the other benefits were easy, but while Butte was a very highly democratic, highly unionized -- it was a very conservative town, very conservative in terms of social issues, and many of our brothers that made it to the school board were also conservative, and so it was nice to have doctors and lawyers to strike against. It was tougher to strike against union people because they didn't want to see, oftentimes, make any more than they were making. Where was I going with this? Oh, so we came up with this scheme that nobody would participate in the insurance unless they paid union dues, and so that became our union security, and it was good insurance, everybody wanted it. So two sisters sued us, and I went to the insurance company and said, "We want to do business with you and you should defend the

union," and so the suit ended up -- while it named the union and the insurance company, the insurance company footed the bill for our union security.

Q: Pretty good!

A: I would have to say that was a high point looking back. That was definitely one of the high points, and that local went -- even ten years later we got collective bargaining. It was legal to negotiate agency fee or some form of agency fee under the law. In fact, most every public employee did negotiate agency fee, but for years the Butte Teachers Union went without any kind of union security, held the people in the union by whether they participated in the insurance or not, and under that system, you were not bound to Hudson or Beck or any of the reporting systems, but now they do have union security.

Q: Right, right. Once again, Butte Teachers Union, one of the first things: contract and agency fee.

A: But they didn't have the union fee or agency fee in the beginning.

Q: No. Pseudo type.

A: But they did have -- this was long before my time -- they had two-tiered salary schedule. The union members got paid

one wage and the non-union members got paid another wage, and that was later said by the courts to be unlawful.

Q: Neat concept, that's pretty interesting! I don't think the courts would like that too much.

A: And in 1936, when the Butte Teachers Union first got recognition rights, they were resisted by the school board, and the president of the Central Labor Council at the time, brother passed away, and he was one of the school board members, ran the mortuary, and he went down and took, removed his brother to another mortuary and said his brother would not be in a mortuary that didn't respect the collective bargaining rights of all unions. So that's quite a story.

Q: (laughter) That's good labor lore.

A: A lot of good stories like that.

Q: Yeah. So you guys went on strike actually?

A: We had many strikes before the law in Butte, and very few after the law. It was just a different world, but basically -- in fact, there'd become an inherent abuse in going on strike because they would get restraining orders and ask that the leaders be put in jail, but the judge would never, didn't think that was a good idea, so what he would do is take his bailiff and locked the two parties up

in a motel until they figured out an agreement, and that seemed to work for us.

Q: And so you've been trapped in motels before, huh?

A: Yeah. But now this was way early in my career, and this wasn't done when I was a staff rep for MFT. This was more when, a couple times when I was an officer for the Butte Teachers Union and my predecessors, but I'd say the Butte Teachers Union over the years -- and then after I left the Butte Teachers Union to work for MFT -- I'd say back in the '70s and back, maybe into the '80s but that was when the mines were closed and that wouldn't have been a smart time to be striking, I'll bet you they were engaged in seven, eight, nine strikes. I was probably involved in three of those. Remember, we were taking advantage of the judicial system, if you're following me.

Q: I am.

A: That gradually they would -- the judge wouldn't restrain us and put us in jail, he would restrain us and make us reach an agreement.

Q: Montana's version of binding arbitration?

A: You might say. But now our collective bargaining law has fact-fighting, mediation, and binding arbitration, and no specifics on how you would strike. It is totally silent on

strike, so prudence would suggest that you plan your strike, but there's nothing that says, except for healthcare, that you have to give any notice.

Q: Just walk out one day.

A: You just walk out.

Q: Wow.

A: Now, most of the ones I was involved in we did give notice, but we didn't get -- I mean, it was notice like "We're negotiating and if we can't settled tonight we're on strike on Monday." And some of our early strikes we scheduled for Friday, and we were back to work on Monday.

Q: So these weren't prolonged things, over a weekend, over maybe a week.

A: Well, some of them were short like that, but there were a few prolonged, but I had the good fortune of meeting a lot of people who helped influence my career, and one of them was that if you plan to strike you also better plan on how you're getting back and what you're going to settle for, and the threat of the strike is always much better than the strike itself, so striking over a weekend wasn't much more than the threat of a strike, but we would miss a Friday or a Monday. But then if you didn't have it settled on a

Monday, then it just didn't seem like there was any hurry, so it could get into a longer strike.

Q: Was it usually over wages and benefits?

A: Mostly always wages.

Q: How much did the wages increase over since you became President?

A: Well, back in those days we were getting anywhere from 6, 8, and 10% raises, but so were they in Pittsburgh and other parts of the country, but those were big raises. It wasn't long after that that a percent and a half was a good raise. And by the way, when we were getting 6, 8, and 10% raises sometimes we were getting killed by our members for not being enough. I brought back a percent and a half and got letters and receipts to go have dinner from members that they thought we did such a good job. It's just the time and the market, and also the more involvement you get the more appreciation, the more buy-in, the more understanding. I found that especially negotiating in these smaller school districts with real tough school boards that some of the teachers would do anything, but you had to be very calculating in what you asked them to do so that you didn't get them in trouble that you couldn't get them out of.

Q: Right. What was the average salary, teacher?

A: When I started, it was about \$5,000.

Q: And when you left?

A: I've never left, so...

Q: Well, in '71.

A: In '71?

Q: When you became Executive Director of MFT.

A: I'd say in those five years it doubled. I was probably making -- I think I was making close to \$15,000 when I left.

Q: That's amazing. Then again, it's across the border, teachers across the country --

A: But not across the state of Montana. That was back when Butte had bargaining and nobody else did, and we had achieved retirement back in that -- no retirement came before my time, that they started a defined benefit. And then collective bargaining came in the '70s, and collective bargaining was quite an interesting story because by and large the people that I was exposed to in the union were pretty parochial and, in Butte, didn't much care about what went on in the rest of the state. I think some of it was they didn't understand that they had bargaining and conditions that nobody else had, partially because we came

from the labor community, and partially because we had people that were willing to stand up and fight, but possibly because we could strike and nobody else would think or do something like that without a law. So then when it came time, should there be a collective bargaining law or shouldn't there be; I was working for MFT. AFT felt it was good to have a law because then we could petition for elections; otherwise, there was no labor board or per board, whatever you want to call it, that we could have majority rule elections, and it was basically you had to be recognized by or not recognized by a partnership or just a building trades type agreement, so there weren't very many places that had that. Now, they had what they called professional this and professional that, but it worked to the advantage of management, and most of the time in association units the principals were part of the union and part of the contract and so the teachers were really getting ripped off. Again, we never had that in AFT, although in my first year of teacher is when AFT put the administrators out, and there was a lot of hard feelings, but there was no lingering like it was in the association. In Missoula, they were still in the association 20 years later. Now, some of the older teachers didn't like the idea, the administrators being put out, but the ones I

remember, the younger ones felt it had to be, and of course anybody who came in contact with other unions wondered why the management would be in the union anyway, supervisors, so... But I hope I'm going here with how we ended up with collective bargaining. So essentially the Butte Teachers Union, the Anaconda Teachers Union didn't want collective bargaining because they had their own form of bargaining, which was the law of the jungle and had a contract, but nobody else in the state did, and so as we got a few more locals I became conscious through my AFT education it was better to have a law, and gradually Butte would end up getting hurt without that law, too. So all of the state employees got bargaining, but teachers always had to have this or that, and so they figured out if they put in a law without the teachers that everybody could get collective bargaining, so then everybody in, say, 1971 got collective bargaining. All public employees got collective bargaining in the state of Montana except for teachers and faculty. Teachers by design, faculty by association! (laughter) Or public school teachers by design, college faculty by association. Well then when we were trying to organize it in higher ed, so we virtually got collective bargaining like in '72 for higher ed faculty, but we were organized in community colleges and it wasn't until later the big

election came at the University of Montana. But in '73 when we had a favorable legislature, supposedly, and a favorable governor and a powerful education association that was going to get bargaining no matter what, well, there were four bills introduced: one by the MFT, one by the MEA, one by the school board's association, which would be management's bill, of course, and then a second one by MFT that we introduced later in the session that would make us public employees like all other public employees. Well, the school board's association and the MEA wouldn't hear of that, but they were also losing their right to strike and they were making all these compromises, and it was quite a deal. We figured out just before transmittal that -- and we went to the school board's association and the Republicans and said that MEA is going to run away with the training, and they're going to have these collective bargaining laws that nobody's going to be able to live with. Just put us in like everybody else. Well, nobody understood or wanted to be bothered, probably a lot of lawmakers, but they just thought they don't want to give teachers all this power, so as a result we were amended in by the Republicans, the bill and the school board's association, but we architected it, MFT architected it, and

I might say I had a very big role in that. And it would happen like that. (snaps)

Q: Really?

A: It just, they came out one day and said, "We're going to amend them in." But the interesting thing now, when bargaining came -- I don't know how, -- at this point municipalities, the foot would be their scope of bargaining. They had a foot, OK, because they had all these other laws that they were governed by, and if you widened that state employees, their scope of bargaining would've been a little bit broader. And then if you brought in with faculty the scope of bargaining was even broader because they weren't bound by any of the like insurance or the workday or vocation or anything. These are all in statute. And then public school teachers, it was just wide enough to drive a truck through, so that was one of our greatest feats and pieces of fast work, and the scope of bargaining for public school teachers was wide open with no catch on bargaining, and in the beginning we negotiated. As time went on many of the contracts got similar, but in the beginning we ruled the day because we understood collective bargaining, and our contracts...

Now, they weren't pretty, but they had lots of nice things in them.

Q: (laughter) Yeah, usually the first ones aren't pretty, but you got 'em through. Was MEA abacked by your widening of scope of collective bargaining? How did the MEA respond to it?

A: Well, the interesting thing was that the President of the MEA and one of the locals of the MEA supported what we did but the association as a whole resisted it because they wanted the pride of authorship, but I have to give credit at that time. Now, that was before Eric and I got together to form the merger.

Q: Yeah, this is at the peak of AFT MEA battling, or even -- they were considering a merger, but it wasn't going to go anywhere.

A: Oh no, there was no talks of merger back then.

Q: Well, here no, but...

A: Or anywhere. This was in the '70s, early '70s. I mean, we were at each other's throats, and... (cell phone)

A: So I guess that was back in the '70s. That was a big deal and a big start for MFT, and then we started growing like crazy.

Q: You were still the only employee of MFT?

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: So you were running around the state, running through the State Capitol, keeping, running the shop.

A: Exactly. And we had -- our first office was kind of a hole in the wall up there by the Capitol that we shared with a couple of young ladies that ran a phonographer court reporting service, and we shared phones. But I have to tell you that in all honesty I think there was more opportunities than we were able to seize if we would've had more staff. We were growing. And then came along the University Teachers Union, which was the next big union after Butte, and they had a large corps of people who were good unionists. They were loyal to each other. They wanted the union to have collective bargaining so that they could have a say. It was faculty community driven, but they taught me the value of the organized organize the unorganized, and they were very helpful in terms of money and in terms of support and in terms of advice, and I wish that my blue collar friends had the will to do that these friends of mine had back in the late '70s and early '80s. And we were raiding MEA all the time, and then we turned to raiding MPEA, and there were some fierce wars, and we

were... Other unions who didn't organize then, still don't organize now, could never understand why we were taking their members, or why would we take these association members. Well, they were bargaining lousy contracts, and especially in state government, and I figured out early on that the way the government set up their budgets, it was all or none, so if we have the other people out there doing our bidding for us it was none. We had to do our own bidding. And picking up the correctional officers, they had backbone and guts to strike, and did, and we conducted a statewide strike probably in the late '80s, maybe '90s, but late '80s for sure, and I could get you the dates on those, where basically we and the association were on strike at the same time, and so that meant we had maybe 20-30 AFT entities that had to vote their way on strike and vote their way back to work. I'm sitting home watching TV one night and the MPEA announces their members are going back to work, and then we were the ones who led the strike, had the key state institutions, the healthcare institutions and the prison. Without those they could've crushed the MPEA, so it was our members who really struck, but we had to meet and vote our way back to work. I remember going before all the correctional officers at the gymnasium in the Beaverhead County High School. I didn't know what was

going to happen to me. They didn't want to go back to work, and there were 400 people in that gymnasium, and I convinced them that we weren't going to get any more and that we would be losing money, and that if it wasn't for them nobody had got anything, we'd come back to fight another day, and we did. And we probably doubled the pay or even tripled the pay in a decade for correction officers, because we broke away from how the Montana Public Employees Association used to do it. Their belief was it don't matter how bad you screw us as long as you screw us all evenly, and my belief was is that if I can get extra for correction officers today and college professors tomorrow, that's the way we do it, but we're not going to hold anybody back, and that built salary pools as we moved along.

Q: Can we go back to the University Teacher Union? You said there are good unionists that are ready for collective bargaining. What was the administration view of that, and did AAUP try to come in, as well?

A: Well, they were a very active group to start with in terms of academic freedom, but academic freedom a lot of it was just making sure that handling grievances like a union would handle them. They understood that they didn't want

bad teachers or faculty, but they wanted everybody to have a chance would be my observation, and that nobody should be railroaded out, and so they took a lot of cases, when it come time to unionize they were naturals at it and they had the sense of community. It's a sense of community I've never saw before or since, in terms of making sure everybody got a chance, but also holding people to high standards. That was the thing that you didn't often see, that they held people to high standards, but they didn't want to see anybody getting railroaded, and that really impacted me in terms of my whole career in terms of how I dealt with employers and a lot of people are mistreated but the contract isn't violated, and that's hard to get across.

Q: It sounds like this is one of the first higher eds to use a peer standard system, and then have it in the contracts.

A: It was in the contract. They negotiated merit pay and they still do to this day. They're proud of it. If you don't perform, you can lose your tenure after so many contracts, but you also can grieve, so it ain't like you can be stripped of it, but the interesting thing was one of the bases they used as people moved or after people got tenure that they could be accorded less than normal raises. They would be denied a cost of living increase if they didn't,

the contractual cost of living increase, if they didn't live up to certain standards, and after so many less than normals they automatically lost their tenure. Very few people pursued that. I think the writing was on the wall if you had two less than normals that you were going to have a tough time, but the ones that did, the union fought for them, and some of them came back and were good teachers, but an interesting thing there's not a lot of it. It's kind of like the right to strike. If you have the right to strike and people know you'll do it, they'll respect you for it. I think in this case the administrators and the deans knew that they had to give good reasons for why they held faculty back on pay or merit or tenure track or anything else.

Q: 'Cause it's in the contract, 'cause they know --

A: 'Cause it's in the contract.

Q: That's interesting. So you're pretty much leading the MFT.

A: Pardon me?

Q: You're pretty much leading the MFT as Executive Director.

A: You mean back in these days.

Q: Yeah.

A: I started out as Executive Director for maybe eight or ten years, and then I became President, and so Executive Director was a hired position, which AFT encouraged at the time, but I think you have to have elected positions because you live or die on what you do, and I've watched associations, they hire -- in fact, that's what's wrong with the Montana Public Employees Association; they hire executive directors and they're just not accountable, and you can't vote them out, and oftentimes they have more control over the board than the board has over them in setting policy, and they get very, very freakin' lazy.

Q: And a kind of also sort of nepotism follows along, so you really can't change anything because they're just following along a route.

A: And so, over the years, like at one point MEA had most of higher education, but after we organized the University of Montana we took all the higher ed units away from MEA, and...

Q: That's a huge grab.

A: Yeah, one at a time. And then about the time that the colleges of technology were taken out of local school districts and put into higher education, there was a big argument on how it should be done, and a lot going on in

the legislature, and this is when Eric Feaver came on the scene, and he approached it that we should go after, through legislation, and I approached it we should go after to grassroots organizing. So whatever happened at the legislature, when it came time for the election, we were able to claim credit for whatever they did in the legislature as well as how to structure in place, and they had no structure, and I think he saw that and understood it very well. About the same time, there was an independent local in Colstrip, Montana, and a lot of people in Colstrip came from Butte, and so while we took advantage of all the weaknesses over the years, all of our -- what do you call it? All the mistakes we've made in Butte and other places happened to end up in Colstrip. And we had a minority local in Colstrip and never bothered to have them vote. We thought we could win the election, and Eric went down there and stuck with it and worked hard, and I remember one day I was getting the hell beat out of me on how we'd handle the grievance somewhere else for -- there were a husband and wife and a cousin, and how I had handled the grievance for their dad, and they were angry and we won in relief, but it didn't matter to them. We didn't win him enough, and this is when I first met Eric, and so they grabbed him in the hall and asked him the questions of how this went down, and

he says, "I think I'd have to admit that Jim was right," which could've cost him three votes but didn't. I took mark on that, and it was almost like the same year when I was on the AFT Executive Council, then they started talking about merger, and so I called Eric. They were billing off that - - we have lottery here in Montana -- and they were billing off that if you pump money into these slot machines that you were making it a better deal for teachers, but in fact is what it was supposed to do is go to reduce the county mill levy that had nothing to do with whether. That helped fund the retirement, but they would have to fund it with something else, and it funded a very small amount of retirement, but the PR we were getting is that if you were to put a lot of money into these machines, you were raising the salary of teachers and sort of doing your little part for the social structure, and you can't imagine how that pissed me off. So I gave Eric a call and told him that we've got to do something about that. Well, that afternoon Eric sent over a set of principles for our boards to adopt and a press release that we would send out jointly, attacking tavern owners and the people who were putting out this false information and undercutting money for education, so the rest is history on the merger.

Q: Yeah, it seemed like it just fell into place.

A: Fell into place. I respected him, and I think he had a respect for me. He saw our strong points. MEA had a much better professional development conference, and we were working hard to develop it. I mean, as we built, we had our people...this is before AFT had an ER&D program, but we used to meet and figure out ways that we could better do professional development and take over the days at the beginning of school to offer our ID instead of...it kind of pissed teachers off, some of the people they'd drag in at the beginning of the school year. I don't know what's going on in the MEA, but, they're having a lot of the same feelings and the problems, but they made up for it a lot, and we get two days paid in October, which is coming up next week, and we're supposed to offer professional development in those days. Well, they had a really good program. We had a better co-program. So we never -- if only these other places could understand this, they try to say, "Well, in other states I've watched them," New Mexico or whatever, pick any place. Well, we had a better co-program, or they argue, "Who's got the best co-program?" Well, we thought MFT had the best co-program, and I knew, or Eric thought we did. I didn't know what he thought, but I knew they had a better professional development program. So here we have two programs, now we have a third again

number of members that are participating in this, and this gave us opportunities to work in other areas, so it was just coming together, just 'cause it should have.

Q: What did your board think about this when you first started working together with MEA on the lottery issue?

(overlapping dialogue)

A: Well, you've got to read the article from Dick Berenden in one of those MEA, or the last MEA AFT to date after I moved over here. These were my friends and colleagues, and we were doing crazy things all the time, (laughter) so they scratched their head, but I think there were a lot -- not in higher ed. They would've questioned, this was a wise thing and would we get eaten up. State employees would've said the same thing maybe, but in the public schools, these were cousins and sisters and brothers, and that one was in MFT and one was in MEA. And when we put together our merger teams, we both knew who we were putting on those merger teams in terms of were they visionaries or somebody that was pissed off at somebody from ten years ago, and were they afraid to try new stuff or did they just want to bitch about what happened in the past? And it was something to watch. Some days I had more friends from the MEA merger side than I did my own, because, remember, we

were pretty strong-headed, and it's interesting how we did vote -- we merged around a constitution, and there were a lot of things in the MEA constitution that we were doing like the structure of the board, but we had little or no discussion on the AFL-CIO affiliation because that was the deal going in. We had little or no discussion on should it be a teacher organization or should it be all these people that were represented by MFT, because, we wouldn't be doing this if we were going to argue those sorts of things. So they were a given. So they were put into the first draft of the constitution, and we gave every single local, including MFT locals, one year to opt out of the AFL-CIO. Nobody opted out.

Q: Wow.

A: And when the MEA-MFT, when Eric goes to the AFL-CIO convention, it's MEA-MFT local 8025, 16,000 members, and then brings a huge delegation, where we got 500 locals maybe, or 350 say. It's not whether they show up or don't show up, the whole voting power of the MEA-MFT is at that convention.

Q: What were some of your sticking points? It seems really easy here, and New York had a hard time, Florida had a hard time.

A: Well, we did it around the constitution. The MFT voted unanimously for it, and the MEA voted 85%.

END OF AUDIO FILE

A: There was one guy from billings, who I observed. He was... I don't think he knew shit from apple butter. He was an MEA person that just tried to find every possible reason why we shouldn't, and he argued that, "Oh, we're going to use the AFT voting structure, and that's a bad thing, and everybody in the union has to vote." Well it was interesting when we were, Eric and I, were going around the state; we did the MEA voting procedure the first year. They were handing us envelopes with ballots in them. We were driving the ballots back to Helena. (laughter) It was a ludicrous situation! It was... It --

Q: (laughter)

A: I wouldn't even suggest it was corrupt, but man, did it have the potential to be! And I think many states do this now. They still do this. But we had agreed in the Constitution that we would do that one time. Well we, have what's called little delegate assemblies before the main convention, so we would make tours around the state to all these different areas, and shit, some of them would be

voting the goddamn ballots right in front of us!

(laughter) But we, of course, never gave them our opinion. I ran for Vice President, he ran for President, and I knew that from the beginning, too. I mean, mathematically MEA had the right to the presidency. They had 9,500 members, we had 55.

Q: It's kind of like Shanker did, too.

A: Hmm?

Q: It's kind of like Shanker did, too. It is allow Hobart to be president. He would be number two, and actually eventually completely off. It makes sense, the numbers are there.

A: Right.

Q: Why cause more...?

A: Well, if you want to build a labor movement -- and remember, I said I learned that. I learned that from a lot of people. I mean, don't misunderstand me: I think there's a lot of boneheads in blue collars in terms of how, because they don't organize. I just think it's atrocious. But I've also had fantastic blue and white collar people that have helped me out in my career, and put a lot of lumps on my head. But they understood organizing, but nobody understood organizing like the University Teachers Union.

The organized organized the unorganized; that's going to cost us a little bit more. Quit your bitching -- that's just the way it is.

Q: So the university professors are the adjunct faculty, is the staff part of it, too?

A: There are adjuncts in part of that unit. The recognition clause recognitions everybody up to .5; that has its advantages and disadvantages, but you're still, you're limited... they do a lot for adjuncts that way, but... I don't think that in that setting I think adjuncts do very well. I think adjuncts in another setting like that, they might not do so well. But that again, is how the union evolved, and part of it is they look out for their brothers and sisters; adjuncts are their brothers and sisters. But now, when you get adjuncts down below .5 they do get abused bad, but nothing like they get abused at some of these other schools, like at MSU. I mean, I'd say they could bring in their English comp adjuncts in buses, OK.

Q: Back to the merger, though, university professors had issues with it, and the state employees had small issues, the thing of being swallowed up?

A: Yeah, but I think we managed that good in the beginning.

Q: How'd you manage that?

A: I don't know, just like we did in MFT. We never let it be an issue, and myself, I had a whole lifetime to learn and understand faculty and public employees. Eric took the challenge on from day one. If somebody called us the teachers union I might or might not eat 'em up. If anybody ever said a teachers union to Eric he would take their head right off, and he --

Q: Really? He accepted it that quickly?

A: And he went after the press to say that we're the largest public employee union, and they have three or four different ways they make reference to MEA/AFT now. Would never have happened if he didn't pursue that on his own.

Q: Were they given extra votes, or...?

A: No, no.

Q: Straight across on membership?

A: One person, one vote. One person, one vote. But what we did is we developed -- like Head Start would have a board member, so there's roughly 35 board members. All the larger locals would automatically have a board member, but then public employees, a certain segment of public employees, say county employees, they would have a board member, so there could be hundreds, even thousands of teachers, they would get their board members by virtue of

large locals, but not by virtue of being teachers. Head Start's, public employees', health care had a seat at the board, no matter how small they were in number, and that was basically the structure of the MEA Constitution. AFT, that wasn't promoted by AFT, but MFT promoted it because they like how it took care of Head Start people and higher ed.

Q: Interesting. So you really took a unique model. You didn't try to follow Florida or New York.

A: We had no -- New York came way later. I mean, we've been merged for ten years, and many years before that. Once we -- we had no no-raid agreement. I mean, that's important to, like we have a no-raid agreement with this counterfeit public employees association, but it's really a no-raid agreement because they don't want us raiding them, but they double cross us on a lot of other stuff. OK, when it came to Eric and I, I'm not sure what he'd say, but if we're going to do this what do you need a no-raid agreement for? You mean you don't trust me or whatever?

Q: Right. You showed all your cards.

A: Huh?

Q: You showed all your cards.

A: We showed all our cards. Showed our cards from day one.
And by the way, I wore diapers to the merger meeting.

(laughter) I had a prostate operation the week before we started merger talks. That was ten years ago.

Q: (laughter) That's a good story!

A: Eric took a lot of beatings for me! Just -- I won't bore you with them, maybe another time when you get us together, but it was really funny how people thought they were going after me, went after him when they were really going after me, and... So we had a lot of fun in the process, too. We had a lot of fun. But like the classified, we had two classified locals who were merged before MEA-MFT merged.

Q: You did an experiment, on a local to see if...?

A: How did that happen? Oh, I know. They consolidated the school district in Missoula. They had a high school and elementary school district. So MEA had five bargaining units, we had one, but ours was larger than their five together, so the Board of Personnel Appeals and the school district wanted to have us shoot it out, and so again, this was -- why would we have a no-raid agreement? Why would we dividing up who these members are? These are merge members! And so when we put our name on the ballot as MEA-MFT, so what's everybody going to say...? (laughter) "Oh,

you're MEA, you're MFT." Well, no, we're telling you who we are. We think we know who we are?

Q: (laughter)

A: And they loved it, though, those classified employees, especially the secretaries and the teachers aides and that. They just loved it.

Q: Because they got a sense of more power, more unity?

A: Well, and they were groundbreakers, and they were pioneers, and they liked each other. It was sort of like the university thing. We're not sure what we should be fighting about.

Q: Yeah.. This is a unique conversation because you always hear about the wars back and forth, and still today, even trying to merge, they just like hurt each other.

A: Look, the AFT adopted something that everybody could've voted on and merge into the AFT-MEA, OK, so that would be one way to do it, but most of this sitting down and saying they're going to do it, I don't think New York would've ever done it if they weren't pressured by AFT to do it, because that brought so much prestige, but why would NYSUT want to put up with the bullshit of, some of the bullshit they had to put up with when they virtually owned New York and could've raided what was left? I mean, other than

Buffalo they could've whittled them right down to the ground, but that don't take away from their -- there were a lot of good people in New York NEA, but that was also partially a staff problem is New York NEA was, I mean... It was like a tree that was dying, and they had all these staff who had all these wonderful benefits, and they're fighting for those benefits, so in terms of being charitable NYSUT absorbed a big bill for the good of the order, which, in my view -- and this in terms of having had the opportunity to be part of AFT all my life, and Shanker and Sandy Feldman and Ed McElroy, who's my buddy forever, but I watched how New York operated, and they were all -- it was similar to my friends at the University of Montana: they always did it for the good of the order. So while there was no real reason why they had to merge, it never did one thing for NYSUT other than showed -- I shouldn't say that, maybe -- but other than show unity and other than show brotherhood and sisterhood and other than build a labor movement, which in my books they were known for -- I mean, I've watched them for 30 years -- I mean, Herb Magidson, do you know him?

Q: I do.

A: He was the epitome, but there were a lot of people like Herb over the years that... Walter Tice --

Q: Tice, I was about to say Tice, yeah.

A: You know, Walter I never knew very well, but he argued with Shanker more than all the rest of us put together, but I don't think Shanker had a better friend when we left the room, and that was like I was telling you, the MFT board, I mean -- I really want you to read about that Barret... We had to make buddies with the Republicans to get the best -- just like we got collective bargaining, we got the best raise faculty ever seen, and public employees. When we were building into the merger, our faculty and our public employees were doing way better than public school teachers. That meant that we could have easily been fighting, and Eric saw that they had their day, the last two legislatures, but as we were building into the merger we had cut some pretty powerful deals for public employees, and he could've easily said public schools are entitled to that. But what did we say? No, we're going to get both, we're going to get criticized. Politicians aren't going to like us because they can't split us.

Q: Yeah, exactly, that's the point. Before they were splitting you guys apart.

A: Horribly splitting us apart. Horribly splitting us apart.

Q: Yeah, they were taking advantage of you guys because you just couldn't come to the same table. Now what are they going to do? They have to sit down at one table with one large -- as some people say, the 800-pound gorilla in Montana.

A: And the fact of the matter is we're a hungry bear. We can never be satisfied, but we can leave with a smile.

Q: That's true. Not bad, you're well fed! (laughter)

A: Our appetite -- I mean, that's maybe a disadvantage to merger, but I think we can prove it's been an advantage in fighting the initiatives. We have had every bit of unpublished fighting of the -- or a lot less fanfare as California or Michigan as any place else. It was the left wing that tried to put through that initiatives are good and we should have them, and I think they're horseshit. Initiatives -- the right-wing has been nothing, has used the initiative in Montana to beat us to death in public employment, but we've won all the time.

Q: They went after you with vouchers, charter school, Right-To-Work?

A: No, no, we've never had a problem with Right-To-Work. Payroll protection, vouchers -- but even to a lesser

degree, those is how they limit government, putting caps on how much it can spend in government. There's a different - - any initiative you can think of that puts limitations on government we've had to deal with, and that's probably one of the ones we've talked about the least, but being merged has been one of the most important that the merger has helped.

Q: And did they try to pass a TABOR?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: And you guys fought it off?

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: OK, so that would've hurt you even more.

A: Oh, yeah. That was the last one. That was the last legislature. But I'm trying to think... Eric can reel a lot of this stuff up, but we had CI95 or 95 and 96 a couple years ago, and then the TABOR thing last time. I have to say -- and that's another thing; the money that MEA-MFT puts into that and gets from AFT and NEA helps everybody else.

Q: Yeah, it's the ripple effect.

A: It helps them so much, but a lot of other unions don't appreciate that.

Q: It's because not really the jealousy but more of --

A: There's some jealousy.

Q: Well, there's always going to be jealousy. There's always going to be the egos.

A: There's some jealousy.

Q: Is it also that mentality that why should we be organized?

A: There's jealousy that they can't break that block. I see, since I've been over here at the AFL-CIO and I've been on the board virtually all my career, I see more positive things, and MEA-MFT -- Eric took some hammers that he wasn't entitled to because of people that didn't like me, but I think they're seeing the advantage of it now, but if we didn't monitor it I think lazy naysayers would've brought us down, which extended my career.

Q: Let's move into the national scene with merger. You started the merger conversation in '90 with the lottery here. AFT picked you up to work on the national, or...?

A: No, at the same time, right about that time was when Shanker said we ought to give this a whirl, and so that's when I come home and called Eric on the lottery, so all this was going on. They were putting the Principles of Unity; that's when the Principles of Unity started.

Q: Why did Shanker think this was the time?

A: I think he always thought it was the time.

Q: He always thought it was the time, but why...? Was there something in the wind that he saw? That he saw --

A: I think Shanker was always worried about the labor movement. I think... I wouldn't be ever the guy to speak for Shanker, but I think what he saw was happening with UAW and the way they weren't paying attention to their industry in the future, and I think he saw that happening with education, that we had to be accountable to the public, and that they were splitting us, and splitting us at the national level like they were at the state level,-- you know all this -- Shanker was an intellectual, and he... Well, first of all, he went through all those mergers in New York, so he thought he knew, and I think when they did the original merger in New York they thought it would catch on.

Q: They did. They really thought it would be a national movement.

A: And I'm hoping it still will be someday. There's four states now, and you know the four, and then there's a lot of locals around the country, and I tell these AFL-CIO meetings that I go to regionally means that you should

figure out a way to get some of these people in there just like us.

Q: Well, more and more NEA locals.

A: Huh?

Q: More and more NEA locals are joining the AFL-CIO boards. That helps.

A: Yeah. I mean, the more of that, the next time it's brought before the national AFL-CIO, and, I'm counting on my buddy Eric to be a big player in that.

Q: So back to the beginning of the AFT, exploring the idea of merger again, who -- was anybody against it? Did anybody say, "We're not ready for it"?

A: There were a couple people. The guy I remember was Dal Lawrence. Do you remember him?

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: But he didn't believe in public employees being in AFT or classified or anything.

Q: He thought it a strictly teacher union.

A: Mm-hmm. Large, metropolitan -- I think, that's the way I read him. But now buddies like my buddy Fondy -- do you know Fondy?

Q: (laughter) I was about to say, how did Fondy respond to this?

A: Fondy was there from day one! But they didn't go after it in Pennsylvania, but as far as Fondy personally, I don't know -- they had that Pittsburgh-Philadelphia thing, and then... But Christ, Fondy ran it -- and he had NEA people or PEA people in his office building there in Pittsburgh! We were good friends, Fondy and I. I loved Fondy. I might have stayed on the AFT -- I stayed there longer than him because he died, but I partially, probably stayed just to go to have dinner with him. But there wasn't an issue that Fondy wasn't on the right side of.

Q: That's right.

A: He might've been a little overly aggressive sometimes, but I don't think -- in terms of the good of the order, in terms of the organized, organized the unorganized, Fondy was there.

Q: I knew there would be something about Al. He was a good unionist, he was a good leader.

A: And, you know, you take -- like, it's bad to start naming people because you miss somebody, I got to watch Al Shanker. I met Sandy Feldman in Colorado on an educational issues -- it was kind of like state school officers, and

they sent people from different states, and I knew she was at AFT so obviously I was AFT. Now, this was back when I was still in the Butte Teachers Union.

Q: So this was late '60s.

A: Yeah, and she was one of the leaders there. And in fact, I had the pleasure of nominating her on the board, not that a lot of other people could, but I asked if I could, to become president after Al died. And then Ed was president when they were both sick, and I have to say, leaving the council and, I mean, just not being able to be around with Ed -- me and Ed and Fondy went to dinner a lot. Ed's been my friend for 30 years, and he's coming here in December to the MEA-MFT, so I'll --

Q: You'll be able to go to dinner with him.

A: I'll miss my snowmobiling for that!

Q: Oh, yeah.

A: But then there were guys like Paul Cole and Herb Magidson. Herb Magidson is probably...I want to say Sandy and Al and Ed, but you know, Herb was on the board, he was just such a gentleman and so well read and so for the good of the order kind of guy, but I always felt most of the people were like that, if not all of them. I think sometimes New York gets a bum rap. It's like here: the University Teachers Union

anted up, didn't question, had to be for the good of the order. All my life, I've watched New Yorkers do stuff for the good of the order, and I think Herb epitomized that, just epitomized that. I miss him.

Q: Yeah, yeah. He was the last person I interviewed.

A: Oh, really?

Q: Yeah, did him in December.

A: Oh, to hell! Well, you should've brought him out here.

Q: I know!

A: You should've brought Herb out here and interviewed the two of us together!

Q: The stories I would've heard! So you guys started on NEA AFT merger issues.

A: Nationally?

Q: Nationally, yeah.

A: Well, I think we all hoped that negotiating the principles of unity would get us there, and -- like I'm finding it today that I don't think that... Who was the president? I used to have his picture up here.

Q: Chase? Bob Chase? Are you talking about the NEA president?

A: No, before him. Now, Chase wanted merger, but I think he had to go out and shake some people and say, "Damn it, this was good. This is what we've been doing all our lives for." And he wanted it, but that's where, in my mind, it broke down.

Q: He didn't go out and shake the tree?

A: Yeah. I mean, I think he wanted it himself, he knew those guys from New Jersey and Illinois --

Q: Michigan.

A: -- and coming from Butte -- and Michigan -- you know, "yous guys" is a universal term that means men and women, so I'm not leaving women out when I say "yous guys."

Q: Right. You guys got over the AFL-CIO issue, the affirmative action issue, the governance; what was missing? Is it the same that the NEA still has, those states still have problems?

A: They just didn't want it. Some of them had problems with the AFL-CIO. I think in New Jersey they still have problems with the AFL and the CIO merger, much less...

Q: They still hate Shanker! And they keep bringing that up!

A: But they would've been like where I started out. They had their collective bargaining agreement, didn't give a fat

rat's ass about the rest of the world. That's the way I'd say New Jersey and the roof came in on us in Butte.

Minerals went to shit and the whole state went in the crapper economically, and didn't a lot of that happen in New Jersey? So you should be looking for new allies and new ways to do business, and... But even AFT, I think, had three state federations in New Jersey at one time.

Q: They had a higher ed, they had a regular K --

A: And they had healthcare.

Q: And healthcare, still have the healthcare.

A: So they still have three --

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: I would say that... I don't want to say that the staff wasn't loyal, but when the AFT, they sat around our council table and heard the people who maybe didn't like merger but who voted for it and why we should do it, and then, I think, when they were sent out to work with NEA people they had their own little fights and their own little domains and their own little hot shot kind of things. I think that hurt -- I don't think that caused the vote to be any different, but I think it hurt building relations after the NEA vote failed, that they were still, you know... Obviously we're proud, we think, we did, and we fell into a

lot of it, but I think we did a lot of it right. I mean, why would you have two COPE-committees? Or better yet, why, if we were both endorsing President A, why didn't we just both endorse President A, and this was an NEA AFT endorsement? But instead we had political action -- and maybe I shouldn't be picking on political action as the example, but I'm using it as an example. We had our political action people out doing their thing, theirs out doing theirs, and competing with each other to help the one candidate that we wanted. Technically in the senatorial race why not have had AFT in one state and NEA in the other state if we trusted each other? See, now I've had an opportunity to watch how that works in reverse with this damn public employee association here. That's what they did. I mean, we have a merged local, a couple merged locals with this public employee association, partially to hold them in bay, and this was before the merger. There was one local of 250 people. Well, we gave them the dues from the 200, they gave us the dues from the 50 or the partial, but this was to unite us. Well, instead of sending out an AFT person to negotiate or an MFT person -- or we call it MFSE -- instead of sending out an MFT person to negotiate the contract, they would send out an MPEA person to watch the MFT person. I mean, and quite frankly,

we were too busy with merger, but that's where being busy with merger, I think we let the staff get into a lot of bad habits. Real bad habits, and they blackmailed us -- and I don't say they blackmailed us to a person, but individuals blackmailed us in terms of just minor resistance, things when we should've been (claps) really moving out. So where we started out with 16,000 members, we had a drop in membership, and I think we're back up to 16,000. By all is right, we should have 20,000 members. And because we both were on the move -- they were negotiating union security clauses in locals that didn't have union security, we were organizing new members -- if we could've both kept up the same pace we were before the merger we would've had another, in a state like Montana, 3 or 4,000 members would be a lot, and if you divide that by 30 staff people, how many a staff person is that? It's criminal. It's criminal. Now, on the internet, I say to all union people -- of course, now I have a good base, and I'm older... but having to have swam uphill all my life, maybe I'm a little looser, but I'll tell you this: Anybody who isn't organizing and bringing in new tangible members that you can see the color of their eyes every day should be backing up for their paycheck. It's on the internet. It's on our web page.

Q: Do or die.

A: Yeah.

Q: And doing is organizing in union.

A: And the same applies to political action, and it's really easy to do. "I mean, you went to a meeting in Missoula last night?" " yeah, good meeting, good meeting." "Who was there?" "Oh, I guess there was about 20 people." "Names?" Pretty soon you get two names. Fucking liars! I don't think they should be working for unions.

Q: They're sitting at the bar or sleeping they didn't go to the meeting, or if they went to the meeting they didn't get names. They sat in the back.

A: And the thing is, if you spent more time at that you'd have the same union members. Most grievances aren't grievances, they're somebody being treated unfairly. Well, get your butt off and go down and get the superintendent or the department head or whoever, so that you're embarrassed, both of you are embarrassed to have a grievance because you know each other well enough. Instead, we have these long-distance fights, and we got too many people in too many unions, and ours is loaded with it who are just out for the fight.

Q: That's what some personalities are. They only see it as a fight.

A: They shouldn't be working for a union. And a lot of people take union -- I mean, you hear them talking. "You know, I'm going to retire, I'd like to get a job with the union."

Q: (laughter) That just hurts you, doesn't it?

A: Kills me.

Q: You're mentioning doing dual work on endorsing one person in NEA-AFT.

A: OK, back on the national level.

Q: Last one on the national level.

A: Hmm?

Q: This is the last question on national level, then we'll go more into you. But I'm always curious is what NEA/AFT partnership supposedly doing? Are they exploring other locals or state feds to merge, or aren't they supposed to be working together on different education initiatives? Will they go into politics together?

A: I... (knock on door) Yeah?

F: Fran is on line two.

Interview stops.

A: OK. I don't know what to say right now, 'cause I haven't been around. I'll sure ask Ed what he thinks. I haven't heard anything out of Eric, you know, in terms of any new merger talks. I think everybody's hoping that Dennis Van Roekel will have a better attitude, or does have a better attitude, and does see the advantage, but I don't think in the last couple of years that there's been near the, you know, push in smaller locals or in smaller states or smaller locals or... I don't know. I mean, if California would've worked at it, that would've been a prestigious thing. I don't think they cared.

Q: No, they're fine with their own worlds.

A: Yeah, just fine with where they're at.

Q: Yeah, they are.

A: I don't understand that in terms of politics, because we probably here in the AFL-CIO raised more money the last year with the help of all the nationals, and especially with the national AFL-CIO, and we got Schweitzer elected, but all of that is just an argument for not duplicating. There's just so much duplicating that goes on there, just so much, and so much thinking that if somebody drags over \$500 or something to a senator or a congressman that

they're ingratiating themselves. Figure out what your real issue is and then send it all over bundled, and that's what we want out of that. If it's a railroad issue or a mine issue, or an education issue we're all in it together.

Q: Let's backtrack. You're Executive Director, sole employee of MFT, in '71, '72, '73. Then you decided to run for Vice President of AFT? Are you insane? (laughter)

A: Well, I knew that there was a vice president for this region that had opened up... I don't know, maybe I was insane! (laughter) But then again, the AFT was like a family, and so I just presumed I wanted to get to know more, and maybe I saw that was a way to do it.

Q: Youngest member of the council.

A: Was I?

Q: Yeah. Maybe Sandra Irons was about your age?

A: No, she's older than me.

Q: You had to be in your early thirties.

A: I was.

Q: So that's your first experience really sitting at the council -- here's everybody, and here's this young guy with hair.

A: Yeah, long hair! Did you see it?

Q: Yeah! And that was, '74 was the change.

A: Hmm?

Q: '74 was a huge change for AFT. Shanker gets elected.

A: Yeah. It was in Florida. Now, I'd been to a couple conventions before, and I know there was politics with Selden. Selden had been here. I could tell you some Selden stories.

Q: Selden came here to visit you guys?

A: Yeah.

Q: Really?

A: He was pretty good like that.

Q: He did travel. He liked to see everybody.

A: And John Schmidt probably was the one who got me into organizing, and... Did you know him?

Q: I never knew John Schmidt, no.

A: Well, he pretty much says, "Oh, yeah, we can do this." I mean, I can't remember exactly how we can do it, but like we need an organizer. I remember one time we were at a workshop somewhere and he needed a partner to play tennis, and I said, "I've never played tennis." He says, "Oh, that doesn't matter, we'll be fine."

Q: (laughter) That's a good attitude!

A: I remember Sally from that day down there in Florida. Bob Porter I knew. I remember going to see Shanker, and he was in his swimsuit and I was in my leisure suit.

Q: In Florida.

A: In Florida, and so Shanker says, "Well, yeah, I've heard you've done some pretty good stuff out in Montana," he says, "but you know we got these regional things." He says, "We got racial, ethnic, men, women," and I think even back then we had if not higher ed but public employee, stuff like that, and later on I became the Public Employee Vice President.

Q: Yeah, I want to talk to you about that later.

A: I said to Shanker -- you know how stuff rolls off your tongue and then you say, oh, that's one you should never say, so when he's telling me all this, all this stuff we had to take into consideration on vice presidents, I said, "Well, I'd be the only cowboy. And I remember (laughter) sweating, and he looked up at me, he says, "These are the things we consider." He says, "I didn't say I bought 'em." And he says, "Last I looked," he says, "cowboys aren't a recognized minority in this country."

Q: (laughter) But that's Shanker, yeah!

A: So I wore cowboy boots the first two years. (laughter)

Q: Good for you! What were the first couple years on council like?

A: Well, McElroy would've been one of the first people I met - - I can remember that -- and I always used to kind of watch what he was doing.

Q: Did you kind of just watch the first year, see what was...?

A: Oh, yeah, and watched -- there was a guy by the name of Manley in my early years from Illinois I became buddies with. We hung out a lot together. But then like Phil Kugler and I have been friends since almost day one. But Schmidt would've still been on the board when I started, but then somewhere along there Steve Porter got hired, and he started coming to Montana, and so as I got to be friends with him, I got to be better friends with his Dad. So those were my early days. I can remember Carl Magel and Bill Simon and 'million and more in '84'.

Q: Yep, that's Magel.

A: He was out here. I remember he came to... You know, Shanker was to Montana half a dozen times. He came out once during the merger, and I got to ride to Missoula with him, and I think he had his cancer back then, 'cause he had some lung problems, but those were great visits. But in terms of hanging out after council meetings and that, but

like if he ever come out here or somewhere like that, I mean --

Q: Family.

A: Huh?

Q: Family.

A: Yeah.

Q: Family visiting.

A: And one time (laughter) we were having a big dinner and he was here. Shanker must have been here six or eight times, because the first time -- we used to have big dinners way back in the beginning, and I remember him in Missoula before I knew him, but we were at this one meeting or luncheon or something, so we had Montana labor leaders, and so we put this one guy who was supposed to be a big shot next to Shanker, and I was sitting on the other side, and I could just see Shanker -- he was boring the shit out of Shanker, (laughter) and Shanker turned around to me and kind of turned away from him, and he says, "Jim," he says, "have you ever been to Israel?" And I says, "No." He says, "Well, you gotta go to Israel." So he starts telling me this, and so really I got a trip to Israel because this guy was just such a big asshole! (laughter) He says, "You've got to go to Israel," and he starts telling me, but

I didn't get to go on that time because something happened, and that would've been probably -- I wouldn't say it was any better than the trip I ultimately went on. But the trip I went on, I went with Ted Kirsch, and it wasn't the same thing. I got to take my daughter, and that's probably one of the most... I mean, one reason why I raise that is because I took my kids a lot with me. I was divorced pretty young, and every one of 'em went different places with me, and this trip to Israel, my youngest daughter was about 20, 21 maybe, she wasn't easily -- to go that far, I was worried. And she loved every, every minute of it.

Q: I bet.

A: And she kept a journal, and she still talks about it. But I'm going to get off the subject there because I have a weird sense of humor. We're up on the Golan Heights, and this young guy who'd been picked up along the way on a bus -- he was dressed in a soldier uniform and had a weapon, and he gets on the bus, but he was more of a moderator on the bus, but then when we got back up onto Golan Heights he was more in his military guard.

Q: Sure.

A: So they got us in this -- oh, I don't know how to explain it; it wasn't a very fancy place, but anyway it's got all

the maps and everything, and they were explaining this about the war and that, and all the different things that were going on. This guy says, "Well, how come the Syrians stopped when they were coming down the Golan Heights?" And this kid never looked up or never made eye contact with anybody when he said this, but I caught it. I don't know if half the people in the group caught it. He says, "Well, it was five o'clock." (laughter)

Q: That's a pretty good line!

A: That was one of the best lines I ever heard in my whole life!

Q: That's a great line! (laughter)

A: Five o'clock! So anyway...

Q: Back to council... AFT's kind of shifting from --

A: Hmm?

Q: AFT's kind of shifting more into the education issues in the '70s, but all of a sudden AFT decides that they want to organize heavily in nursing and public employees. They already had some public employees floating around, but what was the draw to get not only nurses, but public employees, which is in AFSCME kind of terrain?

A: Well, I think Chuck Richards was the organizing director then, and I think Chuck saw that. But Shanker, again. I think Shanker thought -- I think Shanker saw the professional relationship and I just think that the healthcare part, I just think he thought that was a natural, and I think it was. I just don't know that we had organizers that... I mean, it was tough, but you can't tell me that with people like Ann Twomey that we couldn't organize in more places. I know it's hard but we've had healthcare here and we've organized, and I notice our staff -- but in MFT we organize them.

Q: How did -- did anybody on council not want to go up to nurses?

A: Same people, probably. Nobody really -- I can't remember any big, big resistance to it. I mean, I would think guys like Fondy and them guys, they always were adventurous, and the only guy I can really remember who stands out was Dal Lawrence, and I think somebody from that part of the country who really -- I'm not sure Adam Urbanski is big on some of that stuff, but I could be wrong about that. But Dal Lawrence and a few more, and I just can't remember -- I'm not sure they were for the merger with NEA. But most of the council was for all that. None of these votes were

50-49. I mean, they were, I'd say, 80-94 on all of this stuff, 80-94.

Q: Yeah. That's definitely -- I mean, once argued out, AFT council, you debate everything out, at the end of the day you pretty much all agree on everything, 'cause you had a lively debate.

A: But there was always the classified thing there, that there were a lot of classifieds, so I think that was building up alongside of... And then there was a Higher Ed thing, and then --

Q: Classifieds just took off, too.

A: Yeah.

Q: It really took off, 'cause it was a natural.

A: And then so did public employee, to a degree. I think we took the leadership with those affiliations, and they just didn't seem like they could organize. But I don't think that's what they were missing. I don't think they had political connections in their state.

Q: Public employees?

A: The people we took in.

Q: Oh, yeah.

- A: But there, again, you have to negotiate -- to do it successfully, you're virtually negotiating for every last state employee, and so once we had a few state employees I figured out that we had to get more or somebody else does our bidding. Plus, we wanted to grow. I mean...
- Q: Is that why you were tapped in to be in charge of the PCC, public employees part?
- A: Later on, yeah, later on, well first I had a geographical area. Then I had a geographical area and public employees. No, I still had a geographical area even right at the end, most of these Rocky Mountain states and Alaska.
- Q: Yeah. Did you see those public employees as the area to organize and growth?
- A: Oh, yeah. I don't know what Steve Porter and them would say now. A lot of other unions have gone after them. In the South they don't have collective bargaining laws. See, the one thing about where you had the law, you had... You either have to have a lot of political clout or the law, and if you got both -- and we've had both. But now, I think we made a lot of that. I figured that out and when Roscoe was governor, he was grateful to be able to cut a deal, because otherwise he had to do hundreds of them, so he thought that...he believed that we were -- he wanted to be

right with his raises because he told me that we were making his life easier. Now, the people that would come after him have it inherent. This is a matter of fact. And plus, like in the case of Schweitzer, there was money. And also, when the Board of Regions sleeps, they only get the money of state employees, so in order to properly represent faculty we had to have, or in my mind we had to have a big say as to how state bargaining went. We negotiated a five-year agreement for 35% with the faculty. That was one of the highlights of my career, without a doubt.

Q: That's huge.

A: That was huge. Five years. Now...

END OF AUDIO FILE

[2 JmcGarvey3.mp3]

A: Possibly not everybody got the 35%, but all full faculty and all associate and, some of the poor adjuncts might have not done, but they didn't carry that out into the other units, the regions. People got lazy. In fact, I'm looking to go back to war with them this year. In fact, that's the letter I was -- I'll show the letter that I was talking to her about.

Q: You're ready for another fight.

A: Because they're not bargaining.

- Q: They're just not doing, paying attention to it? They're ignoring it?
- A: Virtually, and they're letting it all -- and then you've got to bargain after the fact. In this state you can have a say in bargaining if you bargain before the legislature, and that's where I figured it out!
- Q: When AFT started really shifting into education reform, how did that help you with Montana? I mean, you're already organizing. You have a great legislative laws set up for you, so they're organizing this labor state technically. Did it --
- A: By then we're at the merger, and --
- Q: I'm talking about the early '80s, mid '80s when Shanker gave his speech for professionalism, A Nation At Risk comes out, everybody says Johnny can't read.
- A: It helped us more from a business -- and by the way, he was out here; we created a group called the Montanans for a Positive Future, and he came and spoke to the Chamber of Commerce, and --
- Q: Was that a mix of legislators and businessmen?
- A: Legislators, business people... Now, I guess I'd have to say from my vantage point it was more economic development, and more using Shanker that we're not afraid to change with

the times, and come in here Shanker, you'll see that... And when we created this Montanans for a Positive Future, again. The faculty probably benefited more out of that than the public schools, but now this was before the merger, and we invited Eric to be part of that and when we had some of our efforts around Rally, Montana, that's when we were trying to build public employees, we invited Eric to be part of that, but these are just a little bit before the merger.

Q: These are the steps of building education reform, changing things on a professional level.

A: But I don't think I personally was heavy into education reform, like Shanker was doing it in the East. It was more that we should coalesce with business and that the schools should help what business wants, and that probably helps me, what I'm doing right now in terms of trying to get the building trades and the colleges of technology and everybody to move in the same direction on economic development, and how we should train for the needs of the future and make sure these are union jobs at the same time. This is a really big deal here right now with Schweitzer as governor and people who want to do it, and we got a bonehead of a Commissioner of Higher Education, but we got,

like at the University of Montana a good President and other people there that understand it, so I hold up high hopes. So probably things like that that I had interaction with over the years, all of that added up and helps me now more than I can explain or articulate.

Q: You were building up these coalitions. You were building up working across not only the aisle but with business, and to developmentally for the schools but also vocational education.

A: And so I'm learning all that from Shanker in the meetings, but from McElroy with our friendship.

Q: So what developed out of these meetings and something? Is it our stronger vocational ed in Montana, a retraining?

A: No, we're in the process of doing that now. I think they're a bit aimless right now, or a bit... They need... Actually, they need more union involvement in terms of work, and they need more... Everybody's dream is to bring in a new industry. Well, we got industries that would probably spend -- like say Stone Container, they make paper; they have super highly technical people that they can't replace. Now, they're not -- and they're worried they're going to lose wood, because -- but they can use this burnt wood and change their process a little bit and

use this burnt wood. OK, so that's a political thing that we have to show up and help from the union point of view, but we need to figure out a way to use the colleges of technology or to get training programs to help them train these highly technical people so that they can get them. So it's not a question of building a new industry, as they're liable to put a lot of money into the current industry, because they can make money, but they need training for these people, and they'll be union people.

Q: Exactly. That's the other tail end of it. Also in the '80s -- we're still in the '80s here --

A: Huh?

Q: We're still in the '80s here, for me. You became President of MFT when? '86?

A: (pause) Let's see if I got that somewhere. I don't know.

Q: OK. (break in audio) OK. Elected MFT President in '86. What was your first -- what did you see needed to be changed for MFT to grow?

A: Well, I don't know there was any abrupt changes there. I mean, as the Executive Secretary or Executive Director. Well, I told you I didn't chair meetings, I had a lot of input into direction, obviously we're still organizing.

We're probably moving heavily into public employees then. That would've been when we were -- and that was probably when we were doing a lot of raiding.

Q: You were raiding the independent in AFSCME? Was AFSCME here?

A: No, no, we wouldn't have been raiding AFSCME, other than AFSCME at the time was trying to help the independent, so we would've been at odds with them then, but then that's when they would try to negotiate a deal with the legislature, and so, it was pretty open warfare that... I mean, we were all coming to the legislature with a different bill for state employee pay. It was nasty.

Q: That's nasty. That is just nasty.

A: Nasty! And quite frankly, it would've been during that period of time that we would've formed a no-raid agreement with the Montana Public Employees Association, sometime in the '80s, because I would say by the time we went to merger that agreement was around for 15 years, easy. Easy. Do you have that?

Q: The merger agreement?

A: No, the MPEA agreement, the no-raid agreement with MPEA.

Q: No.

A: And it's not in any of those files I left you there?

Q: No, I didn't see it.

A: OK. I should get you that.

END OF AUDIO FILE

[1 JmcGarvey4.mp3]

Q: So I think we left off kind of in the middle of your presidency with MFT, facing merger, MPA, EA agreement. It still seems like they were still like backstabbing you all the way.

A: Well, I think we managed to keep everything we did focused on organizing, that everything we did we made it to organizing, and I think that has to do with my AFT upbringing that just everything you do should in some way relate to growing the union, and I think I had a lot of friends who felt that way in MFT. I don't think after the early years of the BTU when they didn't want to spend any money on organizing and resisted this in organizing, and we had a very low budget and a very hard time after that, you know, I think our budget was always in the black, and we were able to buy a building along the way, build our membership from 500 to 5,500.

Q: And this is mostly public employees and higher ed?

A: No, no.

Q: Still K?

A: Lots of K-12.

Q: Who was your base? Was it everywhere?

A: Everywhere. Actually, it was pretty well -- as time went on, it started out mostly K-12 but as time went on it probably turned out to be more public employees than there were K-12 by the time we got to the merger, so a lot of the '80s was spent both on trying to affiliate the Montana Public Employees association. We even approached the Montana Nurses Association.

Q: Really? How'd that go?

A: No good. (laughter) I mean, right now they're on the verge of extinction, and they're going to have to figure something out, but they were, again -- it just breaks your heart to see how some of these people got government jobs and hung around campaigns, never did anything for their union, never really offered... I think if you check the money that was donated to politicians you wouldn't find their names there, but they survived, and they've been frauds, impersonators as far as unions go.

Q: Have you ever had the nurses come to you and say "We want to get out of here"?

A: No. We invited them, they wouldn't come. I could show you reams of letters. Now, I'm hoping the governor sees this importance of unity; since I've become the Executive Secretary we've grown about 4,000 members in terms of people affiliated with AFL-CIO, maybe closer to five. So when MEA MFT first come in we had over half, but now because we got other unions back it's maybe down to 45%. I think all the unions are feeling the need to organize, it's just how they do it, and I see a lot of opportunity with restoration and reclamation. The governor's got ideas on turning coal to diesel. That's a little bit longer, but with all these fires if we could recover -- and the beetles are eating our forests alive. And if we could maintain the industries we have now and get in the training, I see a lot of opportunity in the next few years for union growth in all areas. Now, some of it can come with the help of help in industries, but some of it has to come from people asking people to join. We've gone back to, or MEA has gone back to MSU and is trying to organize down there right now. I just feel that if everybody who was drawing a union wage got up in the morning and says "How do I grow the union one more person today?", we're 5,000 richer within a couple years. That could be what the unions develop, although we've brought most of the unions who weren't affiliated

back, you know. We've got the relationship with postal unions that we never had before. They're in a tester senatorial race. We had a lot of good cooperation. But our worst nightmare in the merger was that they would think we were too big and pushing our weight around, and we really worked hard not to do that, and by waiting it was all levied on us; we had to get rid of the leadership that was in there. I mean, they were building the AFL-CIO into a company union.

Q: Was that Driscoll?

A: Mm-hmm. (lots of static) Between the clubhouse and the company union concept, they were diluting everything we worked all our lives for. A lot of the people -- and I had kept Driscoll alive for a long time, because, like I say, his predecessors were more wobbly types and had no idea of the school funding, and they talked a good game, but they never... They never helped us get money to the schools or higher education. If anything, they caused divisions. So it's been kind of a rollercoaster in terms of how we fit in the labor movement, but I think we're getting pretty good right now.

Q: So you brought back most of the unions that kind of walked out or except for teamster.

A: Except for teamsters, but they were never really in.

Q: Teamsters were never really in, but also they're the ones that usually you would feel threatened about everybody else, because they're used to being the big boys.

A: Mm-hmm, and they have no political action, you know, I could do this with any union. I could do it with art, like I told you earlier, you know, what went on. Big meeting, how was the turnout? Oh, good! How many? Oh, six or eight, you know, it's going downhill all the time. People are just, they're not honest with themselves. When you lie your way out of a situation like that once, that's one thing, but you gotta look in the mirror and say --

Q: Yeah, what am I doing?

A: What am I doing?

Q: Am I just grabbing a paycheck, or I'm actually trying to help?

A: You're just grabbing a paycheck. And then a lot of the hotel and restaurant workers, they organized with a lot of arrogance and meanness, and they didn't, they couldn't back it up.

Q: What happened with the hotel?

A: Huh?

Q: Is hotel and restaurant still here, or...?

A: They're here, but they're pretty well wiped out.

Q: So...

A: Let's see, we're... (break in audio) ...minimum wage drive and an elected tester, and I think this time we can get a majority in the House and the Senate. We'll have a governor, all that want to help us, so we just... And we're really right --

Q: Thank you very much.

F: You're welcome! Anything else right now guys?

Q: I think we're good!

A: No, this will do it!

F: All right, you enjoy then.

A: You know, in terms of trying to find out how the colleges of technology and apprenticeship programs -- I mean, I just find out the other day that Driscoll turned down \$150,000 that could have been in an apprenticeship program. Now each trade has their own thoughts about how they should do their apprenticeship programs, which is good, but what he did is he turned it back for all the apprenticeships, so maybe one apprenticeship didn't want this money, but he

turned it back for all of them. And so... But this stuff's all started.

Q: Yeah. Why all of them?

A: Hmm?

Q: Why all of them?

A: Well, I think he sold us out.

Q: There you go!

A: By the way, I'm not telling you anything I haven't told him to his face. I mean, that's one thing I'm not afraid to do.

Q: (laughter) I kind of gathered that! What was the Political Action Committee like in MFT?

A: We had a pretty good... We had people pretty well involved. We got involved around the state. I don't think we led as much as we participated.

Q: Well, that's half the battle there.

A: And I'd say that's what MEA-MFT is doing, too, but between the AFL-CIO and MEA-MFT we positioned ourselves to where we can lead.

Q: Do you think this is the future of state AFL-CIOs, where the public employee has a larger voice? Outside of like

the industrial belt, but like in New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada.

A: I mean, we have all the boys we want here. I mean, AFSCME -- I hate to say this -- they're just sleeping through it.

Q: But our teachers -- is this the powerhouse in the states? Even the states without unions --

A: Hmm?

Q: Even the states without real collective bargaining -- like Alabama comes to mind; they're the largest force, so the Alabama Education Association is the largest force there.

A: Well, the bottom line -- and I think Ed McElroy would say this the best of anybody -- the bottom line is if we don't figure out a way to help these private unions there'll be no public employee unions, because if they don't think enough of themselves right now to better their lot in life, when they lose it they're not going to want to be paying insurance for us or paying for the schools.

Q: It's the reversal from 1960.

A: Mm-hmm.

F: How's the food tasting?

Q: Excellent.

F: Good.

A: Good! Yeah.

Q: They helped us, 'cause they knew if they didn't help us they'd be wiped out soon.

A: And probably AFT understands that better than anybody.

Q: They do, and they're pushing it hard.

A: Yeah, I mean, appreciates it, talks about it. You know, I think some of these unions think that just 'cause we're teachers that we should be lining kids up every day and, teaching them that unions are the way to go, but I think teachers fall in the same category as electricians. They all have to be trained to promote labor history. It's not like just 'cause somebody was trained to be a teacher that they're an authority in labor history.

Q: So do you see also that AFT is going to shift into a new collective bargaining arena, away from -- well, it used to be craft, then industrial model. Is there a new shift of what AFT's going to be doing?

A: AFT?

Q: AFT. Do we have a new model of collective bargaining, organizing?

A: Well, we gotta get back to our organizing, I think, for various and sundry reasons, and probably partially because

with all the merger talks, we haven't been doing as much organizing. And boy, but I don't know in terms of, you know, the model. (pause)

Q: So you think AFT did stop organizing for a while.

A: Hmm?

Q: AFT did stop organizing? The state feds stopped organizing?

A: Well, I don't think they said "We're not going to organize," but I think when we had all these no-raid agreements, that produced less organization.

Q: Sure. They were so used to raiding each other that they forgot how to organized the unorganized, so it took them a while to catch up with... where AFSCME jumped on the homecare workers.

A: Hmm?

Q: AFSCME jumped on the homecare workers and childcare workers. We were kind of like a couple steps behind?

A: You know, I couldn't say on that. I wasn't... I don't know what to say about that.

Q: OK.

A: I think it's more of -- I think we've bent over backwards and passed up organizing opportunities to try to appease

the NEA, and there was nothing, we got nothing in return for it.

Q: That's true. They gained. What did the AFT get in return?

A: Nothing. Now, if we can elect a Congress that maybe would go with labor law reform and where we could organize easier some of the Southern states, that would be a big thing.

Q: That'd be huge.

A: And I don't know.

Q: Is there any chance for labor law reform?

A: I hope in the next Congress. I feel like... I don't know if I got a better seat to see what's going on because my role with AFL-CIO, but it seems to me like we've got a lot of programs and a lot of -- I really like Karen Ackerman, and I mean, Sweeny as president, what I see of him, I see things happening. One of the things that unions have to do: one is post that you're in and you're not in and out, and you're pissed off at a central labor council or a state labor council. They take an action, you don't go home. I think I see that. AFT and AFSCME have always done that, you know, (inaudible) on all their members, and so there's got to be more of that and at election time I think international unions have to say "We're supporting Candidate A." I mean, that's the majority rule. The

majority ruled in the state, at the national that we're supporting, [inaudible] or whoever. We run into problems on worksites where people were saying "Bullshit! The international isn't telling us what to do!" So we shouldn't have had to deal with that. Now, those were minorities, but we shouldn't have had to deal with that. They should've -- that all should have been laid out there, that we're working with the Montana AFL-CIO or whatever, AFL-CIO, and they're going to be coming around to help us. But I can feel the progress we're making on that from ourselves, just by the people I'm seeing that are emerging.

Q: Younger members, or...?

A: Well, some of them, but just members in general.

Q: What seems to be the shift, the change? Is this...?

A: They're being asked.

Q: That's the number one thing! (laughter) Everybody's being asked.

A: Mm-hmm, the building trade seemed like they're so worried that -- they're not worried that labors are going to, or that operators worry the laborers wouldn't go out and get 100 new members; they're worried about they might get a half a member on half a day out of their work so they're so busy watching each other when they both could be growing in

leaps and bounds somewhere else. I mean now those are things that, as much as I've had experience in the labor method, I've seen more of the last few years, but even before I could never understand it. I think industrial unions have a better appreciation of their employers, where building trades, some of them, there's an asshole here in town; I mean, he has a good day when he puts somebody out of business. No union members involved, just making it tough on somebody.

Q: What's the point?

A: No point. But he's going to meet me one of these days when I have the right hand, when I have the right audience.

Q: Then you'll see something!

Q: So you've been with the AFT for, Oh, a long time, how many years?

A: Well, since '71 staff, and then I was active in my local for five years prior to that.

Q: It's changed a lot.

A: Hmm?

Q: It has changed a lot!

A: Oh, yeah!

Q: Where do you think it's heading now?

A: Well, I gotta strain to go back to my Executive Council days. The thing that I see about AFT that I don't see in other unions, it's not afraid of change. When Shanker was tackling, education issues and not afraid to spend money to help with organizing or building any kind of a state federation, any kind of a front, so... there might be change a little bit because of times, but I think we're there on that.

Q: You think they lost their mission or their voice?

A: AFT?

Q: Yeah.

A: No. Why would you ask that?

Q: Just a general question.

A: Hmm?

Q: Just a general question.

A: Well, I don't think Louise is happy with the merger, but...

Q: No, she wasn't.

A: I think there's got to be some changes in how we do organizing. My feeling is 90% of your day should be organizing, and if you're organizing properly -- and you could even include political action in that -- and if you do all these other things will basically take care of

themselves. But most go out and pick a problem and go deal with it, so they never get around to organizing, and I can be critical here in Montana. There's no reason since the merger why MEA-MFT couldn't have picked up all the rest of the state employees. They just... This staff didn't want to do it.

Q: Because it's five o'clock!

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: That's a good line! I'm going to keep using that!

A: Five o'clock. (pause) I'd rather be having a battle or a kind of de-cert somebody else, but I think MEA-MFT needs one because in some ways organizing treated like a war, nobody's worried about what's going on with the war because they have no day to day ownership in it. All my early years, if we lost a unit we were going to be hurt. We were going to be hurt. Our feelings were going to be hurt. We were going to be ridiculed, all that kind of stuff, but we were also going to be out money that we needed to keep going. I don't think that most union reps make that connection.

Q: They don't remember the lean years.

A: Well, they don't remember the lean years because they weren't around during the lean years.

Q: Right, so they don't understand that, especially with MEA-MFT. There's none of that threat.

A: Hmm?

Q: There's no threat there, it's so large.

A: No! And if the threat comes, is my fear is what would suffer is organizing. The MFT board never ever had the discussion of whether Joe Blow would be out-servicing me or not. They had for granted that they would be servicing, and they were needed, but I noticed in the MEA-MFT a lot of these leaders -- not Eric, not me, but a lot of these local leaders were worried whether this time spent organizing would be taken away from their local service needs, and I don't think they dreamed that up. I think it was taught to them by some of the old Uniserv people, so basically what they were doing is they started on in... They said these guys are going to ruin the union because all they care about is organizing. I heard that in MFT, and it was "All Jim cares about it organizing." I probably settled more grievances than... And I mean, I took some grievances away from attorneys. What the hell? You don't need a court case on this! What's the relief? Put the relief there tomorrow and we won. I wanted a year and a half from now,

so we got a big fancy record somewhere, put it in our pocket.

Q: And they usually do.

A: We got pretty good attorneys that way, but it's hard in a big organization like MEA-MFT to watch these people as they move down. I was a lousy manager. That was my, you know... I'd just get pissed off and say, "Well, we're going to do it this way." Shit, staff union probably filed more grievances than I've seen in my whole life!

Q: Yeah. That's because you were trying to organize.

A: To just file a grievance against who you hired or who you didn't hire. But now that's on a negative. I mean, overall I think we're... The merger was a good thing.

Q: If I were a teacher and I came up to you, what's the merger done for me?

A: Well, you could go through any of those things that, we showed that we did on the webpage and everything, but I think one of the things that was liked the most by the average teacher that's in professionalism is -- what do you call our AFT...? Oh, come on... The training.

Q: ER&D?

A: ER&D. They love it! They love it.

Q: They're getting that professional development, they're getting that professional world, they're learning more.

A: They love it, and they brag about it, and they love to go to the meetings, and I say that we've created a big network. Eric Burke was the staff person in charge of that, and as near as I can tell we've developed one hell of a network. You know, that's being done for credits and for ER&D is used for the two days before school, and then I would imagine there'll be a big ER&D thing during the educators conference next week, but those are obvious things, but there's stuff going on all the time, and they're going out into other -- like people from Great Falls are going out into smaller communities and teaching, and they like it. They like what they get, and the ones doing it like it. So that's a big deal. Have we improved collective bargaining in the last few years? I don't think we've improved collective bargaining, but the last few years we've got the raises up after a big pay-off scandal. But I think it's in the area of stuff that the average teacher don't see where we've stopped these initiatives and budget battles.

Q: You're done? That's good, though.

A: Well, this second, not other than... I mean, I've had -- AFT's been my life, and it's been good, and --

F: Gentlemen, we still doing OK back here?

A: Yep.

F: OK, done here?

A: And I know I've met, some just super, super people, and they've certainly impacted my life in terms of friendship, but I've also met a lot of great people that I deal with on a daily basis, and getting down in the trenches, they're there and they're still there. I don't think that's left us. I think we're having a tougher time finding leadership. I don't know why, but I think there's a lot of people that give what they can in different ways, and maybe that impacts the local. We've moved more to the state federation model, but I don't know that... (cell phone) Hey... (break in audio) ...unless you primed me or drew it out of me.

Q: But think of it, you've come a long -- from the mines to this! It's been a long ride, nice ride.

A: Back to the mines.

Q: And back into the mines! (laughter) Different kind of mines, just as dirty.

A: Mm-hmm, but you know, some of the... if we're going to have some economic growth here, some of it's going to have to be -- well, reclamation is cleaning up the mines and the messes they made, and we can get them back union jobs. That's what this guy Phil's talking about.

Q: Talking about how to do it and get union jobs in there?

A: Mm-hmm. I've been working on that for a couple years.

Q: It only makes sense.

A: I got a lot invested in it, a lot invested.

Q: Well, and people coming your way.

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: That's a great way to lead the state, too.

A: If they were all coming as fast as the governor, it'd be easy. He's moving way faster than the rest of 'em, but he's on the right page.

End - Jim McGarvey