ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

JOHN R. GABBARD

Interviewer: Greg Giebel
Date: February 7, 1973
Place: Washington, D.C.

INTRODUCTION

John Gabbard joined the Photoengravers' Union in 1954 when he was working as a mask-out artist and then as a permit man for Advertisers Engraving in Cincinnati, Ohio.

In 1960 there was a four-week strike at Advertisers Engraving. As a result of his involvement in that strike, Gabbard was taken in as a journeyman, became more active in union affairs, and finally ran for the executive board and won in 1963.

In this interview Gabbard describes in detail the various job classifications in his industry--routing, etching, printing, stripping, and other processes.

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN GABBARD

DATE: FEBRUARY 7, L973

INTERVIEWER: GREG GIEBEL

GABBARD: John Robert Gabbard, currently international vice president, Graphic Arts International Union, home office, Washington, D.C., 1900 L Street.

GIEBEL: Mr. Gabbard, I want to ask, to go way back, in your case it's not that far, when did you first make contact with the labor movement?

GABBARD: I'm not sure I understand your question. You mean when did I become affiliated or what was my earliest recollection of organized labor?

GIEBEL: I think that's the best way. Let's just go as far back as we can and then come up to where you became affiliated.

GABBARD: Okay. I'd really have to do some mental math to figure out how old I was, but my father was a member of the Sheetmetal Workers Union; I guess before that he was a member of the Coal Miners' Union down in the hills of Kentucky. My mother was a member of, and I can't remember which one it was, it's either the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union or the Amalgamated Clothing Workers; I'm not sure which. I suppose my earliest recollections, and I'm not quite sure whether it's my own recollection or just from hearing about it around the house, they had a strike at the plant, the dress factory that my mother was working in to supplement the family income. Supplement, hell, you know, she was half of the bread-winner. And I just kind of grew up with the knowledge that there were such things as unions and she was active as a chairlady. I think that was the term they used within the factory. She was continually, after we finally got a phone (this had to be around third grade stuff, you know, whatever the age is there) she was continually on the phone in the evening, playing father confessor or mother confessor or whatever to her little flock of girls down at the plant. She served on the negotiating committee.

I guess I was in high school, but I recall she made a trip to Washington as some sort of a delegate from the local union. My father was really kind of close-mouthed about unionism and affiliations. He wasn't even very outspoken about the lodge that he belonged to. He just kind of didn't talk to the kids. I

guess it's kind of old hillbilly tradition, I don't know. But I knew that he worked, but as far as really knowing he belonged to a union, I don't think I was really aware of that until I got in high school. Then it kind of got through that he was going to union meetings, that sort of thing.

And I suppose my next contact was when my high school buddies were getting jobs as stock boys in the local supermarkets, and it was a condition of employment that they join the Retail Clerks, or whatever it was. I'm not even sure what the name of the union was. My next awareness of unions, other that the garbage that you read in the newspapers about--well, no, that's not true, I had a brother, he was an over-the-road truck driver, and he had a friend who was active in the Teamsters' Union. He was kind of, I guess, a hatchet man, drove a Cadillac and had no visible means of support, had time to party a lot, and that sort of thing. Then I suppose my next awareness of unions as such was after I left high school, had an early marriage, and was still laboring under delusions of grandeur that I was going to become a successful commercial artist. I took a job in a photoengraving house. It was the only one I could find. They were looking for a trainee, which was a fancy way of saying they were looking for a mask-out artist. This is one of the preparatory steps that's still utilized in the trade today for separating copy, either articles or portions of articles from the background so that you have a white background, or separating a line, a portion of an illustration from a tone area. The process was done by means of opaque ink that was put on an acetate overlay. And that was my next exposure to the unions.

I became aware very quickly that the International Photoengravers' Union was a hard-nosed outfit that didn't put up with nobody messing around with their jurisdiction, no matter how innocent. They told you very quickly, this is where the line is and as long as you stay over there we won't say anything about it, but when you get in our area, you're in trouble.

Gabbard: What year was this?

GABBARD: This was 1954, August of '54.

GIEBEL: You were then training. . . ?

GABBARD: I was a young father that was working as a mask-out artist with hopes of becoming a commercial artist. I worked there for about a year, I guess, a little over a year. And at this time, at this point in time, (that would have been back about '55) there was a real demand for photoengravers. That was one of the things that I really liked about that union because, you know, you talk to somebody about the trade. What's a photoengraver? Just like you, you never heard of photoengravers, I don't suppose, until you got involved in this thing. I may be shortchanging you there. If I am, I apologize.

But I felt that this was a pretty exclusive group in a fair-sized city, Cincinnati. Out of 500,000 people there were only 120 or 130 photoengravers working at the trade at that time in Cincinnati. That gave it a degree of exclusivity which I grooved on somewhat.

So in '55, after the first year, they had a shortage of people. The union really was hard-nosed about granting apprentices, even though they couldn't fill the job. The apprentice ratio was ten to one and the employers were screaming for help. And there was all kinds of floaters in our trade at that time because there was such a demand for people.

You know, looking back I didn't think about it much at the time, but it seems to me it's understandable that you had a legion of drifters through the organization that kept their cards, always maintained their union membership, and they were just drifters, drift into town, get themselves a job, make a few hundred dollars, get enough money to travel some more. And most of them, you know, were tippers. I guess that's another one of the reasons I had an affinity for the craft. It was, and I say was in the proper sense that it's not quite true anymore, but there was a hell of a premium on artistic ability. You had to be an artist of some sort in order to really do the job because there was such a premium in ninety-five percent of the trade that required real coordination between hand and eye. You had to have a feel for line and color, the whole thing, so that made it a kind of natural for me.

Anyway, I was offered not an apprenticeship but a permit, which meant [that] we're not allowed to have an apprentice, the union can't supply a journeyman. Taft-Hartley says that we can go out and hire a person off the street so long as we pay him journeyman scale, which was a good deal.

GIEBEL: Was it an expanding market in 1955 in Cincinnati for photoengravers?

GABBARD: Well, I don't think so much it was an expanding market; I just think it was one of those deals where there was a turnover in people.

GIEBEL: Just not enough journeymen to go around?

GABBARD: Right, so I was offered this arrangement. There were about three of us right at that same time who came in. The other guy was an older guy. I guess he must have been twenty-eight, which was pretty old back then, I suppose, as far as I was concerned. I was about eighteen. The bit was that we were supposed to get journeyman's scale, and behind the hand it was, "I'll start you at this nice increase." Well, that was a hell of a lot better than the sixty or seventy dollars a week I was making as an artist, so I took it.

That was my start with the union, and I laugh about that or kid about it a lot because the union was really not happy with me at all. That was 1955, and this is 1973; less that twenty years later, now I'm sitting here in Washington as a vice president. And when I first came in contact with the group, it was this "get away"; they ignored me totally for nine months. I was working, wasn't paying dues. I was making a hell of a lot more money.

I failed to make my point. My point was that I had a wife and a baby at home, and I said well, I can get my card as a photoengraver and then if I want to be a drifter I can always get a job and I can go to night school for my art classes. And I did that for about a year and a half and dropped. It got to be too much of a drag.

GIEBEL: So what firm were you working for? What was your actual. . . ?

GABBARD: The company name was, and they're still in existence today, Advertisers' Engraving.

GIEBEL: And there were just the three of you, all permit. . . ?

GABBARD: Permit men, right. We didn't come in at the same time. I think a fellow by the name of Charles Kruger started. He was big. I guess he weighted about 240. He was a weight-lifting champ in Cincinnati, and that impressed me. I think I weighed 150 pounds then. I'd like to be back there. (laughter) But the other kid, Frankie Griffith, he was a down-home boy. He was working in the shipping department, and they put him on after. . . I forget. I forget the order. Maybe I did come on. No, he was on next, and then it was my turn. He lives in D.C. now. That was an interesting little bit. . . .

GIEBEL: So the union made no attempt to contact you directly during this period?

GABBARD: No. I used to read the minutes, you know, after I got an office. It's like going through the Unionist. You go through to see where your name is, that kind of thing. And it was funny, they spelled my name all different ways, but it was always, that permit man at the Advertisers. There was a guy that was corresponding secretary, and in the Photoengravers' Union at that time, well, in some locals it's still true today, the corresponding secretary was the guy with the axe. All the correspondence for the organization had to go through him. All of the job placements went through him. So while he didn't have the title, he was really the authoritarian figure within the organization. He could really kind of control things.

The guy's name was Edward Kapelhoff, and he was, surprisingly enough, an old Dutchman. He had a brother; I can't

remember his name. Fred, I think. His brother, Fred, had a daughter by the name of Doris Day, so that was a little bit of reflected glory, I guess. But he was really a. . . . kind of whiney voice, fat old guy, with little or no hair on top of his head, and he ruled that local with an iron hand. Anybody who got up at a meeting and tried to say anything that didn't quite meet with his approval or whatever didn't really stand much of a chance.

GIEBEL: Were there other unions in the firm then. Advertising?

GABBARD: No, it was a complete photoengraving shop. It was one of the larger ones. At one time they employed seventy photoengravers, ran two shifts. There was a guy by the name of Leonard Dalman that was general manager. He was really the guy that was aware of the Taft-Hartley law and what he could get away with and what he couldn't. He sort of supported the owner of the plant, Kenneth Scott, who was sort of a, when I got there, more a figurehead than anything else. He'd pretty well made his. And that's a regrettable thing. When I got into it it was. It had already peaked out by '55 and it was a gradual, and then (sound to indicate cut-off) drop in the level of letterpress engravings that were being made.

GIEBEL: So nine months later they found out about you in terms of making a movement to put you into some kind of classification, or you were saying they were aware of you.

GABBARD: They were aware of me. I showed up in the minutes every month. You know, I got just a little bit of lineage each month, but it was minimal. It was just, we know we got a problem over there, and we're going to do something about it one of these days. Later, the union. . . . This was when I was still a permit man, and I don't remember what the year was, but they had a permit man that came in and they nailed him for something like $275 initiation fee, which is really kind of illegal looking back because it was extreme and unusual or whatever. It wasn't consistent, anyway.

GIEBEL: But they would take you in at that point as a journeyman?

GABBARD: No, they took me in as a permit man. It was a special little isolated category.

GIEBEL: But after the nine months?

GABBARD: It took them nine months before they decided what to do. That was conservative Cincinnati. You don't rush into things, you have to give it some thought. So they finally elected to start taking my dues. They charged me journeyman's dues. I was supposed to be making journeyman's wages, and I think at the end of a year or two I was. I was pretty

hungry, hounded the boss a lot, and told him how wonderful I was and why didn't he pay me what I was supposed to get. So that was basically it from 1955 until '59, '60. I just went along as a permit man, making my journeyman's wage and learning my trade.

GIEBEL: And you didn't attend any meetings; just accasionally would be aware that the union was doing things?

GABBARD: Yes, well, you're working in the shop; you're aware of what's going on, you know. I met the local president. He was out of work. He got a job in the routing room. I don't know whether Harry [Conlon] got into what routing is or not.

After an etching is made and you've removed the non-printing, unwanted area, you have a raised printing surface. Unlike today's powderless, one-bite. . . . That term doesn't fit anymore. Unlike the powderless, one-bite etching machine that you have today, they used to etch with etching powder. And the way it was done, you got an acid-resistant image on about 1/16 inch thick sheet of zinc, or copper and you put it in nitric acid and water and gave it what was called a splash, (I forget the other term) splash-etch, and what it did was it gave you just enough relief that you could kind of feel it with your finger. You had to be careful because if you went at it too long it would undercut, go under the surface, which made it impractical to pull a mat for making dupes on the thing. So you'd give it just that first little splash and take it out and you'd put it in a bin. You got a plate so big back in the bin and you've got a row of resin. . .

GIEBEL: About three feet. . . .

GABBARD: Eighteen by twenty-four was the common flat size. You'd get the powder on it; then you'd lay it on the front edge of this bin. There was supposed to be a fan that sucked this dust out and you'd just brush it. And what you'd do is you'd brush so that you had a little layer of powder. Then you'd take it over a gas stove with a lot of flat-looking burners and you'd heat that and you'd just drop a drop of water on it until it would sizzle and you'd know it was hot enough to melt the resin that was in this powder, and that would form a line. We called the stuff "dragon's blood." It was red. Etching was really not a very fun job. Then you'd take it off, and what would happen is, you'd take away the unwanted metal and in the process your resin protective coating would etch away, would come off. Then you'd go back to the bin and do it again.

Well, it usually took six, seven, eight trips like that, and the further down you got the more relief you had. And you know, gradually, in areas where you would have half tone, the tone area, the hole in the plate. . . . I'm sure you're familiar with the way photographs are made up with the screen, you've got dots and holes, right? Well, the shadow areas, which would be the

hole, would plug up. It would just blank out and you didn't have to worry about that area anymore. What you had to worry about was where you had an isolated dot sticking up. That's what you had to watch for so that you didn't lose those. Because back at that time it was very critical that every dot be there. Now that's not so anymore. As long as it looks good, who cares if all the dots are there? But anyway. . . . I don't even know how I got off onto this. I remember now. When you're doing it this way, you're being very careful not to lose those isolated highlight dots. That's fine, except that in the non-printing area you would have little dots that thought they were highlight dots. Okay? And if you didn't lose them, or if you didn't lose your highlight dots, you didn't lose those.

Well, most of the time you'd lose most of them because you wouldn't. . . they would be finer than your finest highlight dots, but after the etching process was finished, you got your twenty-five or thirty thousandths depth. They would take the plate into the routing room, after cleaning off all the asphalt and paint that they use to protect the areas that they didn't want to etch, spot up broken lines or places where there wasn't dots where there should be, and then they'd take it into the routing room, and the guy had a routing machine that they'd mount the plate on a wooden sheet. He had a cutting bit, a flat thing with a big handle so you could move the thing around, and he would take that and cut off. . . he would actually drop out areas that were non-printing areas, and he would knock off bits of dirt up to and pretty close to the work. The trick was to get as close to the work as you could without bumping it, because if you bumped it, then it was time to take it back and do it again. And, you know, it took an hour, anywhere from an hour to an hour and a half, to etch a plate. Today, in the one-bite etching machine with the fast-etch chemicals, you stick it in an etching machine and turn it on for ten minutes and you've got an eighteen by twenty-four flat.

Most of the newspapers, especially, and I guess most of the commercial houses these days, have got a machine that will take two eighteen by twenty-four flats at one time, so you're etching two eighteen by twenty-four flats in ten minutes where you couldn't hold two plates and powder-etch them. Talk about flavor, these guys working in there, no air-conditioning, right, you got stoves going all the time. So in the summertime it was really brutal because this red stuff would get on--you can image what OSHA would say about that if they had to go in and look at something like that--and there were no showers in this plant. If you were an etcher, you had to go back and wash at the sink. I never thought about that until today, but that must have been a real pain in the tail to have to go in and just wash off as best you could, get out of that red powder. It was as red as that matchbook, you know, got on their hands, in their nose. An etcher's hands were always like the pressman today. You look at a pressman's [hands]. They're like a mechanic's hands. He's going to

have, unless he's really an unusual guy, he's going to have black under his nails and in the cracks from the chafing. Same thing with an etcher. Most of the time they were all calloused because you were swinging a plate that weighed, oh, probably five pounds minimum. You were putting it on there and you were turning it out so that you heated the thing evenly so that all of your dragon's blood, your etching powder, melted evenly. So they usually had pretty strong hands from working the pliers, but they were dirty, oh, messy, messy. . . .

GIEBEL: Photoengravers is sometimes referred to as the more militant of the unions that merged into the Graphic Arts Union. Is this perhaps one of the reasons for the militancy, that the workers' conditions were different than the Lithographers or the Bookbinders in these kinds of critical areas, or is that a poor explanation or only a partial explanation?

GABBARD: It's going to have to come out egotistical, but I really think the intelligence level of the organization as a group was really, I think, unusually high for unions. Now you mentioned before the industrial unions where you've got semi-skilled people, photoengravers had to be smart as well as skillful. They had to be. . . and obviously I'm not saying that all photoengravers were mental giants or anything like [that], but as a group, they were bright. And they knew that they had a lock on a very lucrative business, you know. They were making, back in the depression days, seventy dollars a week, back in the 1930s when people were working for fifteen and twenty.

But they were able to control the industry because there were trade secrets. You talk about the effect of technology, it was starting to slip a little bit when I got in, but, for instance, the red powder that they used, it didn't come all premixed; they add their own little things to it that would make it perform the way they wanted it to perform. There wasn't any standard etching acid that came in. You got a carboy in of a certain nitric acid and it was up to the craftsman to figure out how hot to make the bath, whether he should dilute it one-to-one, and to this day I don't know how they mixed it. I never was involved in the etching room, for which I was thankful. I really doubt, if I'd been offered the job, if I'd have taken it if I'd had to be an etcher.

GIEBEL: Nineteen sixty comes along.

GABBARD: Nineteen sixty comes along.

GIEBEL: And that's where you make your really formal commitment to the union, is that right? What happened?

GABBARD: Right. I don't know how you know that. Have I already mentioned that date? Well, 1960 comes along and I'm

still a permit man, still paying journeyman's dues, and by this time I was making my scale. The union was in negotiations for contract, and vice-president Henry Dillon was involved in the negotiations. Photoengraving shops were small, generally, and the owner either had worked at the trade or was a salesman for the company. And there were a lot of negotiations that went on within the plant, informal negotiation, like, "I'll shut the damn place down before I'll pay those kinds of wages." Or, "Go ahead, hit the bricks, I don't need you. Those kinds of rates I can't afford you. I just have the plant to make jobs for you, and this is the thanks I get." You know, all the standard bull-crap.

Well, I called Kenneth Scott, the owner of the plant, into my printing room, which was the first job I had in the trade. That was another one of the neat things about the technology change. Today you buy precoated metal and you stick it in a printing frame, a vacuum frame, and you put your negative on top of it and you get contact and you expose it to the arc lamp and develop away the unwanted areas and you're ready to do something. Well, in those days you got a piece of highly-polished zinc or copper and you scrubbed it with an abrasive pumice and a brass or copper brush to put a tooth on it and then you took an Ajax solution or some kind of cleansing powder and you scrubbed it with that to take any grease off of the surface and then you took a mixture of egg albumin, Lepage glue, Bichromate, and these things were mixed by hand. . . .

GIEBEL: Trade secrets?

GABBARD: Trade secrets, right. And you had to filter this stuff through a wet cotton-woll and a glass funnel into one of the old glue bottles. That's what we used all the time.

GIEBEL: How did you pick that up as a trade secret, working without an apprenticeship?

GABBARD: Well, I was working with a journeyman who was a half-brother to the owner, and he showed me anything that I wanted to know. As a matter of fact, he had the colored porter doing this rather mundane, menial task. But without a formula and without knowing what did what, you were just SOL, you know. You had to know just what percentage of Bichromate or Dichromate to put in the thing to get the proper level of light sensitivity so that it would react with the egg albumin and the glue and cause the image to harden in the light. Right? Then after you exposed it. . . well, first off you had to take it and you got it wet. Then you take your glue bottle and you hold it out there and you run about a three-inch strip of this nice looking stuff, a real rich yellow color (I kind of liked the color); you'd run that down the copper plate, and what you were doing with the first flowing was you run it down to this corner and then you throw it over this way so that you just. . . .

GIEBEL: To the far left corner.

GABBARD: Yes, down to this corner, then tilt it so that you got a nice graceful curve, and then you tipped it that way, and what you were doing was the viscosity or the specific gravity or whatever of this solution was heavier than the water and you were actually pushing the water off the surface of the plate with the first. And then to make sure you didn't have any diluted areas, you flowed it again and held it up to the light to make sure there weren't any pieces of lint or cotton-wool that were going to light on your plate. Then you put a spring-clamp that way and tilted it quickly so as not to get it flat, like a couple of big coathangers. They had little gahingueses on them, just a heavy-gauge wire that. . . .

GIEBEL: That plate is flat and you. . . .

GABBARD: The plate is flat and you had a holder on the edge of your wooden sink that had water standing in the bottom all the time and you pulled it open, put it in, let this clamp in, picked it up, checked it once more and then flipped it quickly so that you didn't get any ripples, and then you hung it into what we called a whirler which was just a big tub with an electric motor with an adjustable handle on it that you could control the speed. There was a flame in the bottom and you usually had to go through. . . there was an automatic timer on the thing and you went through two cycles, and by that time. . . .

And that was another one of the things you had to know. If you got it too hot, you would preset it, and after you exposed it to the arc lamp with your negative on top of it the holes that you should have in the half-tone areas would be scummed in and you couldn't use the thing, it would be just solid, so you had to test it periodically. You wanted to get it warm enough to dry it quickly, but you didn't want to get it hot enough to preset it. Then you exposed it to the light, and then you took it over and had to spray it evenly and quickly with lukewarm water, and that dissolved the glue and albumin and bichromate out of the non-printing areas so that you had an image on the copper. Now it's printing copper, you had an image on the copper. When you had that done, you had to take that over to a stove that was similar to that of the etchers and went through what was called a "burn-in", and this was where you really hardened the enamel image that you had on top of your copper, and that made it impervious to the ferrous chloride, I think, anyway, a solution of iron, and it would dissolve the copper, but it wouldn't touch the image.

And they had to go through the same process, you know; they had to put it in and it worked much slower than nitric attacking zinc. It took a lot longer, but it was a lot more durable. Once you had your image there, the plate life was a lot greater, and usually you could do a lot more with it. I guess because you were going at it slower, you could print a finer

screen on copper. The common screening at that time was 132 dots or 133 per inch, and usually you didn't go. . . you would go 110 dots on zinc, but you didn't go much further than that without getting a loss of dots, because naturally with each ten lines of dots, or ten more rows of dots in each square inch, you were reducing the size. You'd have the same percentage dots, but you'd have a much smaller dot so that you were more apt to lose it in the etching process. Okay, so much for digressing. . . .

GIEBEL: So you asked Scott to come into the. . . .

GABBARD: Yes. I said, "Hey, what is this stuff? Are we really going to have a strike?" He said, "No, don't worry. There won't be a strike." Well, a few days later, I think that was the first time. . . .

GIEBEL: How did Scott know about it, through his association?

GABBARD: Yes. His general manager was involved in negotiations. No, that was before, that was before. Yes, I got it screwed up. I didn't know what was going on. This was one of the contracts in between my starting and the strike. But, you know, I heard all this stuff and I didn't recognize it, and I said, "Hey, what is this, Ken, you really going to. . . ? "No," he said, "don't worry about it. It'll be all right," and there wasn't a strike that year.

But then, 1959, enters Henry Dillon, and he (Ken Scott) came up to me one day and said, "Well, John, it looks like we may have to strike. It's pretty bad, but I want you to know that no matter what happens if there's a strike you just keep coming right in to work. I'll always have work for you." And I said, "Well, gee, Ken, I don't know." And he said, "I want you to know that I'll have work for you, and if you go on strike, I'm not sure I'll have a job for you when you come back when the strike's over." That was really great. Let's see, that was 1960. That would have made me twenty-four years old at that point. I said, "Well, I really don't much like the idea, but if there's a strike, you're only one employer, Ken. If I cross the picket line and come in here, I'll probably always have a job with you, but if you go out of business, I'll just to SOL because I'll never get a job in another engraving house." So there was a strike. We had a meeting and they invited, probably at Henry's suggestion I wouldn't be surprised, they invited the permit men to attend the meeting on a Monday morning, I think it was.

GIEBEL: Who had this meeting?

GABBARD: The local union, Local 13 of IPEU.

GIEBEL: Henry Dillon invited permit men?

GABBARD: Well, he didn't invite them, but the Local people said, "We want you to come to the meeting," and I'm sure that Henry instructed them to. And from my perspective now, I'm sure he advised him that it would be beneficial if we didn't cross the picket line. So we came to the meeting. So anyway, Henry offered commendations to the permit men that were honoring the strike, and the decision was made at that meeting that if we joined them in the strike we would receive benefits the same as any of the other members, which we did.

I had the pleasure of being one of the first two pickets that walked the first picket duty in front of Advertisers' Engraving, along with a newly-hired former lithographer. Because by that time--this was 1960--I had become a stripper, the branch of the trade that I worked at until I got out of it. By this time it was obvious that photoengraving as such was contracting, and lithography was to be the process of the future, and they had gone out and hired a former Lithographer member from what was then Local 8 of the Amalgamated Lithographers Union, a fellow by the name of Donald Papp. He was going to teach the photoengraving salesmen bidding on litho work, and he was going to establish a lithographic department, and we were going to do some trade work in the lithography field, so we wound up with a nice little strike. He had been hired like a month before.

(END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1)

GABBARD: Anyway, we had about a four week strike. As my memory serves, I was reasonably good friends with a fellow named Marvin Houlihan, who was a proofer. No, at that time he was a finisher. He was a finisher at Advertisers', and he was a member of the executive board. Another one of my associates. One of the guys who was nice to the kid, even though he was a permit man. These were some of the younger members. I said many times that I really grew up at Advertisers' Engraving. I've got a warm spot in my heart, and I still like Ken Brown. . . still like Ken Scott. I wonder if that's a Freudian slip there? But anyway, I've got a warm spot in my heart for Ken Scott because they treated me by-and-large pretty well. The industry was good to me, and I'm happy with where I am now and what I'm doing. Who knows where I would be now, where I would have gone otherwise. I might be a happy commercial artist.

Anyway, Marv and I were reasonably good friends, and as an executive board member they called. . . . Now wait a minute, that's out of order. That's out of order. Let me go back and say that Henry, through the successful pressure of the strike, was able to get a settlement that justified the strike. Well, they went back to finalize what they thought was the agreement, and the

employers reneged on several items. Henry tried to turn it around because by then they'd already had a ratification meeting and pickets were down. When they found out that the employers had reneged on some items that Henry thought were important, (I don't even remember what they were) they called a special meeting.

One of our etchers at Advertisers' always went in early. He had a heart condition and they let him come in and start before everybody else. That had taken board action, you know. You just didn't do that kind of thing. Everybody started at the same time, so that if it was going to create overtime there would be overtime, but he had already gone in, and they went in and said, "Look, we have a special meeting, come on out." So out he came and went to the meeting. But the members had had a bellyful of strike. It was the first one they had in forty years. It was a cold March, very cold March, not a nice tour of picket duty at all, so they said, "The hell with it. We are not going to concern ourselves with it. Just let it go. We'll accept the amended settlement," and we went back to work.

GIEBEL: Ken took you back in spite of his threat to not take you back?

GABBARD: Yes, yes.

GIEBEL: So now you're a member of the union?

GABBARD: Oh, yes. At that ratification meeting Henry said, "Hey, you ought to take these guys in as journeymen," which is the transition from permit man to journeyman, and nine months later I was a journeyman. Nineteen sixty-one.

GIEBEL: Nineteen sixty-one. So then you just started your normal involvement in the. . . .

GABBARD: Started going to meetings occasionally. Occasionally. I got ticked off at Ken. It was that once-an-apprentice-always-an-apprentice or once-a-permit-man-always-a-permit-man syndrome in the plant where you work. You're still always thought of as a kid. So I said, "Screw you. I want a day job anyway." So then he gave me this song and dance about how much he thought of me and if I ever wanted to come back the job would be there. You know, he almost made me not want to leave. And it's a good thing because I only lasted six months at the place.

I went to work after leaving Advertisers, that was Deluxe Engraving, and they had a guy that's a millionaire now, guy by the name of Jack Stienman, who was the owner. He's the oiliest man I ever met in my life. You think, how could such a sweet lovable guy be such a horrible prick. Well, anyway, I went to work for him, and I went to work for less than I was making at Advertisers', just to change jobs. I was really ticked off. I

got there and I found out the grass really isn't any greener. Ken really wasn't all that bad a guy after all.

GIEBEL: How were you taken? Was it something you entered into yourself? Was it a minimum wage that was signed?

GABBARD: Well, see, I was working on the second shift in the engraving house, and there's a shift differential. I don't remember what it was now, it was either eight or ten dollars, something like that, and I went to a day job and I accepted the scale, you know, the day scale, which is a reduction, seventy dollars a week. But I went to work there with the understanding that if I did a good job and was able to handle the work, I'd get an increase. They still have that arrangement today that if an employer thinks that you're worth more money and you can talk him into it, he'll give it to you, but all the scale establishes is the minimum. Anyway, I got there and I met a fellow by the name of Jerry Wallberg, and that was the beginning of my road downhill because I wound up getting on a bowling team in the Printcraft League which was comprised of the Mailers' Union members and the IPP and AU and the ITU and the Stereotypers and Electrotypers. I met a lot of good people there.

While I was working at Deluxe, election came up and Jerry Wallberg was going to run for the executive board. I had missed the nomination meeting, but when I found out he was going to run, hey, that sounds like a pretty good idea. I'd been going to meetings, and I'd like to have something to say about what goes on, so I ran for the board and lost. I don't remember where I ran, but I didn't win. But I had successfully constructed a defense against that, well, nobody knows me. If they knew me, they'd vote for me, you know, that kind of thing.

GIEBEL: Well, what was it like to run? You decided you were going to run. Did you talk to Jerry, tell him you were going to run?

GABBARD: I told him to put my name in. They had about four positions and eight candidates, something like that. Anyway, I lost.

GIEBEL: That's typical, more candidates than positions.

GABBARD: Yes, it was then. It's now no longer true. Now you got to scramble to get four. I started becoming aware of contract violations in the plant where I was working. Like, they'd ask a guy to finish a job at noontime, and he'd work till twelve thirty or one o'clock. Now that's supposed to be a half hour or an hour of time and a half. That's not the way they did it. You worked to get the job finished, and you changed your clothes and went out and had lunch, and you came back late and finished out your shift. And there was no overtime. A couple of times they asked me to do it, and I said, "Sure I'll do

it. I'll finish the job if you pay me overtime." "Oh, no, go on to lunch." So I developed the reputation of being an uncooperative employee. Plus, at that time there was a song out called "Hit the Road Jack and Don't You Come Back No More, No More." Well, Jack Stienman's name was Jack, and I used to sing that song a lot, and I don't think he cared for that. But he was such a jerk.

The plant wasn't big, the office was separated and he always had heel-taps on his shoes, and he wore oxford cloth shirts that he always pushed up so that the cuffs would fit tightly around his forearms. He'd click over to the water cooler, take a little drink, maybe come over next to where you were working, see, and say, "How's it going?" He really didn't give a damn how it was going. He was just checking to make sure you were working. You had the pressure on you. You're not supposed to be talking on company time or any of that business. Anyway, he and I didn't get along very well, and I asked the foreman, I said, "Look, I've been here for a while, I'm doing a good job." They had a lot of screen work for P & G. We used to make what they called mat patterns. That's where I saw my first offset press, too, by the way, this little bitty Davidson, like a multilith. It's got the plate cylinder and the impression cylinder on the same cylinder, instead of having three, and we'd run these little eight-and-a-half-by-eleven mat pattern things and they'd have four-column ads for JOY or IVORY LIQUID or LUX or whatever, and then they'd go down to different configurations, four column, two inches high, or single column or two column or whatever. Then you'd have about six or eight of them on an eight-and-a-half-by-eleven sheet and there was all kinds of faking that you had to do where you put in different tones to make it look like different colored bottles, even though it was running black and white. I was doing a good job there, you know, and I found out that they didn't know anything that I wasn't doing at Advertisers, which disappointed me.

At that time there was a fantastic new process on the market called auto-positive film where you could take out black and put black in through means of filters and different light sources and so on. Well, I'd been doing it when the need arose at Advertisers, but I thought they must really know something, talking about Penn Register System, which was new, and they were using thin-based film, which was new. That's all that's used in the industry now, practically. But when I broke into the stripping end of it--and that's where the term comes from--you actually peeled an emulsion with not just a light sensitive emulsion, but there was also a carrier that the light sensitive chemicals ad hered to, and you would peel that off of a heavier backing which you had to have in order to handle it, either a plastic or paper backing. Chemco put out a relatively cheap film that was used for line work and non-critical jobs. You'd strip the emulsion with the image off the backing and then you took that and you stripped that down by means of an acetic acid kind of glue-like water, and you mounted them on glass to get a flat full of work so that you

weren't running single jobs through the position, depending up the different shapes on the piece of glass, and that's what I was doing. But thin base was coming out now; you didn't strip it, you photo-composed it.

GIEBEL: So you were anxious to learn this new process?

GABBARD: Right.

GIEBEL: And when you got there?

GABBARD: I found out it wasn't all that. . . . They didn't know anything more than we did. They were just utilizing it more. So I finally told the foreman, "Look, I've been here six months; I've gotten one raise." I think I got a $1.50 raise. I thought I was going to get a raise. That was the agreement. "Okay, I'll go see Jack." Oh, no, I got the raise. That was the bit. I said, "A buck and a half. Come on. I've been here six months, and all you give me is a buck and a half? All that says to me is you don't care whether I work for you or not." So, Ralph Hagman walks up to me in the afternoon. . . and this is like two weeks before Christmas.

GIEBEL: Ralph Hagman is the foreman?

GABBARD: Yes. Walks up to me and says, "Jack wants to see you in the office." "Okay, fine." I figured [that] he's going to come up with some money. He came up with some money, my severance check! He said, "We really don't need you John. Hate to do this, but we really don't have enough work to keep you on." And I said, "Sure, Jack, sure, fine," fighting back the tears. You know, the first time I'd ever been canned in my life!

GIEBEL: And two weeks before Christmas.

GABBARD: Yes, about two weeks before Christmas. And I went home. We were living in an apartment out in Price Hill at the time, in the western section of Cincinnati. I said, "Guess what, Mar?" She said, "What?" Marlene is my wife, by the way. And I said, "I got fired." You know, it was one of those "you what?!" Of course by this time I had done all my rationalization, like I'll just go down and get my unemployment, see what happens. So I started getting dressed (it was Friday night) and she said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm getting ready to go bowling." "Why you're not going bowling, you got fired!" I said, "Yeah, that's right, so?" Well, anyway, she really got upset. She thought I should go into hiding or something. She was really upset.

So I got over to the bowling alley and [met] Mel Gertler, who was strike captain and one of the executive board members during the strike and one of the guys that I worked with

at Advertisers who had referred me to Deluxe to take this job because he knew I was interested in getting out of Advertisers. I said, "Thanks a lot, Mel, you've been a big help. You got me a job that I got fired in." Oh, it really upset him. Anyway, there was the guy that ran the Davidson offset press at DeLuxe, Don Stienman, who just happened to be Jack's cousin [he] came to the bowling alley that night. He said, "Gee, John, I really feel bad about you getting canned." He and I used to work together because, you know, when I was caught up stripping I would make these little twelve-fifty multilith plates that he was running on the Davidson. He said, "Look, if you need any money, let me know. I'll lend you whatever you need." You'd have to know him to appreciate what a movement that was for him because he was very thrifty. He's one of the blustery kind of people who wants everybody to think he's not at all sensitive or anything like that. So it was a nice gesture on his part.

But I got a call the next Monday morning. I got my week's pay. You either had to get a week's notice or you got a week's pay in lieu of notice. And when Jack decided to get rid of me, I don't think he wanted me working around there for a week. He couldn't have stood it. I don't think I could have either, for that matter. Anyway, I got a call from old squeaky-voice Kapelhoff, and I was glad to hear from him, too.

GIEBEL: Kapelhoff?

GABBARD: Yes, corresponding secretary. "John, I understand that you're out of work. Kenny Scott down at Advertisers wants to talk to you." So I went down to talk to Kenny in the afternoon, I guess, and he said, "Well, you're out of work, right? I need a stripper on the second shift." "Yeah, don't you have anything on day side?" "No." And I said, "Ken, that's going to be kind of bad. Going to conflict with my bowling." (laughter) He said, "Well, that's the way it goes." So I started to work either that night or the next night. Anyway, I was only fired for one weekend and a day and was back to work at Advertisers, and glad to be there. I found out they had an afternoon Printcraft Bowling League, so I started bowling in the afternoon league and met a guy by the name of Harold Correll, who I wound up getting to know quite well a lot later. I don't know whether he had any official standing at that time with his union, but he was a damn good bowler.

GIEBEL: What union was he in?

GABBARD: He was with the International Printing Presssmen's and Assistant's Union newspaper web, it's Local 11, I think, and he and I got to be very close just before I left to take this job. Oh, no, 1967 we got to be pretty close, so I guess that makes it 1961 or '62, somewhere in there when I got canned.

GIEBEL: You had run once and lost?

GABBARD: Run once and lost.

GIEBEL: Then canned. Now you're back at Advertisers.

GABBARD: On the second shift, right. And then I can't remember whether I was still working second shift or not. No, I got back on day side, and I don't remember what year it was. It must have been 1963. I guess it was '63.

GIEBEL: You had elections every year in the Photoengravers?

GABBARD: Right.

GIEBEL: And you didn't run the next time?

GABBARD: Let's see, maybe I did. It was either 1962 or '63 I ran for the executive board. It was probably '63. I probably didn't run the next time because I was working second shift, and I wound up working second shift for a while. Then I ran. I got back on day side and ran. I guess it was '63. It was probably '63 or '62. Probably if I started the other way and counted back I could figure it out. Anyway, I ran and was elected to the executive board, and I got elected to the executive board because I became a bowler. There were about three completely Photoengraver bowling teams in the union Printcraft Bowling League, and I got to know the guys.

GIEBEL: How many people on the executive board then?

GABBARD: Four. So I was elected to the executive board, and I gave up my Friday nights because the Board used to meet on Friday nights. That meant I had to give up my Friday night bowling league once a month. I didn't like that, but I served until about September. By that time there were really some disgruntled members in Local 13. Ed Kappelhoff, I don't know when he retired, but he was a retired guy running the Local. It wasn't a very democratic organization. You had the same guys getting up and saying the same crap every month.

GIEBEL: Why don't I come back and pick that up next time?

GABBARD: Okay.

John Gabbard

Index