ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH

EDWARD VOLZ

Interviewer: Alice M. Hoffman
Date: March 12, 1973

INTRODUCTION

Eward Volz, President of the Photoengravers' Union from 1929 to 1954, was born in Cincinnati, Ohio. He was apprenticed to a wood engraver at the age of fifteen and joined the Photoengravers' Union at twenty-one when it was still part of the Typographical Union. He describes the gradual movement toward the formation of the International Photoengravers' Union in New York in 1900. Volz moved to New York in 1906 as a proofer. He became active in "booster trips" to boost the union, was elected to the executive board of the New York union in 1911 and became vice-president in 1912 and president in 1916 in which capacity he served until 1920. He served as president of the International Photoengravers' Union from 1929 until 1954. While in New York he acted as organizer of the rotogravure workers.

Volz reminisces about Matt Woll, vice-president of the AFL, former president of the International Photoengravers' Union, and founder of the Union Labor Life Insurance Company; Samuel Gompers, first president of the AFL; George Meany; the famous fight between John L. Lewis and Bill Hutcheson; and Florence Thorne.

Volz talks about the various job classifications inhis industry and how he helped get them under one minimum wage scale--photographers, etchers, finishers, Ben Day artists,

negative strippers, proofers, routers and blockers. He recalls his feelings about the CIO and about the later merger between the Lithographers and Photoengravers. He describes the 1922 lockout for a return to the 48-hour week, the movement for a general printing trades union and how he helped obtain the five-day week for his industry in 1929, the first apprenticeship training classes or vocational schools for Photoengravers, and improved sanitary conditions in the shops. Volz also recalls his experience as secretary on law of the AFL under the chairmanship of Dan Tobin and as a fraternal delegate to represent the AFL at the British Trade unions' Congress in 1948.

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INTERVIEWER: ALICE HOFFMAN

HOFFMAN: Would you just say your name, date and place of birth so I could check the level on this. [tape recorder]

VOLZ: Edward J. Volz. You spelled it wrong, V-O-L-T-Z, no "t" in it.

HOFFMAN: No "t" in it?

VOLZ: V-O-L-Z. I was born in Cincinnati, August 22, 1879.

HOFFMAN: Would you tell me a little bit about your family. I notice that you were. . . .

VOLZ: I was one of seven. I had three brothers and three sisters.

HOFFMAN: Did your father work at a trade?

VOLZ: My father was originally a cigar maker and then he opened a small grocery store, that was most of my life. I was six years old when we moved up to where he opened the grocery store and so my life is after that.

HOFFMAN: Did he belong to the union as a cigar maker?

VOLZ: I don't think there was any union in those days. I don't think there was any Cigar Makers' Union in those days. See, that would be back in the '70s.

HOFFMAN: How did you come to start out as an apprentice to a wood engraver?

VOLZ: My brother came home. . . . I was going to school [and] I think I was in the sixth grade. He said to my mother, "I have a job for Ed to learn wood engraving." He said, "I think you better take it," and that was it. Of course in those days, as I mentioned in some of the stuff I sent you, you worked the first six months for nothing. That was the regular procedure. Then I got a dollar a week for six months. Each six months I was promised a dollar increase, but I had a hard time getting it.

HOFFMAN: Did they start you right out teaching you to do the engraving or did you just run errands?

VOLZ: Mostly run the errands for a year; the best part of it. For six months, at least. In fact for a year I was running errands off and on.

HOFFMAN: How old were you when you started?

VOLZ: About fifteen, I would say.

HOFFMAN: Now I noticed that you joined the Cincinnati Photo-engravers' Union.

VOLZ: In 1900.

HOFFMAN: In 1900!

VOLZ: I don't know the exact date. It was just when the photoengravers broke away from the Typographical Union.

HOFFMAN: And you were, what, just about twenty-one years old then?

VOLZ: I would say that, yes, around that. Of course before any of the present printing trade unions were formed, all belonged to the Typographical Union. In fact when I joined, photoengravers were still part of the Typographical Union as were the pressmen, bookbinders, electrotypers, sterotypers and photoengravers. [They] all were part of the Typographical Union and they got out, one after the other, because they felt that their particular group were not getting the consideration they should get. Mostly the Typographical Union.

HOFFMAN: Was it a failure of leadership at that time, do you think?

VOLZ: It was just the way of things, I guess. But that was the reason for most of them getting out. They felt that their particular group wasn't getting the consideration that they would be able to get if they were independent.

HOFFMAN: Now photoengraving was a new skill, wasn't it?

VOLZ: Photoengraving was quite new at the time. However, there were photoengravers. The first Photoengravers' Union was formed in 1886, but soon disbanded. Those who were in it were particularly skilled, but it was hardly known. In those days it was mostly wood engraving. In fact, the wood engravers, many of

them, said, "I'll never put my tools into plate of metal." They were wood engravers. Those who were in the so-called artistic end said, "It might be all right for mechanical work, photoengraving." And the others who were on the mechanical end said, "Well, photoengraving might be all right for the artistic end but not for the mechanical end." But afterwards most of them gradually joined the Photoengravers' Union.

HOFFMAN: What was causing that gradual move into the Photo engravers' Union?

VOLZ: Wood engraving was disappearing. Photoengraving was taking its place. Wood engraving, after. . . . I would say by early in 1900 wood engraving had practically disappeared.

HOFFMAN: Well, now, why were you. . . . Well, first of all, I want to ask you what's a branch finisher? You said you were a branch finisher.

VOLZ: An engraver. The engravers they call finishers. And afterwards I became a proofer who made the proofs of the work, and in the end I was just a proofer. For many years, even when I worked in Cincinnati, I worked at different branches. In those days they weren't as particular about moving from branch to branch as they became later. When I left Cincinnati I left as an engraver and a proofer. I worked in Cleveland for a while and I worked in Buffalo for a while and I worked in St. Paul for about a month, I didn't like it out there, and then I came to New York.

HOFFMAN: How did you happen to come to New York?

VOLZ: Opportunity. When I lost my first job in Cincinnati, it was because of being a shop chairman. I was too active, I guess, and it was a blessing in disguise because I would possibly still be there. In those days if you lost your job for union reasons, you had to get out of town. Members of the union were looked upon much as communists are looked upon today.

HOFFMAN: So you came to New York. Was Local One in existence at the time when you came?

VOLZ: Oh, yes. Local One was in existence for quite a few years under the Typographical Union. I think it was 1891. I think. [A pause, rustling of papers] The International Union was almost formed in New York because most of the work was being done there, same as today. As far back as 1891. . . .

HOFFMAN: Local One was started?

VOLZ: Well, in fact, the first organization, the first engravers was back in 1886. That's about the same time as the Lithographers' Union began, too. Some time in the '80s, anyway. The Photoengravers' Unions passed out of existence once or twice, but the Lithographers kept in continuance.

HOFFMAN: All right. And Local One had withdrawn from the. . . . .

VOLZ: In 1899 the New York union went on strike but got no support from the Typographical Union, so they withdrew. And a number of other small locals also withdrew. In 1900 the New York group called a meeting in October and they formed the International Photoengravers' Union, and the first convention was held the following month in Philadelphia.

HOFFMAN: Right. How large was Local One when you got there in 1906 or so?

VOLZ: I wouldn't know that.

HOFFMAN: Well, I don't mean exactly, but you know, approximately.

VOLZ: Well, I got to New York in 1906, so I really wouldn't know what the size of the membership was. It was fairly good size. I would say maybe 1,000, maybe 1,200.

HOFFMAN: Oh, very big.

VOLZ: Yes.

HOFFMAN: And what was your first activity in Local One?

VOLZ: Well, I wasn't too much interested in what I did do. Shortly after coming. . . like everyone else, I had a difficult time locating here. I was from out of town. And finally they gave me a job, which two or three of the boys fell down on, in proofreading, a difficult job, and I happened to make out with it and I was accepted.

Really my first activity was I formed a so-called "booster club" and we made visits. We made five-day visits. The first one was out to Detroit. We went from here to Buffalo, from Buffalo to Niagara Falls, Niagara Falls across the Lake to Detroit where there was a convention of Photoengravers being held, and we came back the same way. But for

the entire trip, from Friday morning to Tuesday morning, was $31.50. [laughter]

HOFFMAN: You went by train?

VOLZ: By train and by boat, but that included sleepers on the train. Some of the men brought their wives along. We were joined in that by members from Philadelphia and from Newark and from different surrounding cities.

HOFFMAN: So these were trips to go to the conventions, and not. . . .

VOLZ: Well, they were so-called "booster trips" to boost the union, and we made the trips just to keep people's interest.

HOFFMAN: So did you do any organizational activity along the way, or do you mean to keep your members interested?

VOLZ: Well, we tried to do that, of course. We built up greatly on fraternalism, that if your members know each other, if they know their families, they'll stick together more than if they just don't know. Of course that's all passed away, unfortunately. The boys used to come down and pay me twenty-five cents a week to get up to their thirty-one dollars before the year was over. No, fifty cents a week, so when the year was over they. . . .

HOFFMAN: They would have the money to go on this vacation.

VOLZ: We made trips up to Boston and to Providence, and we made trips up to Albany.

HOFFMAN: Well, it sounds like you had a lot of fun.

VOLZ: I was that kind of a boy. (laughter) Of course my little experience with traveling helped me, and I got in touch with railroad men and they helped me. We had our own train going from New York to Buffalo, for instance, a chartered train, and the same way coming back from Buffalo to New York, back on the chartered train. This might interest you. We even had a baggage car where we had a keg of beer on tap. (laughter) We'd drink in those days!

HOFFMAN: Well, it really does sound like you had a good time.

VOLZ: The first office I held was in 1911. I was elected to the executive board of the New York union, and in 1912 I was elected first vice-president.

HOFFMAN: I notice that in that same year the International Allied Printing Trades Association was established.

VOLZ: Around that time, yes.

HOFFMAN: Yes. Were the Photoengravers part of that beginning?

VOLZ: Oh, yes. We were right in that from the beginning.

HOFFMAN: And was it very active in New York City?

VOLZ: Oh, yes. They had a paid representative in New York City, the Allied Printing Trades Council.

HOFFMAN: I wonder if you could describe something about how the five member printing crafts were able to get along with one another in New York City. Did they do pretty well?

VOLZ: They did fairly good, yes. They cooperated very nice. In fact that was true all over the country, the cooperation was what you might say excellent everywhere.

HOFFMAN: But you always think of the printing trades as having so much trouble with jurisdictional disputes.

VOLZ: Well, there was that question. Of course there was that question between the Lithographers and the Photoengravers for a while, and yet we got along all right. We met and talked over our problems and tried to settle them, but there was always the hitch. (laughter) The question was would the Lithographers join the Photoengravers or would the Photoengravers join the Lithographers?

HOFFMAN: Well I would be very much interested in your talking to me some about Matt Woll because, of course, he was very important in your union, but he was also very important in the AFL.

VOLZ: He was vice-president of the AFL for many, many years.

HOFFMAN: Yes. Could you describe him, what sort of a person he was?

VOLZ: Well, should I say wonderful, (laughter) very able, and he went to school at night. He was admitted to the bar in Chicago, but he never practiced law. He went to school at night to get the education and experience. Of course he was president of the International Union for about twenty years, I think.

HOFFMAN: I'm surprised. I thought he had been president of the International Union until his death.

VOLZ: Oh, no, I succeeded him in 1929. I was president of the International Union from 1929 until 1954 when I retired.

HOFFMAN: Why did he retire as president?

VOLZ: Well, while he was president he organized the Union Labor Life Insurance Company.

HOFFMAN: Yes.

VOLZ: And he became president of that. And just prior to my becoming president, he became the active president of the Union Labor Life Insurance Company, and he devoted his time to that.

HOFFMAN: Now did your members feel that he should resign, or did he decide to resign himself?

VOLZ: He just resigned because of having this other activity.

HOFFMAN: Well, I know that prior to that, Johnny Mitchell was forced to resign as president of the United Mine Workers' because. . . .

VOLZ: Oh, there was never any forcing here, oh, no. Matt became interested in the Union Labor Life Insurance Company and continued as president, most likely.

HOFFMAN: Why couldn't he do both?

VOLZ: Well, there was too much to do, I guess, in both of them; to do them well. . . .

HOFFMAN: I see. I'm just trying to. . . .

VOLZ: He was born in Luxembourg.

HOFFMAN: How old was he when he came to this country?

VOLZ: I wouldn't know how old. Quite young I know, but how old, I wouldn't know.

HOFFMAN: Just a young boy.

VOLZ: Just a young boy.

HOFFMAN: Did he have a similar background to your own as far as photoengraving is concerned?

VOLZ: I don't think he started in wood engraving. I guess he was started at a later date. He started at photoengraving.

HOFFMAN: In Chicago?

VOLZ: In Chicago, yes.

HOFFMAN: Well, I wonder if you could just think of some story about your association with him that would illustrate something of the kind of person he was.

VOLZ: I don't know if there was anything outstanding. We got along very good together. I was elected first vice president of the International Union in 1922 at the Chicago Convention. I wasn't present at the time. I wasn't in attendance, but I was elected. He and I always got along very fine.

HOFFMAN: Was he a good speaker?

VOLZ: A wonderful speaker. Everyone marvelled at the way he could speak spontaneous. That was one of his outstanding characteristics.

HOFFMAN: Well, I know that there was some talk that he might become the president of the AFL after Gompers' death.

VOLZ: There was some thoughts of it, but coming from a small organization [Woll] and Green coming from a larger organization, the Miners were selected.

HOFFMAN: Did he ever talk to you about that?

VOLZ: About his ambitions?

HOFFMAN: Yes.

VOLZ: Well, no, not directly that I can recall, but I know that he hoped that he might get the honor.

HOFFMAN: Did you have occasion to meet Samuel Gompers while you were active in your early days?

VOLZ: Oh, yes, I knew Samuel Gompers very well.

HOFFMAN: You know, Mr. Volz, I think if you could put on the tape some of your memories in association with these men, because what we have now for the younger generation coming along is [that] we know of course when and where they were born and what they did and their activities, but we don't know very much about them as human beings. You know what I mean? It's hard to. . . . For example, I think so often about Samuel Gompers and his statue down in Washington, but. . . .

VOLZ: He's buried up here in New York, a ways up here.

HOFFMAN: Is he?

VOLZ: Yes.

HOFFMAN: I didn't know that.

VOLZ: I was at his funeral. He was a cigar maker, you know.

HOFFMAN: Yes, I know he was that, but what kind of a relationship did you have with him?

VOLZ: Well, not too close. I knew him and he knew me, knew my name, knew who I was and what I represented and all; socially, not too close.

HOFFMAN: Uh-hm. Well, what sort of a man was he? I mean, could you describe what kind of a person he was?

VOLZ: He was, according to who he was speaking to, arrogant at times (laughter), and he could be very pleasant at times.

HOFFMAN: Was he ever arrogant with you? (laughter)

VOLZ: Oh, no! Never hardly that close with him, because we never had any differences or anything.

HOFFMAN: Did Matt Woll tell you any stories about him or about his relationship with him?

VOLZ: No, not that I can recall. We spoke of many things, I guess, but I don't recall anything outstanding.

HOFFMAN: Well, I know that there was a lot of criticism in the labor movement of Matt Woll's involvement with the Union Labor Life [Insurance].

VOLZ: For a while there was. And yet the unions practically made, supported, really brought the Union

Labor Life Insurance Company into existence and gave it its foundation.

HOFFMAN: Well, particularly, I think, the criticism grew out of his activities in the social insurance field because it was felt that since he had this interest in this private company that he might not be interested in government insurance.

VOLZ: I don't recall him ever mentioning anything like that. He was a thorough union man. Always liked, that I'll say, and his thoughts and his ambitions, everything was for the benefit of the unions.

HOFFMAN: His own personal interests in this company would have been second you think to what was of benefit to the labor movement?

VOLZ: Oh, yes, he was always. . . his first thoughts were union, the organization of union men.

HOFFMAN: How did he get to be that way do you suppose?

VOLZ: I don't know. I guess it's just born in some of us. (laughter)

HOFFMAN: How did you get to be that way yourself with not coming out of a trade union background?

VOLZ: I joined the union and became interested, I guess.

HOFFMAN: It was much more of a fraternal organization then than it is now, wasn't it?

VOLZ: It was. And of course as I said before, union men weren't regarded very highly as a rule. They were much the same as a communist is regarded today.

HOFFMAN: So that caused them to stick together, do you think?

VOLZ: To some extent. Of course the meetings often had to be private because if it became known you were attending a union meeting you were sort of put on a black list.

HOFFMAN: Well one thing that interests me is these various job classifications that you listed here in the book of scale wages for photoengravers, etchers, engravers, BD artists. I don't know, what is a BD?

VOLZ: Ben Day. It was a Ben Day artist. It was a special class of artistry. It was mostly on film.

HOFFMAN: How do you spell bendey?

VOLZ: B-E-N D-A-Y.

HOFFMAN: I see, and it was a chemical process?

VOLZ: Well, no, not chemical, it was all hand work. It was the first agreement I was associated with. In a three or four year agreement where we had sliding scales for different branches we got them all under one minimum scale.

HOFFMAN: Uh-hm, I see that.

VOLZ: And we raised. . . some of the groups were raised from fifteen to twenty-seven dollars in a three or four year period.

HOFFMAN: Right, you sort of started with a minimum scale of twenty-seven dollars?

VOLZ: Twenty-seven dollars. That was for the so-called higher branches at that time. And of course they ranged down from that to eighteen dollars. And one branch was as low as fifteen dollars.

HOFFMAN: Now you said in here. . . well, what does a negative stripper do? You talked about the fact that there was a big change in their. . . .

VOLZ: Well, in the beginning when they were getting fifteen dollars, all a negative stripper did was to reverse the negative, because it had to be reversed so that when the print was made it was back to its original.

HOFFMAN: Right. How did they do that?

VOLZ: Well, the film (it was a wet plate photography), and the film you could raise off the glass and turn it around.

HOFFMAN: I see.

VOLZ: But afterwards it became very skilled because they would put together different parts of a negative and patch them together so that you couldn't see where they were patched or anything.

HOFFMAN: I see. Did the same people who had done the job when it was an unskilled job. . . ?

VOLZ: Mostly. They gradually developed into it, yes.

HOFFMAN: That's interesting. Well, I think it would be in teresting if you just could describe these various jobs. What about blockers? What did they do?

VOLZ: Routers and blockers, they were.

HOFFMAN: Routers and blockers, right.

VOLZ: I guess they were separate in the beginning.

HOFFMAN: They're listed separately.

VOLZ: They were separate, yes, but afterwards they became one, routers and blockers.

HOFFMAN: What does that refer to?

VOLZ: Well, a negative is made first, and a print on metal, and that's etched, and certain large parts had to be taken away entirely. That's what the router did with a machine, a routing machine. It revolved at the speed of about 18,000 revolutions a minute, and that would rout away the metal, the metal that wasn't wanted, that wasn't to be printed.

HOFFMAN: I see. So that was not a very highly skilled job.

VOLZ: It was skilled, yes. In fact, we contended that all of them were equally skilled to get a perfect job in the end, a perfect finish job. On that basis we asked that all be given one minimum wage.

HOFFMAN: I see, okay, and then any other increases would be based on incentives or additional skills?

VOLZ: Yes. In the early days most men got over the scale because of their particular skill.

HOFFMAN: And what did a proofer do?

VOLZ: A proofer made the prints when the plate was finished.

HOFFMAN: He made the first print?

VOLZ: He made the print to show the buyer what. . . .

HOFFMAN: What it would be. He would pull the first print.

VOLZ: That's right, the first print. We call them proofs.

HOFFMAN: Why was that more difficult to do than just the subsequent printing of them in itself?

VOLZ: Well the proofing in those days was all by hand, and printing of course was machine work. A printing press is. . . .

HOFFMAN: I see. So what you did was you laid the paper on it and you did just one copy in order to show the customer.

VOLZ: Maybe we would make two or three proofs of it to show the customer. And a proof to go with the bill. (laughter)

HOFFMAN: Did that mean that you had to read it or check it for accuracy to make sure it was right before you. . . ?

VOLZ: Oh, no, just to show the customer what he was getting.

HOFFMAN: What kinds of commercial photoengraving were typical then? There was a lot of newspaper work, wasn't there?

VOLZ: For a while, newspaper was the principal work, but gradually it got into magazines. Of course afterwards the magazine became the big volume of work. Of course what caused photoengraving to decline was the coming of television and radio. All the advertising dollars going into [TV and radio]. . . at one time all the advertising dollars went into printing.

HOFFMAN: And isn't there some decline too because of the fact that more and more was done by lithography rather than photoengraving?

VOLZ: Well, in my early days lithography was in existence, but lithography was on stone in those days, and it was . . . .

HOFFMAN: Cumbersome.

VOLZ: Cumbersome, roundabout way. And until they got to what they now call offset on metal, the same as photoengraving, they didn't make much headway.

HOFFMAN: What metal did you use in the early days?

VOLZ: Part of the work was done on copper, so-called half-tone work, and the line work was on zinc. And

of course in the early days the etching was all done in an open tub. You'd drop the tub and brush it with nitric acid. And with dragon's blood they had to protect some of the. . . .

HOFFMAN: What's dragon's blood?

VOLZ: Well, all I can tell you about dragon's blood is that it was a red powder, and it'd be put on a plate and then burned in to protect certain parts of it from etching away.

HOFFMAN: I see. Now you made an effort to set prices for a commercial establishment. . . .

VOLZ: For a while, yes.

HOFFMAN: And that was unsuccessful?

VOLZ: It was very successful for three or four years until the legislature at Albany passed laws to stop it.

HOFFMAN: Right.

VOLZ: Of course what one judge did, I forget his name now, but he upheld it for a few years. He said photoengraving was an art or a process, it wasn't a manufacture.

HOFFMAN: And that you had the right to set the prices because it involved your labor.

VOLZ: Where the employers set a price, they had difficulty in enforcing it; the union set a price, and we were more successful in having it observed.

HOFFMAN: Yes. Now when all this effort that you went through to try to fight this law in Albany. . . .

VOLZ: For three or four years. . . .

HOFFMAN: Yes, did you have backing from the New York State Federation of Labor?

VOLZ: In a way we did, but we did most of it ourselves.

HOFFMAN: Was Mr. Meany in the New York State Federation of Labor at that time?

VOLZ: I don't think so. I think Meany came in later. I was one of Meany's supporters when he first ran for

secretary against Frank. . . . What was his name? He was secretary of the Federation for so many years under Gompers.

HOFFMAN: Morrison?

VOLZ: Morrison, yes, and when Meany first ran for secretary/treasurer, you know, I was one of his seconders. Not that I had anything against Morrison, because Morrison was getting old and was thinking of retiring anyway.

HOFFMAN: I see.

VOLZ: I met Morrison. I knew Morrison very well and I liked him very much.

HOFFMAN: Well, when did you attend your first convention of the AF of L?

VOLZ: I attended some; not as a delegate. I started attending as delegate when I became president. That was in 19. . . .

HOFFMAN: In 1929.

VOLZ: In 1929. Of course, 1930, really.

HOFFMAN: Well, you must have been there through all the discussions about the Committee for Industrial Organizations.

VOLZ: Oh, yes, I went through all that.

HOFFMAN: How did you feel about that?

VOLZ: Well of course I always felt that they should have never started the CIO. They should have stayed in one organization and fought out their battles. Whatever battle they had, to fight them out there.

HOFFMAN: Why did you think that they withdrew?

VOLZ: Why did they withdraw?

HOFFMAN: Yes.

VOLZ: The CIO was more of an industrial organization, where the AFL of L was mostly craft unions, limited to one craft, see?

HOFFMAN: Yes, but the Miners were in the AF of L and they were an industrial organization.

VOLZ: They were an industrial organization, yes. Of course some of the miners. . . . John Lewis, you know, was one of the formers of the CIO; he wanted to get out.

HOFFMAN: Right, right. Were you there at that famous convention?

VOLZ: Oh, yes.

HOFFMAN: When he and Bill Hutcheson fought with one another?

VOLZ: Yes.

HOFFMAN: Did you see the fight?

VOLZ: I did.

HOFFMAN: Would you describe it?

VOLZ: Well, it wasn't too much of a fight, but it was more verbal than physical. (laughter)

HOFFMAN: Oh, really.

VOLZ: Yes.

HOFFMAN: Because I've heard John L. Lewis say that he knocked Bill Hutcheson down.

VOLZ: Oh, well, he pushed him and I guess he lost his balance, but there was no injury done to any of them.

HOFFMAN: (laughter) Well, I've heard other people say that, too.

VOLZ: Of course Lewis was very arrogant, if I might use that expression. And his backers were all placed when Lewis came into the convention. His backers would all stand up and applaud and they would try to get the convention to stand up and applaud John Lewis coming in. (laughter) Are you getting all this on tape?

HOFFMAN: Yes. Well, John Lewis is gone, and the Miners for a Democracy now have gotten their union back.

VOLZ: Personally, John was all right, too. John had many good traits, and he did for the Miners a remarkable job, but he took advantage of the Wagner Act to do it.

HOFFMAN: Yes. Well, I know lots of people that have felt that he was sort of an ego maniac.

VOLZ: As I say, arrogant and very ego. . . .

HOFFMAN: Right. Well, let's get back to the strike of 1922 in New York. Was that really a strike or a lock out?

VOLZ: Oh, that was a lockout; not only in New York. It was a general lockout. Of course the stuff I sent you was unfortunately international and New York local activity combined.

HOFFMAN: Right.

VOLZ: Unless you knew what was what, I thought you might have a difficult time understanding some of it.

HOFFMAN: Well, this was an effort to establish a forty-eight hour work week, you said, and the employers engaged in a country-wide lockout.

VOLZ: We had a forty-four hour week. The employers, to get back to the forty-eight hour week, called a general lockout.

HOFFMAN: So I imagine that this was a part of the general attempt of the employers to return to pre-war conditions.

VOLZ: It was an attempt to get back to the forty-eight hour week.

HOFFMAN: Right.

VOLZ: Of course that was before I was president. I was president of the local union at that time.

HOFFMAN: Now in New York you seem to have had better luck than you did in a lot of other places.

VOLZ: Yes, it was better organized. Some of the cities never recuperated until the adoption of the Wagner Act, giving the men the right to organize, you know.

HOFFMAN: So they were over twelve years without a union?

VOLZ: Yes, some of them.

HOFFMAN: Open shop.

VOLZ: They had unions, but they had more difficulty. There were some unions in all the same cities, but a lot of the shops couldn't get recognition.

HOFFMAN: Now this was a general strike which affected not only the Photoengravers, but all. . . .

VOLZ: Photoengravers only.

HOFFMAN: Oh, only the Photoengravers.

VOLZ: Only the Photoengravers.

HOFFMAN: Because it seems to me that there were a number of strikes in the printing industry in 1922.

VOLZ: There might have been, but it was only the Photoengravers who were locked out that I refer to.

HOFFMAN: Right. Now was the Allied Printing Trades Council doing any kind of inter-union bargaining in New York City?

VOLZ: How do you mean, inter?

HOFFMAN: Well, I mean that they all sat down together to bargain with one employer.

VOLZ: Oh, no, each group bargained for itself.

HOFFMAN: So there was no. . . .

VOLZ: No universal bargaining between the printing trades.

HOFFMAN: No universal bargaining.

VOLZ: No, each union. . . .

HOFFMAN: Well there was in Boston, wasn't there?

VOLZ: Not that I know of, no.

HOFFMAN: No? Because I may be mistaken, but I thought that Mr. Connolly told me that the Bookbinders participated in joint bargaining through the Allied Printing Trades Council in Boston.

VOLZ: They may have; I'm not aware of it.

HOFFMAN: It wasn't very important in any case.

VOLZ: No. I know the Photoengravers as a rule had to bargain for themselves. And there was a bit of rivalry of course because each one was a bit jealous of what the other one got.

HOFFMAN: How did the Photoengravers come out relative to the typos?

VOLZ: Well the Photoengravers were always a bit higher paid than the other printing trade unions.

HOFFMAN: Why was that?

VOLZ: Possibly better organized and possibly a bit more skilled.

HOFFMAN: And maybe Matt Woll's law degree helped.

VOLZ: Well that might have helped quite some in all of it.

HOFFMAN: Now I notice that you said that there was an attempt to get a general printing trades union about that time.

VOLZ: There was talk of it. They spoke of it, but it never got very far.

HOFFMAN: Why not? First of all, why did you talk about it?

VOLZ: They wondered if they maybe could get some benefits out of it. But each group felt that their own particular group was more important.

HOFFMAN: Were you interested in this general printing trade union?

VOLZ: I attended some of the meetings, yes.

HOFFMAN: But you weren't pushing for it?

VOLZ: No.

HOFFMAN: Why not?

VOLZ: Well, Photoengravers always thought they were higher skilled than the others and always got a little more money. (laughter)

HOFFMAN: Right, okay.

VOLZ: Of course one of the outstanding things which I would say I helped do was to bring about the five-

day week in '29. We were the first of the printing trade and the first of almost any trade that had a five-day week.

HOFFMAN: Now it's interesting you obtained that right on the eve of the depression.

VOLZ: Yes, we made a six-year agreement to get it, see.

HOFFMAN: But that was lucky!

VOLZ: It was the most fortunate thing we ever did because it carried us through the depression without any difficulty.

HOFFMAN: Right.

VOLZ: And of course while the first one was in New York, the same way with reducing the number of branches and putting time all on one scale. What New York did, other cities, within the year, followed. They were successful in getting it. And the same way with the five-day week, within the year we had it throughout the industry.

HOFFMAN: Would you tell me something about your educational activities in apprenticeship training in Local One in New York?

VOLZ: Well, my apprenticeship was. . . .

HOFFMAN: No, I don't mean <u>your</u> apprenticeship. I mean apprenticeship training.

VOLZ: Well, I was instrumental in getting the first. In getting the Board of Trade, which was the Photoengravers' employers and the Board of Education, to organize classes for Photoengravers. That was back in 1921 or '22. I don't know, it was quite a ways back.

(END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1)

HOFFMAN: As well as your interest with the Board of Education in establishing these vocational schools, you also were active with the Board of Health in doing what?

VOLZ: In getting an examination of the sanitary conditions in the shops and a physical examination for any member who volunteered for an examination.

HOFFMAN: To determine whether there were any threats to his safety.

VOLZ: In his particular branch that might have been rectified, that it might be detrimental. We had two of those examinations and each one lasted six months before they got around to all the shops.

HOFFMAN: What kinds of hazards were there?

VOLZ: Well as I mentioned before, the etchers, for instance, worked over an open tub of nitric acid, eating away the metal. The fumes were terrific. Then this dragon's blood, the men would be red from top to bottom. Some of it would get in their throats, of course, and in their eyes. Different things. Even the photographers, with the chemicals they use for developing the negatives, you know.

HOFFMAN: Yes. Were there risks of danger of being burned by chemicals, too?

VOLZ: Well, the nitric acid would burn you pretty bad if you got any of it on you. Of course afterwards it was all done in machines, closed machines. In the early days it was all done by hand in a tub that was rocked and they had a brush which they brushed over the plates while it was etching.

HOFFMAN: About how many men would typically work in a typical shop?

VOLZ: Oh, they ranged quite different. Some shops were very small, maybe ten men, and other shops were as high as 150 at the time. It all depends.

HOFFMAN: Now the large ones would tend to be newspaper work?

VOLZ: No, newspaper as a rule had their own plant. Some newspapers had their work done in commercial plants, but most newspapers had their own plants, as they still have.

HOFFMAN: Were their own people members of your union?

VOLZ: Oh, yes, the photoengravers were members of the union, yes.

HOFFMAN: Well, the reason I ask that is because I noticed that in one of the things I was reading that you set a ratio of one to four for training appren tices, but fewer. . . .

VOLZ: And then two to seven for a while.

HOFFMAN: Right, but fewer in newspapers. And I wondered why fewer in newspapers?

VOLZ: Because we figured they had less opportunity in becoming skilled workers. In a newspaper every thing had to be done so fast, and it's hard to give a boy a chance because the copy came in and within an hour or two it had to be on the press.

HOFFMAN: I see.

VOLZ: The apprentice hardly had any opportunity. For a while newspapers did work outside their own. We stopped that because we felt that it was detri-mental to the industry as a whole.

HOFFMAN: Well, I thought we might talk a little bit about some of your activities with the AF of L. Now you attended your first convention of the AF of L in 19. . . ?

VOLZ: I was there as a delegate in 1930.

HOFFMAN: So Bill Green was president then. . . .

VOLZ: And Morrison was secretary. I, for most of my years in the AF of L, was secretary of the commit-tee on law.

HOFFMAN: On law.

VOLZ: Under Dan Tobin. He was chairman of that com-mittee.

HOFFMAN: Right. And what kinds of things did this committee concern itself with?

VOLZ: Well, the only law it was concerned with was the law of the American Federation of Labor.

HOFFMAN: Right. So it was a rules committee?

VOLZ: Really a rules committee; they called it a com-mittee on law.

HOFFMAN: But it made rules for the convention.

VOLZ: Anybody that put any amendment to the constitution, we passed on it.

HOFFMAN: So it was a pretty important committee.

VOLZ: Well, not as important as it might sound. A committee on law may mean many things outside of the AFL activities, but the only activity was the constitution of the AF of L.

HOFFMAN: Right, but you were in a position to either get things on the convention floor or not.

VOLZ: Any resolution that was put in in regard to an amendment of the law had to go to this committee.

HOFFMAN: Right.

VOLZ: And they either approved or disapproved and sent it to the convention.

HOFFMAN: Right. So it seems to me that if you want to discuss something in the convention, it was a pretty important committee.

VOLZ: Whatever amendments were brought up, of course, were discussed on the floor of the convention, yes.

HOFFMAN: Right.

VOLZ: And the committee had to more or less justify the findings.

HOFFMAN: I don't picture Dan Tobin sitting on the committee.

VOLZ: Well Dan Tobin was supposed to make the report to the convention, but as a rule I had to make the report. (laughter)

HOFFMAN: Well, how has the atmosphere of the convention changed over the years?

VOLZ: Well I haven't attended any in the last twenty years, so I. . . .

HOFFMAN: Well, from 1930 to 1950?

VOLZ: Well, there wasn't too much change. I believe at those times the AF of L was more of a fraternal organization than it is today.

HOFFMAN: More people sort of knew each other.

VOLZ: Right, knew each other by their first name.

HOFFMAN: About how many delegates would be in attendance at the convention?

VOLZ: Oh, I'd hate to say. They were large conventions.

HOFFMAN: I notice that you were active as a fraternal delegate to represent the AF of L at the British Trade Unions' Congress. . .

VOLZ: Yes, in 1948.

HOFFMAN: . . . and that Photoengravers have frequently been fraternal delegates.

VOLZ: Matt Woll was delegate. Pete Brady, a New York man who was president of the New York union before I was president, was a fraternal delegate. Matt Woll was a fraternal delegate for two or three of their conventions. Henry Schmal, who was secretary of the International Union for quite a number of years, was also a delegate.

HOFFMAN: So you would bring back your reports to the next convention of the AF of L?

VOLZ: Of the AF of L, yes.

HOFFMAN: What was the substance of your report in 1948?

VOLZ: Well at that time the communists were very active in trying to get a foothold in all unions and especially so in England, and my report to that convention was mostly to guard against the intrusion of the communists.

HOFFMAN: Now the AF of L was involved at that time in forming a new world federation, the ICFTU.

VOLZ: Yes.

HOFFMAN: See, the CIO at that time belonged to the WFTU, the old. . . .

VOLZ: I believe so, yes.

HOFFMAN: Yes, and the British must have been discussing these two. . . .

VOLZ: The main topic of consideration in those days was to block the intrusion of communism into the union.

We had some of it in this country at that time, too, but not nearly as much as England did. England, in fact all countries, had the same problem for a while.

HOFFMAN: Right. I see where you married an Irish girl.

VOLZ: Yes.

HOFFMAN: Had she been born in Ireland?

VOLZ: Oh, yes, and her sister here was born in Ireland, too.

HOFFMAN: So you got to take this lovely trip to Ireland.

VOLZ: When I retired the boys, knowing Mrs. Volz was always so popular at the conventions, said, "Take your wife to Ireland."

HOFFMAN: That was nice.

VOLZ: So they paid for the trip to Ireland.

HOFFMAN: (laughter) That was very, very nice.

VOLZ: Of course I went to Ireland on our honeymoon. First I took my wife down to Cincinnati where I was born. Then we went to Niagara Falls, Washington, and different places, and when she came back [she said], "We've got to go to Ireland." So we went to Ireland for a couple of weeks.

HOFFMAN: You were an active trade unionist at the time you got married?

VOLZ: Oh, yes.

HOFFMAN: And how did your wife feel about that?

VOLZ: Well, I would say she took it wonderfully. (laughter) Let me tell you this story. When we went to get our marriage license, we weren't on speaking terms. (laughter) We met down at City Hall. I tipped my hat, we went in together, got the license. I paid the dollar for the license; smiling, handed her the license, tipped my hat. She went her way, and I went mine.

Two nights before. . . . Well, you see, she knew I was a member of the union, but she didn't know I was active, and when I had sometimes two meetings a week, she couldn't understand because she thought unions only met once a month. (laughter) I've often told that story to different friends,

about when we went to get our marriage license and we weren't on speaking terms. (laughter)

HOFFMAN: She was angry with you because you had been to a union meeting?

VOLZ: Too many meetings. She wondered if they were union meetings because she thought unions only met once a month. We had meetings two or three times a week sometimes.

HOFFMAN: But she married you anyway.

VOLZ: Oh, yes. I had rivals, but I beat them out I guess.

HOFFMAN: I think it would be interesting to know something about what New York was like in 1916. Where did you live and where did you work?

VOLZ: I had a number of jobs in New York. I worked with Electrolight Engraving Company. I worked with Atlas Engraving Company, and then I was back at the Electrolight. Then I worked at the Beck Engraving Company, just before I got the job with the union. In 1914 I was put on as a special organizer of the New York union, and I organized the rotogravure workers.

HOFFMAN: Oh, was that a full time job, special organizer?

VOLZ: Yes.

HOFFMAN: I see.

VOLZ: Rotogravure was a new process at the time and was making headway, and I was appointed to organize the gravure workers, which I succeeded in doing. I got all of them in the union and got contracts with all of the plants within, maybe, two or three years.

HOFFMAN: That must have been quite a job in the city of New York.

VOLZ: It was. Of course. It took a lot of time. I worked from early morning till late at night.

HOFFMAN: So it's no wonder you wife wasn't on speaking terms with you!

VOLZ: Ordinarily we'd have gone to lunch after getting the marriage license, but I handed her the marriage license, tipped my hat, and went my own way.

HOFFMAN: How long after that did you get married? Just a few days?

VOLZ: A week or two, I'd say. It was all patched up again. (laughter) Of course my mother and one of my brothers came along to witness the wedding. In fact, my brother and my sister-in-law were best man and best girl.

HOFFMAN: You were always located here in New York?

VOLZ: From 1906, yes.

HOFFMAN: Oh, I know one thing that was curious, that struck me as curious. Matt Woll was also always located here in New York.

VOLZ: Matt Woll was a member of the Chicago local union all his life, but his activity was mostly here in New York.

HOFFMAN: But it strikes me as strange, Mr. Volz, that he didn't go to Washington, D.C., you know, when he was vice president and so active in the AF of L.

VOLZ: He put most of his time in here, I would say.

HOFFMAN: Why did he do that?

VOLZ: I don't know. There was more doing here, maybe, more activity here.

HOFFMAN: Did he kind of. . . .

VOLZ: Of course while Matt was from Chicago and a member of the Chicago local union, if there was anything that had to be done in Chicago, even before I was president, when I was vice president, I went to Chicago to do it because, unfortunately, Chicago had at that time a number of communists, and they were out for Matt.

HOFFMAN: So he felt he had to stay here and kind of keep an eye on things.

VOLZ: He stayed in New York most of the time.

HOFFMAN: No, but I mean when you had to go to Chicago.

VOLZ: Oh, if there was an agreement pending, I went out to negotiate.

HOFFMAN: I see, I see. But when he became president of the International Union, he moved to New York.

VOLZ: Well, he kept Chicago as his official residence, but he lived most of his time in New York.

HOFFMAN: Did he move his family to New York?

VOLZ: No. Of course Matt's one son is still an attorney for the AF of L.

HOFFMAN: That's right.

VOLZ: Albert Woll.

HOFFMAN: Right.

VOLZ: The other one was active in Chicago. He died since. I forget what kind of a job he had. He was in city government in Chicago. [Speaking to his sister-in-law] Anna, if you have lunch ready, we'll have it.

[APPARENTLY A LUNCH BREAK]

HOFFMAN: It strikes me as curious and I'll tell you why, because nowadays it would not be uncommon for a man to commute from New York to Washington and to keep his office in New York and yet have to go to Washington so oftn on business. But then it must have been very unusual.

VOLZ: No, it was common. After all, it was six hours to Washington on train. It was a night train. It would leave New York at midnight and be in Washington in the morning. He lost no time, really. Most of the travelling was at night, and he lost no time.

HOFFMAN: Did he maintain an office in Washington as well?

VOLZ: I don't think so.

HOFFMAN: No. He just relied on somebody like Miss Thorne to report to him.

VOLZ: Right.

HOFFMAN: Did he have a very close relationship with Florence Thorne? I mean, was she. . . ?

VOLZ: They got along very nicely together. Matt got along with everyone very nicely.

HOFFMAN: Well, some people didn't get along with Florence Thorne. (laughter)

VOLZ: I never heard of any controversy between them or any difference between them.

HOFFMAN: Between Matt Woll and Florence Thorne?

VOLZ: Yes.

HOFFMAN: No, I think the impression that I have is that she was very loyal to him. She sort of saw him as the person to carry on Gomper's tradition.

VOLZ: She thought he was going to be the successor.

HOFFMAN: Yes.

VOLZ: [Speaking to sister-in-law, Anna] I just told Mrs. Hoffman that when I went down to get the marriage license with your sister we weren't on speaking terms. (laughter)

ANNA: Oh, that's true! That's so true! Did you show her the picture?

VOLZ: Yes.

HOFFMAN: Yes, very pretty.

SARA: She was wonderful. Everybody has the same thing to say about her.

HOFFMAN: You must have been a much, much younger sister.

SARA: Oh, no. . . .

HOFFMAN: Both of you. I would never guess you were so old. He claims to be ninety-three years old. I'm not sure I believe him. (laughter)

VOLZ: You asked me when I was born. I told you when I was born; you figured the years.

HOFFMAN: Well, it's wonderful. It's just wonderful. Well, it there anything else that we should cover that we haven't covered?

VOLZ: Unless there's something you can think of.

HOFFMAN: Well, let me look through here. I did have some other questions.

VOLZ: Of course you have in there about the various unions that were formed of photoengravers and passed out again.

HOFFMAN: Right, that's all here. Well, how did you feel about the merger between the Photoengravers and the Lithographers?

VOLZ: We were talking about it for many years. But as I say, the question was will you join our union or will we join [yours]. Will we join the Lithographers or will the Lithographers join the Photoengravers?

HOFFMAN: And you couldn't work out an amalgamation?

VOLZ: We couldn't. It just wasn't in the making at the time.

HOFFMAN: Well, what caused the difference do you think?

VOLZ: I don't know. It was possibly neither one would give up their identity as Lithographers or [Photoengravers].

HOFFMAN: But why was Mr. Hall willing to give up the presidency to Mr. Brown?

VOLZ: Well, you see we were getting closer and closer together. By the time he got in, we had a fairly good understanding as to what should be done.

HOFFMAN: Did you start these discussions with Andrew Kennedy?

VOLZ: Oh, yes, we had lots of them. In fact, at one time we agreed that they would join the Photoengravers Union, that is the Pressmen's Union. You see, the Pressmen were interested too because some of the offset pressmen thought they should be in the Pressmen's Union and the Pressmen's Union also wanted the Lithographers to join their union. George Berry was president of the Pressmen's Union at the time and he thought he had an understanding with them, and he suggested that the Lithographers decide either to join the Pressmen's Union or the Photoengravers. To his surprise they voted to join the Photoengravers, (laughter) and then he upset the whole apple card.

HOFFMAN: Yes, he wasn't really interested in merger then.

VOLZ: If you joined his union, yes, but to join the Photoengravers, no. Oh, yes, even before Kennedy's

time we had meetings, possible amalgamation or possibly joining together.

HOFFMAN: Who did you have the first discussions with, Gehrig or Bock?

VOLZ: Before Kennedy's time, Matt Woll was mostly in on the preceedings. When I got to be president, it was mostly with Kennedy for a while.

HOFFMAN: I can't imagine Matt Woll joining with anybody. I mean, you know, unless they joined the Photoengravers.

VOLZ: Those days it was a question whether will you join us or will we join you.

HOFFMAN: Yes.

VOLZ: And as I say, we got along all right together. We had occasion to go to Washington often and Kennedy and I went together, that is, we'd be on the same train. We'd meet in the morning, have breakfast together, and he'd go his way and I'd go mine.

HOFFMAN: How did you feel about the Lithographers joining the CIO?

VOLZ: Well, we weren't very favorable to it at the time at all.

HOFFMAN: That must have meant that all merger discussions stopped then?

VOLZ: Yes, well, we still kept on speaking terms as you might say. We still discussed it, but of course they weren't in the CIO very long.

HOFFMAN: No, they went independent.

VOLZ: Yes.

HOFFMAN: Well, what kinds of discussions did you have? I mean, what did you talk about?

VOLZ: Well, why don't you join our union? Why don't you join my union?

HOFFMAN: That's all? In all those meetings?

VOLZ: We spoke about the benefits it would improve and so forth. Of course the big pitch was that some of

the lithographers were Pressmen, and the photoengravers as Photoengravers didn't want to do any thing harmful to the Pressmen.

HOFFMAN: The Photoengravers regarded themselves as much more highly skilled than Pressmen?

VOLZ: Well not necessarily highly skilled. But we felt that if they had jurisdiction, they should be observed as having jurisdiction over the press work. Of curse some of the Lithographers were doing press work. That was the main objective. That was the main reason for not getting together, the Pressmen in between the two unions. We didn't want to do anything harmful to the Pressmen, and the Pressmen didn't want to do anything harmful to us, I guess.

HOFFMAN: So that if at one point you could have all three merged, that would have made sense.

VOLZ: There was no such talk.

HOFFMAN: Never was?

VOLZ: No.

HOFFMAN: Why not?

VOLZ: Well, the photoengravers' work was so far removed from any press work. Of course there were pressmen in the Lithographers' Union, but there were no pressmen in the Photoengravers.

HOFFMAN: Are there now?

VOLZ: No. At one time there were Photoengravers who belonged to the Pressmens' Union, and in 19. . . Oh, I wouldn't want to say the date, but the Pressmens' Union turned over some forty-odd members to the Photoengravers. It was for that reason, too, that we didn't want to do anything detrimental to the Pressmen by talks with the Lithograpners.

HOFFMAN: And the Typographical Union had also turned over some of their members, had they not?

VOLZ: Not to the Photoengravers.

HOFFMAN: Not to the Photoengravers.

VOLZ: No.

HOFFMAN: And what about the relationship with the Stereotypers and the Electrotypers?

VOLZ: Well, at one time there was some talk of the Stereotypers and the Photoengravers joining up, but it never worked out. That was in the very early days, and the Electrotypers and Stereotypers formed their own union.

HOFFMAN: Now in the very early days were the crafts more distinct or less distinct than they came to be?

VOLZ: I would say they were more distinct.

HOFFMAN: More distinct.

VOLZ: Yes.

HOFFMAN: Well why did you talk about merger then, because you were plate makers?

VOLZ: Yes. Well, the lithographers and we were making plates for printing purposes.

HOFFMAN: I see. You thought in terms, at one time, of a union that would include everybody who was a plate maker?

VOLZ: That's right.

EDWARD VOLZ

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