ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

JACK WALLACE

Washington, D.C.

March 8, 1973

INTRODUCTION

Born in Jefferson, Missouri, and originally a commercial artist, Jack Wallace entered the lithographic industry after the Second World War as a litho artist, cameraman, and finally superintendent of a plant in Kansas City. Wallace became a member of Local 25 in Kansas City. He describes the lithographic industry as it thrived in Kansas City. He recounts the situation where as lithography processes expanded, jurisdictional disputes increased--although less so in Kansas City where lithographers were so well organized. He describes the relationship between the lithographic industry and Hallmark Cards, one of its largest customers. He discusses the good relationship that Kansas City locals had with employers, many of whom were themselves members of the union. As these employers die off, warns Wallace, and as conglomerates take over, the personal worker/employer relationship characteristic of Kansas City plants might fade.

Wallace tells about the 1951 strike in Kansas City--the roles played by Benjamin Robinson, lawyer for the union; Marty Grayson, secretary-treasurer; Donald Robbins, strike strategist; Frank Karl who was in charge of strike benefits. As a result of his involvement with the strategy of the Kansas City strike, Wallace came to the attention of union officials and

was eventually appointed International Representative in the Mountain Region, working closely with Marty Grayson, who had resigned as secretary-treasurer because of differences with Ben Robinson and Ed Swayduck, President of Local One.

Other union experiences that Wallace relates are the merger between the Lithographers and the Photoengravers in Kansas City, the Kansas City local's disaffiliation from the AFL in 1948 and its subsequent joining with the CIO, and the Foote-Davis case that prompted it--with some impressions of Ben Robinson, with whom Wallace disagreed on the question of craft versus industrial unionism.

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INTERVIEWER: ALICE M. HOFFMAN

INTERVIEWER: Okay, why don't you just tell me your name and date and place of birth. And that'll give me a chance to check the level.

WALLACE: My name is Jack H. Wallace. I was born in Jefferson City, Missouri on January 20, 1914.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. You had told me that your father was a bookbinder and active in the trade and active in the labor movement.

WALLACE: That's correct.

INTERVIEWER: Did you go into the Army right from high school?

WALLACE: Well, no, I worked in Kansas City and in Chicago prior to going into the Army. I worked from the depression years, starting in 1929, until I entered the Army, and I believe it was 1942.

INTERVIEWER: And you worked as a commercial artist?

WALLACE: I worked as a sign painter first and as a commercial artist during those years. Worked for a department store for a while, creating their signs and their displays, advertising work.

INTERVIEWER: And there was no trade union involved in that work or was there?

WALLACE: There was no trade union involved.

INTERVIEWER: And then you came out of the Army in 1945?

WALLACE: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: And where was home at that time?

WALLACE: Kansas City, Missouri.

INTERVIEWER: Kansas City. And how did you end up in a lithographic shop?

WALLACE: When I returned from the Army, I was undecided as to what to do. I did not want to go back into the work that I had been doing because I had no significant talents as an artist. My father and a very close friend of his, Melvin Hamilton, urged me to enter the lithographic industry. It just happened that about that time, George Krug, who was a member of our Kansas City Local 25, was starting a new shop, the Krug Litho Art Company.

INTERVIEWER: Krug and what?

WALLACE: Krug Litho Art Company. And he was in the process of hiring people. My father and Melvin Hamilton spoke to Krug, and Krug then insisted that I come for an interview. I wasn't very interested in it at all, but I finally met with him and listened to his arguments about what a good trade it was, and what good opportunities there were; and he even made me some special concessions because of my art ability. He arranged for me to have, I believe, a two--and-a-half year credit toward my journeyman's card. And somewhere along the line I was convinced that it might be a good idea to get into the lithographic trade. And it was very good I did because it's been a good trade and it's been a good movement.

INTERVIEWER: Which end of it did you get into?

WALLACE: Lithographic artist. Then later on I worked in a number of other shops, first as a lithographic artist, and later as a cameraman. As I moved from shop to shop, I became a cameraman and did some stripping and eventually was given charge as the foreman of the preparatory department, then as a superintendent of a plant, a rather small plant of about thirty or so employees in Kansas City.

My work in the lithographic trade was in the Krug Litho Art Company, the Fine Arts Lithographing Company, the Midwestern Litho Plate Company, and then Williamson and Lawrence Arts Company.

INTERVIEWER: So when did you become associated with Local 25? When you first went into the Krug Litho Art Company?

WALLACE: Yes, when I first went over to Krug Litho Art, I became a member of Local 25. One of the things I recall that was rather impressive was that--not that I agreed with it, but it was rather impressive to me--was that when I made my application for membership in the local, they used the blackball system. And so now that I've become the director of organizing and involved in organizing a lot of people, I sometimes tremble almost when I think of the manner in which young applicants to the union were treated when they were left standing in the hall while the whole membership filed past the box and either dropped a white ball or a black ball in the box.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

WALLACE: And if someone dropped in a black ball, you were not accepted into membership.

INTERVIEWER: And what would cause people to drop in a black ball?

WALLACE: I think the individual who dropped the black ball would have to be the one to tell you this.

INTERVIEWER: No! If he just didn't like you?

WALLACE: If he didn't like you, if he had any reason at all or no reason at all, I'm sure he could drop a black ball. If he didn't like you or if he felt that somehow having you come into the union might somehow threaten his own security in some way, maybe that you'd try adding additional people in the shop or in the union, it might reduce the amount of his overtime or whatever the reason. The black ball system was abandoned in Local 25, oh, very shortly after I became a member; within a year after I became a member they ceased to use that system.

INTERVIEWER: (laughing) Well, that must have been a real eye-opener for you! Were you reluctant to join the union?

WALLACE: No, I was delighted to have the opportunity to join the union. I had had the experience of working all my life in non-union situations where there was no overtime in all the years that I worked as an artist or as a display manager. We would just work whenever the work was there and work hard and work long and never get paid for the extra hour. When there was an opportunity to work in a union situation, it was a new and wonderful experience and one I'm sure that I was appreciative of.

INTERVIEWER: Well, why don't you kind of describe the Kansas City Local at that time and say something about the way in which it may have changed.

WALLACE: When I joined the Kansas City local about 1945, as I recall, there were about 250 members. The president of the local was John Davis--John W. Davis--a very nice, elderly man, quiet, not very articulate, but honest. He had at one time, I understand, been an international councillor of the Amalgamated Lithographers for a short period of time. And just about the time I joined the union, he became the first full-time president of the local union. Other officers of the local at that time were Thomas Slight--better known as "Slim" Slight--who was secretary-treasurer. "Slim" later left the Kansas City local and went to Salt Lake City where I met him in later years when I was an international representative. There

were a number of other officers whose names are a little more difficult to recall, but it seemed to me at that time that they were all somewhat elderly as compared to the leadership that we have now. They were good men, honest men, not very effective, and.

INTERVIEWER: What were wages like in the litho industry as compared with the other printing trades at that time?

WALLACE: The wages in the lithographic industry were higher even then than they were in the letterpress or in the binderies or stereotyping, electrotyping or composing or any other trade in the graphic arts. I'm not certain, but I have the impression that the wages in the lithographic industry were better than wages generally throughout the industry and probably better than the building trades in those days.

The union had already achieved vacations with pay, holidays, and fairly good overtime conditions. But it was a far cry from what we have today, and I had the great-experience of being on the international staff later when we achieved most of the conditions that we have today.

INTERVIEWER: Pensions and so forth?

WALLACE: Hm-hm.

INTERVIEWER: Were you largely concentrated in one or two large shops in Kansas City or were there many small shops?

WALLACE: No, the Kansas City local consisted of a number of large, important shops. For a relatively small city the industry in Kansas City was quite old, Kansas City Local 25 being the 25th local chartered in the whole union. We had some very good, high-quality lithograph shops in Kansas City. There were not very many of the kind of specialty shops that you see in some areas. The shops did a lot of high-quality color lithography, even back in those days.

INTERVIEWER: For what sort of customers.

WALLACE: General commercial customers and Hallmark Cards. Hallmark Cards and Transworld Airlines were the biggest single accounts in the Kansas City area. There were companies in Kansas City that did beautiful calendar work; there were companies, of course, that did greeting cards; there were companies that did posters. My father once worked for the Ackerman Quigley Lithograph Company, one of the last companies to be engaged in the manufacture of show posters, the kind of posters that were posted on fences and walls, advertising circuses and that sort of thing. That was quite an industry in itself.

INTERVIEWER: Recently in Philadelphia at the Art Museum they had an exhibit of circus posters, and there was a lot of very beautiful art work in them.

WALLACE: A lot of creative work was done. It was done right in the shop by lithographic artists. Although my dad was in the bindery--and he was the foreman of the bindery, as a matter of fact--I used to visit the shop from time to time and watch with great interest the work of the lithographic artists who designed the hand letters. And in those days they were designing and cutting letters out of wood blocks. They were putting them on large, flat letter presses and setting the wood-block letters together just as you might set type together.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Were they kind of craft-oriented, these people?

WALLACE: Yes, the Kansas City local was very craft-oriented. The Lithographers Union of that day was so highly craft-oriented that there were many people who were not acceptable to the local because their skills weren't considered to be high enough skills to warrant membership in the highly craft-oriented union. It was many years before the local was willing to organize multilith operators, for example--multilith being a small press. And most of the work done on multiliths in those days was black-and-white work, and it was not thought that the union should be representing people doing work of that low a skill.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. What changed their minds?

WALLACE: Well, I hope I had something to do with the change in their minds. I suppose many factors brought the change in attitude. Technological developments, I think, had a great impact upon the decision that we needed to represent a broader base of graphic arts workers--the fact that technological developments actually brought about diminishing skills in many instances. We knew then that we had to represent all people, whether their skills were of the highest order or not, because with diminishing skills our ability to maintain decent wage structures and fringe benefits rested less on our skills and more on our organizational strength.

INTERVIEWER: And what about your relationships with other unions in the printing trades in Kansas City?

WALLACE: As I recall, there was no close relationship with any of the other unions, although when I first came into the industry, the industry was in a transitional stage from stone lithography to a photomechanical process, photo-lithography. For the first time, some of those plants sent their camera work to the photoengraving plant in the city to be done by photoengravers in the sister union. Later on, when cameras were introduced in the lithographic plants, then the work was done in the lithographic plants. But the Photoengravers were not at that point interested in lithography. They thought it was a cheap and dirty process, although in fact some of the most beautiful work in reproduction ever created was created by the process of stone lithography.

INTERVIEWER: Well, isn't it true that art reproductions and things like this have been done by a lithographic process for a long time?

WALLACE: For hundreds of years?

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Well, about 1945, of course, there were all of these various jurisdictional disputes as lithography processes began to expand, and various places that had been

letter press brought in lithographic processes, and letter pressmen attempted to maintain control over them. Wasn't this a problem in Kansas City as well as in California and other places?

WALLACE: It was, but it was less of a problem in Kansas City than, I believe, it was in most places because even at an early time the lithographers in Kansas City had organized themselves pretty well. There were lithographic shops in Kansas City which were strictly lithograph, and not so many were combination letter press and lithograph shops. And there were not so many large letter press shops. Kansas City has never been much of a publications local. The newspaper, of course, was letter press, but there was not very much publication work done there. And it was in plants that did a great deal of publication work by the letter press process, I think, that the switch to offset took place.

Even today the number of lithographers who are represented by the Printing Pressman's Union is extremely small in Kansas City. In Kansas City the union in the graphic arts is the Graphic Arts International Union locals--the Bookbinders and the Lithographers and Photoengravers. There is really no other union of any significance. The Typographical Union has a few members, the Mailers a few, and the Printing Pressmen a few, but it's largely a lithographic union and very largely a lithographic city.

Part of that can be attributed to the fact that Hallmark is such a big customer. There's an interesting story in connection with Hallmark Cards. Hallmark once had their own printing plant, and somewhere along about 1940 or '41--maybe a few years earlier, but around that time--the local, Local 25, organized the printing department of Hallmark Cards. And at that time Fred Rose, from Local 5 of St. Louis, was the vice-president of the region under the then regional system of international union structure. Fred Rose met with the officials of the Hallmark Company. Hallmark told him that they did not want to operate a union plant. As a matter of fact, they didn't say this, but they did not want us to come in the plant because we had organized just a department and there were really thousands of other workers and they didn't want the unionism to spill over into those workers.

So they made an agreement with us. Hallmark Cards made an agreement with us that they would transfer all of their press equipment into the union shops in Kansas City and Wichita and that they would put all of their work into union shops and that we would agree to that rather than insist upon representing the people in the Hallmark plant.

So they sold off all of their press equipment, and all of the employees who were then on the Hallmark payroll were given opportunities to go to work on their same equipment in the companies which bought the equipment.

INTERVIEWER: That must have made for a group of grateful employers!

WALLACE: Yes, it brought a lot of work into Kansas City shops, and it preserved the jobs of all the people in Hallmark. And I can recall, even though it was before my time, I can recall meeting people all over the country--Fort Worth and other cities--who had been in that original Hallmark plant when it was organized.

Hallmark lived up to that agreement until just about ten years ago. About that time they began to place some of their work in non-union shops--Riverside Press in Dallas, Texas, and a plant in Columbia, Georgia, the name of which I know but I can't recall at the moment.

INTERVIEWER: What was their motivation for this? Was it cheaper for them to sort of job out all their...

WALLACE: No, their motivation, I am certain, was that they didn't want a group of people in their huge complex working under union contract because it would encourage all of their other employees to seek union conditions. So rather than have a union representing a few people in the midst of a huge company, they decided that they would just have all their work done outside and not do any printing in their own plant.

The greeting card industry is a strange industry. Some of the greeting card companies have their own printing facilities and some don't. Some follow the system that Hallmark has, and they don't do their own printing at all.

INTERVIEWER: So what's the major work, then, that's done--sorting and packing and...?

WALLACE: In the Hallmark plant?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

WALLACE: Well, they do the creative work, for example. They hire hundreds and hundreds of young people out of high school, people who have some art talent, and they train

those people in their own methods of fake color separation. This means that they make color separations by using pen and ink and brush and wash and air brush and pencil drawings on paper in black-and-white, but each black-and-white drawing represents a color. The process is not completely fullproof, so Hallmark has devised a system where, instead of using four-color process like most commercial plants, they use seven or eight or nine colors on most of their cards. And in addition to the process colors of yellow, cyan, magenta, black, they probably would use a pink and buff and a light blue and a dark blue in order to get flesh tones and that sort of thing without having to be too accurate in terms of their color. And in addition to those young artists, they employ some poets who write those sickening verses.

INTERVIEWER: (Laughing) "Poets" in quotes!

WALLACE: Most of them seem to be kind of "delicate" young men who affect strange attire and dress and sit around meditating and getting inspiration to write that sickening drivel you read on the [cards.]

INTERVIEWER: (Laughing) All the doggerel, yes.

WALLACE: But even Hallmark has moved a little bit away from that as their sole line. They have funny cards, too. It's the biggest greeting card company in the world by far, a tremendous complex there. In addition to the poets and the artists, they have a few cameras now that kind of sneaked into the preparatory production end. And I think they have some small imprinting presses. And then they do an awful lot of sorting and inspecting of cards. And then there's a tremendous department which is involved in placing little doo-dads on the cards. Some of the cards will have a little tulle pasted on them or...

INTERVIEWER: String.

WALLACE: A little string or little something or other, and that's a lot of handwork involved. The company has branched out now to about four or five satellite plants in small towns around Kansas City where they employ housewives mostly and sometimes seasonal and sometimes a few hours a day.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I can see where an operation like that would find the presence of highly-paid, skilled, craft trade unionists sort of a threat.

WALLACE: Another thing that I think was maybe not unique, but was always impressive to me in Kansas City was that many of the firms--lithographic firms--were started and headed up by people for many years who were members of our unions. Many of the employers that I bargained with in the early days who were members, maintained their membership in the union, were really good guys, recognized that skilled craftsmen deserved good wages and conditions. And I believe that of all the places that I've ever worked in--and I've worked all over the United States and Canada--our relationship with the employers in Kansas City was the best I've seen anywhere.

I think it's not at all unusual that the chairman of the Supplemental Retirement Disability's Fund is a Kansas City employer, co-chairman along with President Brown. He's from Kansas City. Herman Rosenberg was the president of the Midland Lithographic Company for many years. He's now dead, and his son is now the chairman but Herman was the first chairman of that fund. A very tough bargainer but a very fair one. I never worked for Herman, but I worked for Sam Goller.

INTERVIEWER: Sam what?

WALLACE: G-O-L-L-E-R. who, along with Vile, owned two plants: Vile Goller Printing Company and the Fine Arts Lithographing Company. Sam is now dead, but his son, Al, has taken over and he also is one of those very fair, very decent employers.

INTERVIEWER: So that the printing industry in Kansas City has not been sucked in by various kinds of conglomerates where you find yourself really bargaining with the food industry or something?

WALLACE: Not nearly to the extent that we've experienced elsewhere. The American Standard Company, which basically was a plumbing concern and now I think they own about thirty-eight graphic arts plants, they did buy the Rigby Printing Company and operated it for a year or so and then sold it back to the original owners. So in that respect the conglomerate idea didn't catch on. Most of the employers in Kansas are still individual owner-operators, with the exception of the Greiner-Pheifield Company, which was purchased by a firm which is a multi-company firm out of Twin Cities.

INTERVIEWER: What's the name of this company?

WALLACE: G-R-E-I-N-E-R. Greinger-Pheifield. I see a lot of the old presidents of these companies, who were members of our union, have been dying off in the last few years.

INTERVIEWER: So that the change is going to come in Kansas City as well as elsewhere.

WALLACE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Well, what was the background of the membership in Kansas City? Were they largely native born?

WALLACE: Almost exclusively native born, yes. In the lithographic end, which was the only end that I was familiar with going back that far, there were a number of German people and people of German extraction. It seemed that the Germans gravitated to the lithographic industry, particularly the stone engravers and artists; many of them were Germans. I can recall hearing some of the old-timers tell that the old lithographic artists used to come into the plant with a tall silk hat on, the ascot tie, a white shirt. And they'd send the boy out for a bucket of beer. They were really sort of prima donnas in the old days, and they didn't want to have much to do apparently with what they considered the lesser people, the people that ran the presses and got their hands dirty and all that. At that time they were separate unions.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

WALLACE: Those unions were all amalgamated into the Amalgamated Lithographers Union. That was about 1915, I believe. . .no, no, that was about 1935, I believe.

INTERVIEWER: Was it as late as that? I thought it was earlier.

WALLACE: Maybe.

INTERVIEWER: I don't know, but anyway. . .

WALLACE: I think we'll look it up. [1915 is correct].

INTERVIEWER: It's before <u>either</u> of our times! (Laughter) <u>All right</u>, well, how did you become active in this local?

WALLACE: In the union?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

WALLACE: We had a strike in Kansas City in about 1951. The issues were, as I recall, you-know, the pension fund and, oh, some dollars, I suppose.

INTERVIEWER: You had a strike over a pension primarily?

WALLACE: Some of the things. Health and welfare, I believe, was one of the things, and dollars. But there had developed actually some bad blood, as I should put it. . .kind of an expression I'm not sure what that means. . .but there was a very bitter relationship developed in Kansas City between Herman Rosenberg and Benjamin Robinson, who was the nominal boss of our union at that time. He was a lawyer for the union.

INTERVIEWER: Lawyer.

WALLACE: General council for the union, but he called most of the shots. He came to Kansas City and in a rather highhanded and arrogant manner dictated the terms that would be agreed upon and presumed to handle the negotiations. The strike took place at any rate; whether it was because of that entirely or not, the strike took place. Marty Grayson, who was the secretary-treasurer of the union at that time, he came in; and I was extremely impressed by him. He was competent, articulate; he seemed to know all of the answers. He did his homework and came in armed with reports--financial reports on the company--and refuted their claim of inability to pay and stirred the guys up real good. And we had this strike.

During the course of the strike, I was named to the strike strategy committee. And an international representative who is now no longer with us, who left the union a few years later, was sent in; and he was put in charge of all strike strategy. I was very much impressed by him and worked very closely with him.

INTERVIEWER: What was his name?

WALLACE: His name was... (long pause)...

INTERVIEWER: Well, we'll fill it in. You'll think of it (laughter).

WALLACE: His name was Donald Robbins.

INTERVIEWER: Donald Robbins?

WALLACE: Yes, Donald Robbins. Now in Washington, D.C. Very effective guy. I had been on some local committees--a by-laws committee and a few things like that. I had been mildly active. I was on the local council--the council board of the local. I was just kind of learning the ropes a little bit about the union and. . .but when he came in, I got involved in strategy, and that intrigued me. And so for a number of reasons, since I was pretty young and active and aggressive, and I seemed to be in the thick of everything that was going on, I guess I came to the attention of the International Union. The Union was shorthanded in the region.

To give you an example of how many people were involved in the Kansas City strike. . .Grayson came in, and he was the secretary-treasurer; the vice-president of the region at that time was Robert Cottrell who lived in Kansas City; Don Robbins was assigned; Bill Edder, an International Representative, was assigned--he worked there; and Glen McQueen, another International Representative. All were involved in the Kansas City strike.

INTERVIEWER: So this was considered a pretty important strike?

WALLACE: It must have been. I wasn't privy to those inner-sanctum discussions at that time, but it must have been because they had an awful lot of manpower there. And therefore the other locals were pretty much denuded of help. And the Secretary-Treasurer Grayson and the vice-president of the region asked me then, while I was on the picket line, if I would go to Denver and to help assure that they won an election at the plant. They had an election scheduled at the Bradford Robinson Company. I went out there and met with some people. We won the election. I engaged in some activity which I wouldn't do now which was in violation of the rule--meeting with the people in the plant within a twenty-four hour period of the election. But I didn't know what the rules of the road were.

INTERVIEWER: (Laughter)

WALLACE: I just did what I thought needed to be done, and I was in the plant visiting around. (Chuckling) The employer was furious when he found it out later. So I

suppose it was because they noticed me during the strike, and then they asked me to take that assignment, and I did it successfully. It wasn't very long before they offered me an appointment as an International Representative.

INTERVIEWER: In what area?

WALLACE: In the Mountain Region. And I worked under International Vice-President Martin Grayson, the same Martin Grayson who had been secretary-treasurer during the strike. He resigned as secretary-treasurer and accepted an appointment as vice-president in the Mountain Region when Robert Cottrell retired. This all happened right after the Kansas City strike, some months after.

INTERVIEWER: Why did he resign as secretary-treasurer?

WALLACE: My opinion is that his main reason for resigning was that he was having a terrible fight with Ben Robinson and Ed Swayduck who was the president of the largest local in the union at that time--Local One in New York City. They had many differences, and they were even carrying on a tirade in the pages of the magazine.

INTERVIEWER: Was Martin Grayson the editor of the journal at that time?

WALLACE: No. Donald Stone was editor. . .

INTERVIEWER: Oh, Donald Stone.

WALLACE: . . . at that time. And Martin Grayson was secretary-treasurer, and I guess this made it too miserable for him. He saw a job that needed to be done in the Mountain Region, and he did it. He was my teacher and mentor, and in the next several years we spent literally thousands and thousands of hours together.

INTERVIEWER: Organizing?

WALLACE: Organizing and bargaining. And he was a good teacher. He did what I try to do. He taught me the ropes. He taught me how things worked, how the industry functioned, and how to bargain, and how to organize, and how to organize yourself and solve problems, really remarkable. Not

too many people are doing that these days. I can recall that in the early years that Marty and I. . . Our union didn't have any money in those days. We had a union car, and we drove every place because we didn't have the money for trains and planes.

INTERVIEWER: You had long distances to cover?

WALLACE: Long distances to cover. Marty and I drove day after day from Kansas City to Minneapolis from Minneaspolis to Kansas City, sometimes bargaining all day and driving all night and bargaining all the next day and driving all night and bargaining the next day. We did this over and over until we broke with the second settlement in the United States in this union for a 35-hour work-week in Kansas City and the third settlement for a 35-hour work-week in Minneaspolis-St.Paul. And I can recall how we worked. It was really amazing! I wonder today how we ever could put in the hours and the time that we did.

My first assignment after coming on the staff was to bargaining in Des Moines. It worked out real good. We had a very good settlement. Broke the workweek in Des Moines. It was good for me because it started me off with a victory--I mean, with a good taste in my mouth. And the International President and everyone else, everyone wrote it up and it just gave me a big sendoff, a success.

INTERVIEWER: Hm-hm, sure. Well, I think maybe it would be important to begin to develop some of the thinking about Kansas City with respect to merger with the Photengravers.

WALLACE: I was involved from the very start in the merger with the Photoengravers Union on the local level. The Kansas City Lithographers local was a relatively large local. There were just a very few Photoengravers. We worked out a merger on the basis of far greater representation for the Photoengravers than was represented in the actual numbers. By this time, Harold Larson was president of the Lithographers local. Harold Larson came out of Lincoln, Nebraska. He worked there for Jacob North Company and worked very closely with me in Lincoln in organizing. Had a very poor job, far beneath his capacity. I'm talking about way back before the merger, now that you mention it, in recalling Harold. But he wanted very much to learn the more sophisticated aspects of the trade. He wanted to be a color cameraman. He was a cameraman in Lincoln but mostly did black and white work. He wanted to learn color; wanted to be a cameraman or an artist. And I arranged with the Rigby Printing Company in Kansas City

for an interview. I cleared with the local president, of course. Frank Karl then was the president of the local. Incidentally, this is rambling a bit. Frank Karl became president of the Kansas City local very shortly after the strike. I would like to develop that but you want to hear about the merger first?

INTERVIEWER: No, go ahead and develop that if that comes in first.

WALLACE: Frank Karl and John Davis, who was the president of the Kansas City local during the strike, had once been close friends. And then they had a falling out. As a result of this falling out, Frank Karl didn't attend a union meeting in Kansas City for many, many years--something like ten years or more. But when the strike came along and the chips were down, he materialized out of the woodwork and came in and took over the handling of the books for the payment of strike benefits. I got to know him then for the first time, and he became president of the local about the same time as I became international representative. Frank was a decent guy, but not very competent, not at all articulate. But a decent guy. He worked at his job. He did the best he could.

Eventually this Harold Larson, whom I brought down to Kansas City, ran against him and defeated him. Those are the kind of things that happen. I didn't bring Harold down for the purpose of running against him, and Harold would never have run against him excepting that Harold wanted to be active in organizing or some other phase of the union's activity, and Frank Karl discouraged him. He wouldn't let him! He just wouldn't turn him loose and let him work and express himself and be productive! In the meantime, in his frustrated years there while he was studying or learning to be a color man at Rigby, Harold Larson was attending night school at a Catholic University there. I can't think of it. I know it real well. He was studying labor law.

INTERVIEWER: In Kansas City, Missouri?

WALLACE: Kansas City, Missouri. I'll think of that in a minute [Rockhurst College]. He studied and studied and learned a lot and became very active in Democratic politics. Quite a guy! And when he was frustrated and wasn't allowed by the local president to do what he thought he could do in organizing, then he ran for the presidency and defeated Frank. Frank is now a bailiff in the court; probably is more suited to that work.

INTERVIEWER: (Laughing) He probably also doesn't think much of labor education! Join the ranks of those who are against labor education because it teaches people how to run against you!

WALLACE: Well, Harold Larson was a dedicated guy, very thorough and very accurate. He takes the most copious and accurate notes in negotiations of anyone I've ever seen. Plans everything down to the minutest plane and works very hard at his job. He's on some of the national boards. He's on the Early Retirement Board. And one of the early things that he did when he took office was to work out this merger between the Lithographers and the Photoengravers. A very good merger.

INTERVIEWER: Now, when did he take office? 1964? Or prior to that?

WALLACE: Prior to that, I'd say. Prior to the merger with the Photoengravers. I don't remember exactly what time. Somewhere around 1962, I would guess. But there's a very, wholesome and good relationship between the Lithographers and the Photoengravers in Kansas City. A Photoengraver was named to be executive vice-president, a most competent guy, a very dedicated guy, who lent a lot to that merger. And after the election--in the last election, local elections, Lithographers and Photoengravers were still elected in about the same proportion in spite of the fact that the protection for the smaller Photoengraver unit, smaller Photoengraver group, had ceased to exist in terms of protections built into the merger agreement. And the officers could be elected from either the Lithographers or the Photoengraver membership, and yet the Photoengravers were still elected in about the same proportions. And I think that speaks well for the kind of relationship that exists there--a good one. It's a good local.

INTERVIEWER: How long were those protections in effect?

WALLACE: Well, in the international union, you know, they were ten years.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

WALLACE: In each local union in its merger agreement made its own rules. I'm not sure what the time was in Kansas City. I believe it was six years. For the first six years the

president from the Lithography segment, and the vice-president from the Lithographic segment, and the treasurer from the Photoengraver segment, and the recording secretary from the Lithographic segment. So there were three Lithographic offices and two Photoengraver offices on the officer level, in spite of the fact that the Lithographers outnumbered the Photoengravers by probably close to ten to one.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

WALLACE: It was a good merger.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, and it was done early.

WALLACE: Local 235. It was about the thirty-fifth local or merger thereabouts out of about eighty some odd.

INTERVIEWER: One thing I wanted to ask you, was this a strong craft identification thing that you had in the Kansas City local? How did they respond to leaving the AFL and affiliating with the CIO in 1948? Were you sufficiently new that you weren't too aware of that or. . . .?

INTERVIEWER: I think there was very, very slow involvement with either the AFL or the CIO in Kansas City. I can recall going to some CIO meetings there, but my impression is that they were dull and unproductive.

INTERVIEWER: This is the industrial union council meetings that you went to?

WALLACE: Yes. They weren't well organized. The CIO was not strong in Kansas City like you find them in other areas in the country.

INTERVIEWER: It was an AFL town?

WALLACE: It was an AFL town. I believe that we disaffiliated from the AFL about the time that I. . .I'm not sure. . .not very long after I became. . . .

INTERVIEWER: Right.

WALLACE: In 1945.

INTERVIEWER: That's right.

WALLACE: I recall it was about that time. I remember the Foote-Davis case that prompted it. I remember the advice of our lawyer, which I know now was poor advice. I didn't know it then. We were pretty much impressed by Ben Robinson, and he called the shots. I frankly was quite impressed with Ben Robinson for many, many years. The disenchantment started to take place gradually as I began to see that he was. . . .Well, at least I began to see the role of the union in a different light than he did.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Would you explain that a little?

WALLACE: At some point in time I began to believe that Ben Robinson was interested in shaping the union to Ben Robinson's preferred shape rather than to the needs of the members. I recall that, since I was involved in organizing from the very beginning, I had the opportunity to work much more closely with Ben Robinson, I think, than most other officers and representatives early on when I was just a very new representative. They used to have me try cases before the National Labor Relations Board, and I'm one of the few who ever has in the Lithographer segment. And I studied and I learned a lot about the Board and its procedures and how to handle a case and how to argue.

Then I began to see that, I think, because he [Ben Robinson] had made a good record before the National Labor Relations Board in establishing a lithographic unit, then it seemed to me that he began to make all of his decisions with respect to the units question, based on his authority to keep° a beautiful Ben Robinson record rather than serve the interests and the needs of the people. And he urged and he achieved many things, which, in my opinion, were wrong for the members, wrong for the union. He convinced Vice-President Oliver Mertz to turn over the workers who were members of our union to other unions because they weren't Simon Pure lithographic skills involved. He turned over coaters and strippers in can plants, like American Can and Continental plants, in a number of cities. He just went in and said to the Steelworkers and the Machinists, "We're gonna turn these people over to you." That was a violation of the basic concepts of trade unionism. We were the representatives of those people.

INTERVIEWER: It may have had something to do with CIO pressure, too.

WALLACE: It had to do with Ben Robinson's theory that he could sustain a bargaining unit of lithographic pressmen and feeders, but he could not sustain before the Board a bar-

gaining unit of lithographic pressmen and feeders and coaters and strippers and other people. He thought that this craft unit would stand up where a departmental unit wouldn't. And in order to have a clean-cut situation where he could go before the Board and say, "Well, we don't represent these kinds of people," in order to achieve what he wanted, to give away our members without concern or regard for the members.

In Cincinnati he convinced the then local president of the Cincinnati local--Local 810--Bill. . . .I know that well, too. . .he convinced the local president to abandon members of our union who had been members for years, working in the Powell Brothers Company because that company switched its operations from a lithographic operation to a silk screen operation where the same employees were doing the same work but by a little different process, not significantly different but a little different. And because Ben Robinson wanted to be able to say, "Oh, we don't represent anyone but Lithographers," he even went so far as to order them given away to another union.

The other union that took over those people represented them poorly, badly, and we found ourselves in the position of abandoning our own members and no longer representing them and not bargaining for them anymore. Those were the kinds of things that broke. . .that caused me to break with Ben Robinson. I didn't see him anymore as a champion; I saw him as a guy who was interested in maintaining his own position and thumping his chest and saying, "Look at me. I consistently win the units before the National Labor Relations Board and damned organizers and the elections."

INTERVIEWER: (Laughter)

WALLACE: But I proved that we were right because we have now been able to sustain before the Board all of the units that I felt were correct. Because the lawyers don't make the decisions anymore. As Ken Brown says, "The lawyers give us the bad advice. We make our own bad decisions." (Laughter) That's facetious!

INTERVIEWER: Well, I think we're gonna have to draw this chapter to a close. I do think it would be useful before we get together again if you can sort of sit down and make an outline of what you would like to cover.

WALLACE: I'd like to talk about some of the old-timers that I knew in the union--some like Bill Edder, an old representative. And I could also tell you a lot about all over the Mountain Region locals--not only Kansas City. I was the representative there and the vice-president there for many, many years.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, that would be very fascinating. And also I would like to talk about methodology of organizing. You know, how you go about it, how you adapt yourself to changing circumstances.

WALLACE: And when I retire, I want to also write a book.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, well, I hope that this will be useful to you as a starting point.

WALLACE: And it's gonna be not a book of memoirs. I have the theory that the labor movement and all of the writings about the labor movement that I've ever read are deadly. I want to write a funny book (laughing). I have lived through some of the excruciatingly funny experiences at the bargaining table in organizing where people do funny things and make ridiculous mistakes; and sometimes the consequences are not too dire, sometimes they're pretty bad. I don't know if I have the talent. I've written a lot of funny stuff in my life, and some people seem to think it's funny. But if I had the talent, I would like to write a funny book about the labor movemet mainly for the purpose of humanizing the labor movement and letting a lot of people who are highly critical of the labor movement get a feeling that it's not all that deadly serious, even though most of it is, that there's fun to be had, and that the business of labor-management relations is sometimes a joy.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Well, it's fascinating to me because I think that would. . .first of all, you can learn a great deal from what you can laugh at. And second of all, I'm doing a series of interviews now with Bob Donahoo, who's the Regioinal Director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, and he has been the chief observer at every pingpong match the United States Steel Corporation and the Steelworkers have engaged in. And I'm prepared to believe that there's a lot we can learn from some of these funny stories!

WALLACE: I've made many, many friends among employers based on some funny thing that happened. And I've seen some guys turn from bitterness to a real pleasant relationship based on some crazy thing that happened in negotiations. There's been a lot of it!

INTERVIEWER: Yes, yes. . . .

JACK WALLACE
Index