Metro Detroit Skilled Tradeswomen Oral History Project

Interview with

S. H.
Sheet Metal Worker

June 6, 2005

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Metro Detroit Skilled Tradeswomen Oral History Project

Interview with S. H.

MARGARET RAUCHER: It's June 6, 2005 and the Metro Detroit Skilled Tradeswomen Oral History Project is here at the Reuther Library to interview S. H., who is a sheet metal worker with Local 80. And I guess I usually start out the questioning, so I will start by asking S. about her life before she entered the trades—family, education, where you were born and brought up and that sort of thing.

S. H.: Okay. I was brought up in Taylor, Michigan. I graduated high school and after high school, I went to Kentucky — I have grandparents down there — to go to college. I wanted to be an architect.

ELAINE CRAWFORD: What college did you go to?

S. H.: Georgetown College in Kentucky. I helped my grandparents out on the farm down there. And I wanted to go to Lawrence Tech [nical University], so I came back up here and went to Lawrence Tech. But I also had a brother that was in college and my dad had some health problems. So, two people in college — we just didn't have the money, even though my mom, who'd been a stay-at-home mom for years, went to work. So I had to go out and get a job.

So a friend of mine got me a job landscaping and I was doing this until I decided what next. I wanted to be an architect, I wanted to pursue drawing or construction, something like that. And I looked into the Air Force. They called me in to take the Air Force test. But before that, a friend of my dad who was a sheet metal worker told my dad

that they were giving the sheet metal test, and this would be a good opportunity for my brother.

So my dad told my brother, “They’re giving this test. Go down there and take it.” And he said to me, “You can pass the test. Go with him.” So I rode along with him and I took the test. And before I could go take the Air Force test that I was scheduled to take, Sheet Metal Local 80 called me. And it was funny. The whole day was a string of odd events. I was in places I shouldn’t have been. I was landscaping, and normally we leave the yard.

But that day, for some reason, I was left there, and they were able to find me. They had called my house, but they couldn’t get anybody there. So they called my neighbors, who we’ve grown up with, you know, we’re very close, and they knew where I was. My neighbor and my brother came and told me, "You have a message from Local 80 that you passed the test and they got a job for you if you want it."

RAUCHER: When was this?

S. H.: This was in July of 1985.

RAUCHER: And when were you born?

S. H.: 1962, September.

And they told me to call the apprentice schoolteacher. I called him. I hadn’t a clue what I was getting involved in. I’m trying to get some information about sheet metal work. All I knew was I took a test. It had math and English and stuff like that on it. And the teacher was telling me, “Well, you passed the test, we have a job for you, you can start tomorrow.” That was all he told me. I’m like, “Well, could you explain a little bit? What am I talking about here? How steady is this work?” He goes, “Well, it is the

construction field." And he didn't give me much more than that. He said, "You can start tomorrow if you want." And well, it was making more money than I was doing at the time, and I figured I'd stay there until I take the other test.

RAUCHER: You mean the Air Force one?

S. H.: Yeah. And that was it. He said, "You can start tomorrow. And you have to go get a work assignment from our hall." And the hall was close by Lawrence Tech. I knew exactly where it was. So I went over there. I had to get there before they closed at 4:30 and pick up a work assignment. It was an all-of-a-sudden, whirlwind-type thing. I go there and I get the work assignment. I still haven't a clue what I'm doing. No one has told me what I'd be doing or anything about it.

So I go there and talk to the people and sign all the forms. You start wondering when they ask, you know, next of kin and stuff like that. I'm like, "What am I doing here?" And they asked me, "Well, who do you know in the trade?" I go, "I don't know anyone here." And they said, "You have to know somebody. How did you get it?" I'm like, "I don't know anybody." And they said, "Well, who told you about the test?" And I couldn't remember my dad's friend, his name. But that was kind of interesting to me, that they figured a female had to have known somebody to get in.

RAUCHER: What did your dad do for a living?

S. H.: My dad, they classified him as a steelworker. He worked for Whitehead & Kales — they were in Detroit a long time, but are out of business.

CRAWFORD: So they made steel, a steel plant?

S. H.: I don't know what they did. He drove a hi-lo at this place, is all that I can remember about that.

RAUCHER: Did you say your brother took the test too?

S. H.: Yeah.

RAUCHER: How did he do?

S. H.: He did all right. They called him two years later, though. That's when he came in. And my sister took it after that. She came in two years after him. And my other brother was in the Navy at the time and he'd be getting out soon, so I told him that this might be something he'd want to do. So while he was still in the Navy he took the test, and by the time they called him, he was out. They called him two years after my sister.

CRAWFORD: You just started a dynasty.

S. H.: Well, I guess so.

RAUCHER: Well, is that how they normally would bring somebody in, though? I mean, they give you, not just a woman, but anybody, a general aptitude test and you come in not knowing anything about the trade?

S. H.: Everybody, yep. Well, most people know something about it, somebody has told them. But I hadn't a clue. But it was construction. I did know that blueprints was involved. And so let's give it a shot. So twenty years later, here I am.

RAUCHER: Well, we kind of zipped through the early stuff, right?

S. H.: Yeah.

RAUCHER: You say your mom didn't work?

S. H.: Yeah, she was at home until we got to, probably, junior high school.

RAUCHER: So what did she think about your particular career choice here?

S. H.: She probably couldn't tell you now what I do. But my parents are from the South, you know, and they're hard workers. A good job is important. They know it's a good paying job. They know I come home dirty and with cuts and stuff like that.

PAT NUZNOV: I'm Pat Nuznov, and I can see where your interests were taking you this way anyway, the architecture thing. Am I too soon to be asking about her first day? Are we ready? Can I ask that question? What was your first day at work like?

S. H.: Oh, I remember it. I had to get a work assignment, and they told me where to go. And in sheet metal work you can either be in a shop, you know, fabricating, forming ductwork, or in the field. Well, they sent me to a shop in Allen Park, close by the house. And I knew where this place was, but I didn't know what they did.

And so the first day, I know it's construction, I knew enough to wear work boots — I didn't need to wear a dress. And there have been some that have come in in street clothes, as they would say, dressed for better than sheet metal work. But I did know enough to wear work boots and stuff like that. And I showed up there early.

And I remember going in there and there was quite a few older guys there at the time, big guys with beards who looked kind of scruffy, you'd say. And I'm thinking, you know, that it seemed more like a factory-type job than I thought it would be. And I remember thinking, "What am I doing here?"

And in the shop, the work is repetitive. They cut it, they form it, they put it together and load it on the truck. There's some variations, there's some welding involved and cutting angle material and stuff like that. But it's a lot of repetitive work. And that's not for everybody. And the shop was right next to Frito Lay, and you could smell them making the Fritos — oh, it's a horrible smell — every morning.

So I was in the shop for three years. When I got there they told me, "For two years, you're going to be in the shop, working in the shop." Our apprenticeship at the time was four years; it's five now. "Two years you'll be in the shop learning this. And then two years you'll be working in the field installing this."

And the guys that were in the shop then had been there a long time; it was just work to them. They weren't friendly.

CRAWFORD: How many guys?

S. H.: Let's see, I'd say fifteen. It's a pretty big shop. That's considered pretty big in sheet metal.

RAUCHER: You were the only woman?

S. H.: No. That's another good thing that I lucked out in. When I came in, they called in four apprentices, including me. There were two other women there. And they had started a week before me. And this was the only thing that kind of livened up the place, you know. We were younger, all four apprentices. These people didn't go out to lunch. They ate at their area.

And it was really a hard place to work. But you made the best of it. But like I said, it's a repetitive thing. It's tough. It ain't a lot of fun. That's what I think kept me in it — if you could do this for as long as I did it, for three years, the rest of it is a piece of cake, you know. If apprentices get thrown into the field to begin with, it's not as repetitive and you don't get as bored as quickly. And they seem to think that the harder work, they just don't have to do it. And I think that's what's kept me in the trade. Because no matter how bad the rest of the days are, it still beats the same old thing over and over in that shop.

Cutting insulation, for instance, I don't know if they get a laugh out of this, but it's a miserable job, and they like to stick the apprentices doing it. And I did it for six months straight, I remember. And in the beginning it was tough, because the people, they didn't chat with each other, you know. It was all business, and they didn't help each other. I understand not wanting to talk, because you're being watched by the boss and all that kind of stuff. But they'd be working right next to somebody that's hammering together fittings that might need a hand and wouldn't help them. But when the apprentices came in there, it seemed like, okay, it was all right then to help, because you got to help them, they don't know anything. So it kind of loosened it up when we got in there.

MICHELLE F ECTEAU: I'm Michelle and I work here at the University in the Labor Studies Center. When was that first day on the job, what year?

S. H.: It was July 25th, 1985.

FECTEAU: And I was going to ask about the sharing of information. So the older guys, even though you were a woman, were happy to share information with you? Was that just some of the guys or was that everybody?

S. H.: Not way back when. A few were different. Like I said, there was a couple guys in there that if it wasn't for them, I would have quit in the beginning. All three of the other women apprentices are no longer in the trade. There was a male apprentice that came in. He was office help, you know. And they liked him better than the rest of us. He had no mechanical aptitude for it either, but he was somebody they knew from the office who got put in the trade. (He's no longer in the trade.) But the other females, one, it wasn't what she liked, it just wasn't her cup of tea, you know, and she got out. And

then the other one, she was a black woman, and she had a hard time getting a job after she turned out. So she went to the auto plants.

But there are some of them in there that helped me, some that I could go to if we screwed things up. There was a couple guys that I could go to and they would say, "Here's how you fix it." And that was the thing: they showed me how to do it. They didn't do it for me. And that was great. One has since passed away. He was one of the first guys I saw when I came in there, you know — like I said, a big guy, all scruffy, like the Grizzly Adams-type guy. And he's the sweetest guy you ever want to meet. So it made it easier, his being there.

But some of them are so afraid of losing their own job that they don't want to teach you what they know.

FECTEAU: So they're afraid that if they help you, it would hurt their job security.

S. H.: Yes.

FECTEAU: Now, how would that work?

S. H.: Well, if you know it, why do they need them? And I guess it's everywhere, but there are a few that, in order to make themselves look good, want to make you look bad.

FECTEAU: That's everywhere. [laughter]

S. H.: For example, the very first day . . . Before they throw you into insulating, they start you out slow. They put you on the break — it breaks up metal. A guy lays it out and cuts it and you break it up. Well, it's big pieces and the journeyman is on the other end and you have to hit the prick punch. Like I said, I didn't have a clue what I was

doing. I was on the other end of this metal. He said, “Hit this, hit this point.” And then the break comes down and you break it up.

Well, okay, we did that. And I hit the wrong prick punch, the first day. But we were bending up quarter-inch, it was no big deal. We hammered it out and we hit the right one. But later on, he hit the wrong prick punch, and where we broke it this time, it was a BIG deal. It was a big piece of metal and we had to take it out, we had to stomp it, flatten it out. And the boss comes over and says, “What’s going on?” And he [the journeyman] said, “New apprentice hit the wrong mark." At the time I wasn’t paying that much attention, but years later, I’m thinking, "He blamed me for that."

FECTEAU: There’s an advantage to working with an apprentice.

S. H.: Oh, yeah, somebody to blame. [laughter] But stuff like that happens.

RAUCHER: I was thinking, mostly you were just sort of ignored by the guys. I mean, it wasn’t as if there was any active resistance to women being in the shop or snide remarks made or anything like that, it was just people didn't talk, except for a couple guys who helped out. Or did just your presence there bother some guys, guys who just didn't want to work around women?

S. H.: Oh, yeah, there was those in there, too. I remember, we insulated for a long time. Like I said, there were three of us. And usually they put all the apprentices back insulating. Well, there’s three women. We can’t have three women together. You know that nothing will get done and they’ll just be back there chatting. So they would split us up and make sure we weren’t working together, so something would get done. And I remember the boss telling the other apprentice — we’d done this insulating for a long time and she said, “You know, I want to put some ductwork together,” and the

superintendent told her — how did he word this — that he wasn't going to teach her anything because she wouldn't be here that long. So that was pretty much their attitude, that we'll give you the menial stuff that we need to have done, but we ain't going to teach them anything.

And the way I survived is when I got done with my work, I found a job myself. I'd go help somewhere where I could fabricate something. You know, they didn't like the apprentices touching the equipment. They were afraid they'd get hurt, or whatever. They didn't teach us to do things, but I'd take it upon myself and go do it anyway.

FECTEAU: So nobody taught you how to use the equipment?

S. H.: No.

FECTEAU: You just watched and learned.

S. H.: That's exactly it. And the funny thing, too, is that later when I was a journeyman, I came back and was working in the shop again. And being a journeyman, they expected me to be able to work the power break and all the equipment, which luckily, I could do. It's not that difficult. But it doesn't hurt to have a little experience on it. But they expected me to know it, and yet they didn't teach it to me.

FECTEAU: So you didn't have classes at the local hall?

S. H.: No. We have an apprentice school that we go to once every two weeks. And we're taught layout, drafting, welding, stuff like that. We put stuff together there. But as far as the equipment, it's not the same. They do have equipment there that's similar, but it's not the same. And even from one shop to another, their equipment is a little different. It's similar, but even a man journeyman would have to get used to it. You know, power breaks, they break differently, each one. You have to adjust it and

stuff like that. But the funny part is they expect you, just because you've become a journeyman, you should already know it, but they don't think they should have taught you.

RAUCHER: So can you explain the power break? I'm thinking the power break is something that is like this right angle on the edge of the table.

S. H.: Sheet metal has fittings. Pieces that aren't straight, that go from one size to another, they have radiuses that turn 90, and all this stuff has to be put together. And they're put together with locks. And you have to form the metal so you can basically glue it together, piece it together. And what you do, you have to form these locks. You take a flat metal — we're one of the few trades where you take a material and form what you're going to use — and you put — they're called Pittsburgh locks — on there, you run them through a machine so it forms a lock on there and you break up another piece that goes on top of it and you hammer it together.

And to break these quarter-inches, there are power breaks, hand breaks, there's just basically a big die and you put the metal in there and it comes down and breaks it and bends it up.

NUZNOV: That's the break.

S. H.: That's the break.

CRAWFORD: But these locks that you're talking about, are those sort of narrower pieces of folded-over metal that you kind of join together? Is that what's called a lock?

S. H.: That's a drive — I guess you could call it a lock, yeah. But the locks that I'm talking about keep the pieces together themselves. A transition fitting will be made of, say, four pieces of metal. It's going, say, from one big size to a smaller size.

CRAWFORD: It's reducing down.

S. H.: Right. Four pieces will have to be put together to make this. You got different sizes, so you're going from ten-by-ten to eight-by-eight. So this metal has to be cut and formed and put together. And to hold these pieces together, you use a lock. And it's just one piece into the other piece.

NUZNOV: And folded and it locks them together.

S. H.: It's folded, yeah.

NUZNOV: See, I know what you're talking about and I love hearing your explanation. You did a good job.

S. H.: Well, I never thought about it for people that don't normally see that.

CRAWFORD: I've seen a lot of it, but I'm always a little mystified about just how it goes together so well.

S. H.: In our apprenticeship class we learned to make a Pittsburgh lock, which is the main lock that we use, by hand. The companies have a machine that makes this lock, but we learned to do it without a machine. But I think, too, you're thinking of a drive edge, which connects pieces together.

CRAWFORD: Yeah, like one piece of rectangular duct that's ten feet long into the next one.

S. H.: Right. I'm talking about fittings that are in four pieces. Well, now that you've got this piece together, you have to put it with another piece. Now, the piece that connects this one to that one is a drive.

RAUCHER: Is it dangerous at all?

S. H.: It can be, yeah.

RAUCHER: In what way?

S. H.: Let's see, things in your eyes, metal cuts — all that kind of stuff. You do a lot of physical work. I fell off a ladder a couple years ago and got stitches — you know, that kind of thing.

RAUCHER: You wear gloves, I assume.

S. H.: Usually. They like you to, yeah.

RAUCHER: Because the metal is very sharp.

S. H.: But a lot of people, it's hard for them to work with gloves, you can't grasp it. So you should when you're handling material, but . . .

FECTEAU: What about welding fumes, is that an issue?

S. H.: Yeah. Usually in the shop, you've got to make sure that it's well ventilated. And we also have — it's called a Cybermation machine. It took the place of a lot of manpower — it's basically a big computer that cuts out the metal. You have sheets of metal that are placed on this thing and it's pretty much like a cutter. It'll cut out all this metal. When I was talking about these fittings that we need, this Cybermation machine will cut these things out.

Years ago, before that thing, you had a guy that had a piece of metal rolled out on a bench that was laying out these fittings. And you'd have two or three guys doing this.

And now this machine does it in half the time. And there's fumes that comes off of there — it pretty much burns it — and you find it a problem a lot in the shops.

But out on the job, you're at the mercy of whatever the general contractor will let you put up with. Like the job I'm on now, they were sanding tile — I don't know, they were getting ready for some tile in a kitchen area and they were grinding the concrete.

CARRIE WELLS : So it will receive the tile better. It's sealed concrete.

S. H.: And they were kicking up such dust that the whole floor was covered with this stuff. And we complained to the general contractor that you got to water this down or something, you can't breathe up here. And the general contractor has to go and check it out and until he makes them stop, you're kind of stuck up there with fumes.

WELLS : With the silica.

S. H.: Yeah. I believe that's in there, right?

CRAWFORD: Right, when they're grinding concrete or drilling it, there's silica in the dust.

S. H.: And luckily, the outfit I'm working for, though, they have no problems with it. If you feel like you can't work in this area, they'll move you. So I got no complaints with them. You know, ear plugs, stuff like that, it's a lot of noise, dust and — so you got to kind of watch yourself, because no one else — you know, you can't count on them do it.

RAUCHER: Going back to your first few days on the job, you said that one of the things that kept you going was the guys who showed you what to do. But what was the job like generally — I mean, except for those guys, it sounds like when you left at the

end of the day, you kind of didn't want to go back the next day. Can you talk a little bit about how you felt those first days or weeks?

S. H.: Like I said, it's a repetitive job, over and over. And no, I wasn't sure I wanted to stay. And by the end of six months, one of the other female apprentices had already left. And you know, this is getting worse — it was getting less and less fun. Like I said, we made the best out of it. But yeah, it was hard dragging yourself back in there every day.

CRAWFORD: So when did the Air Force call you for the test?

S. H.: I never went and took it.

CRAWFORD: Did they call you?

S. H.: I had an appointment, and I just didn't go, yeah.

FECTEAU: What were the main motivators for why you went back?

S. H.: Went back every day?

FECTEAU: Yeah.

CRAWFORD: The money.

S. H.: I think in the beginning it was, in the very beginning, because — oh, I can't remember what the scale was then in '85, I think about seven bucks an hour — and I didn't have a college degree. That kept me for a while, but even then, you know, I was still thinking, "I don't know about this."

RAUCHER: But mostly from boredom, not from your treatment by your co-workers, or anything like that?

S. H.: Yeah, really. The work itself. You know, I had gone to college. Basically I was a student-type person, and I thought, "How can anybody make any money doing

this?" They don't have a college degree. And like I said, it wasn't a fun place to work and I wasn't sure how long that I would last there.

And when we started apprenticeship school, I figured, okay, now I'll get some more fun stuff, some drawing or something that I thought I wanted to do. And the year that I got in, the two instructors, this was their first class. They were new to being instructors. And you know, they were going to teach us to weld and put all these fittings together, this and that. And their method of teaching you was to kind of throw you in and let you sink or swim, that type thing. And that was kind of tough for me.

And I remember the first day, having to weld. I'd never welded before. And so they bring you in this group. First of all, you have a big old welding jacket on and the sleeves went that far past my arms, you know. I'm trying to push these sleeves up. You have a welding hood on that comes down over your head. Well, the thing came down way over my eyes, and I'm trying to adjust my hood so when it comes down I can see. And I've got these big gloves on. And what was it? September? But I just feel like I'm covered with a blanket or something.

So I'm still trying to get situated and the teacher, he's like, "This is how you do it." And he'd throw the bead, you know. And I'm here trying to get situated and he goes, "Here, try it." So here I have to — so I have to give this a shot. That was their method, they were still new at it.

And I have to say the procedures today, they're better, they're way better than they used to be. It's gradual. They start slower. They give you a book, some pictures, something.

RAUCHER: Do they have clothing now for women?

S. H.: No. That hasn't changed.

RAUCHER: Do they have masks for women or anything like that in smaller sizes?

S. H.: The masks, they've changed a little, the gloves a little bit. But all in all it's pretty much the same. The same thing with work boots back then. Now you can get work boots for women. You know, back then you couldn't. The whole thing was pretty horrible, is what it was. But like I said, for the first six months being in the trade, I wasn't sure I wanted to be there. And then going to this school, even though I figured I'd be better able to handle some of this, it was the same.

One day I was just having a bad day. And the instructor was trying to explain something to me and I just wasn't catching on. And he was waiting for me to give him an answer and, I don't know, it wasn't sinking in or something. And it was something simple and I was always good at math. But I gave him the wrong answer and he looked at me and I'm like, "Oh, wait, I quit. I've had it with this." And I was headed for the door. And he said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute." So he took me aside and he talked to me and gave me some encouragement — "How's it going? Hang in there," that type of thing — because I was leaving. And if he hadn't stopped me, I think I wouldn't be there today.

RAUCHER: Do you think the fact that they hired three women apprentices and they worked hard to keep you there might have had something to do with an affirmative action program or some sort of directive that they needed to bring in more women?

S. H.: Oh, I think they had to have us there, because they didn't want us there. And they didn't care, because if we quit, that was just, "See, we told you. We told you

they'd quit. You want us to have them, but they quit on it. You know they can't do this work." And I know some other apprentices that when what happened to me happened to them, the instructor said, "Well, if you want to quit, you can." Well, if he had told me that, I would have hit the door. If he had told me I could have quit, I would have quit. But he didn't do that with me. He encouraged me. But I know with others, when they said they wanted to quit, he said, "Well, you can quit or you can take a leave a absence or you can do this." If he had given me that opportunity to quit, I think I would have taken it at that moment.

FECTEAU: Why do you think he treated you differently?

S. H.: I don't know. I know at the time he was new and I think I was about the fourth female in the trade. I just don't know.

RAUCHER: You mean the fourth female ever?

S. H.: Yeah.

CRAWFORD: And you had no journeywomen.

S. H.: Well, at the time I believe there was two. I didn't know them. And one is still around. One has just retired with twenty-five years in. But he did, he took the time. He said, "Well, what's the matter? I know you can do this." And so I said, "Okay." And I'm so glad he did, I really am. The trade, it's a tough job, but I'm glad I'm a tin knocker. I'm proud to be a sheet metal worker — a union sheet metal worker.

And I was five months into the trade at that time — well, six months into the trade — when my dad passed away at age fifty-one. And I still had a sister that was in high school — I don't think she was in high school, she was in junior high.

FECTEAU: Are you the oldest?

S. H.: I'm the oldest girl. There's six of us. And I have an older brother who has cerebral palsy. And now my dad has passed away. For us, this was all of a sudden. No one in the family had passed away. And now, how are we going to make the house payments? My dad was the breadwinner of the family. And you get a raise every six months in your apprenticeship, and because of that, we were able to live.

CRAWFORD: You were still living at home?

S. H.: Yep. I was twenty-two.

CRAWFORD: And you were contributing to the house payment?

S. H.: Yeah. After that, I was the only contributor. My mom, she had been working by then — she was a cook — but after my dad passed away, she stopped working. I think six months after my dad passed away, my grandfather passed away, her father. And so she more or less had to take care of my grandmother.

CRAWFORD: Did your grandmother live with you?

S. H.: No. My grandmother was in Kentucky. So my mom was down there quite a bit.

RAUCHER: What about your younger brothers? Were they old enough to be working or what?

S. H.: One brother was in the Navy. My other brother — he was a cook, too — got a job, I believe, at the mall, so he wasn't making any money. He came into the trade two years after I did.

RAUCHER: Okay, so then you basically were the chief breadwinner for the family.

S. H.: Oh, yeah. Like I said, my sister, I think she was still in junior high at the time. So now, here I am, whether I like this trade or not, this is what's paying for our house payments, the bills and whatever else.

FECTEAU: How long did you support the family, or are you still?

S. H.: I still take care of my mom. Shoot, ever since, I've been taking care . . .

RAUCHER: Did you get any benefits from your father?

S. H.: No. That's another thing. He'd been twenty-six, twenty-seven years as a steelworker. But what happened, first the company left Detroit and went to Chicago. Then they went out of business. And pension plans were, you know, tied up and all that kind of stuff, and my mom never received a dime.

RAUCHER: So all she got was Social Security, then?

S. H.: When she became sixty. See, at the time, she was fifty-one, too.

FECTEAU: But didn't she get survivor benefits?

S. H.: Yeah, she got survivor from him, for all the years he worked.

CRAWFORD: For your sister.

S. H.: Oh, yeah. Right, from Social Security, yes.

RAUCHER: But still, that's not much. The pension was gone, because the company went out of business.

S. H.: No pension, yeah.

RAUCHER: But you say after six months there was sort of a turning point, you think, when then you decided it wasn't so bad and that you were going to stay in?

S. H.: Well, like I said, after six months my dad passed away and I needed to work, period. And the trade pays well. And like I said, every six months you have a pay

upgrade and you're given benefits, you're given a pension, the whole thing. It's pretty tough to find something that's better.

FECTEAU: What is the annual salary?

S. H.: Well . . .

CRAWFORD: If you work 2,000 hours a year. [laughter]

S. H.: Well, let's see, the sheet metal package right now, as of June, is $50.10 — that's their total package. And scale is $31.11, plus eleven percent vacation pay. But the average sheet metal worker works nine months. And the average minority sheet metal worker works even less, about six months.

RAUCHER: By minority, you mean women and African American?

S. H.: Right.

RAUCHER: And that's just because they aren't hired as much?

CRAWFORD: It's because you have to solicit your own jobs.

S. H.: Yes, yes. Electricians solicit their own work?

CRAWFORD: No.

S. H.: You don't have that problem?

CRAWFORD: We have a referral hall.

S. H.: So for you getting your pension credits, there's no problem as far as work?

CRAWFORD: Well, it's just that we've had thirty-three percent unemployment for the last three years. But other than that, no.

S. H.: But when you say thirty-three percent unemployment, you mean total, though. Right now, the women in our trade, I would say . . .

CRAWFORD: Do you know how many women there are, roughly?

S. H.: The best I can figure, about twenty.

RAUCHER: In your local.

S. H.: In our local.

RAUCHER: So how many in the local — how many total members?

S. H.: Oh, I would say — see, we're very diverse, we've got a lot of different branches, so I'd say a total of 2,000.

CRAWFORD: Are you statewide?

S. H.: Local 80, Detroit area.

FECTEAU: It sounds like you're pretty familiar with the minority statistics. Is this something that you . . .?

S. H.: Well, I sit on the executive board of Local 80. And when they come in, I try to — like I said, it was tough for me when I came in — I try to meet them and, being an executive board member, to offer them, you know, "If you need any help, call me. If someone gives you problems on a job . . ." That's a big problem we have, like I said, they don't want to teach you anything. They want to stick you in an area and forget about you and not teach you anything.

But we have to solicit our own jobs. It's hard enough to get a job, but if you don't know anything, if you're not given an opportunity to learn, it makes it even worse.

RAUCHER: And that's for women more than just any apprentice, that's specifically for women or minorities.

S. H.: Yes, minorities. But right now, you can count on one hand how many women of that twenty are working. They like to keep the apprentices working, because they make a lower scale. But we have to go out and convince a contractor to hire us

instead of the guy standing next to us. A lot of it is physical work and when you look at that, you can understand why they think a man could do this better. And it's hard to get them to hire you, especially when times are bad and there's so many men out there. "We can get two of them! Why would we hire you?"

FECTEAU: I'm curious, you're saying that they also treat minorities the same way, even if they're male?

S. H.: Yes.

FECTEAU: So that reasoning wouldn't work, unless they are operating on stereotypes.

S. H.: Oh, definitely. I had a story. You know, it's tough when you first become a journeyman — they figure you're an overpaid apprentice — to go out and get your first job. Well, when I had to go and get a job — sometimes they do call the hall and the hall sends people out. And I joke about it today, because I was with the business manager — he's the guy in charge of our local — and there was a company that called him and said, "We need a worker." And the business manager said, "Well, I have a woman and a black guy here." And at the time, I didn't know the black guy he was talking about, but we joke about it now. I said, "You could hear the silence over the phone." [laughter]

CRAWFORD: It was deafening.

S. H.: Yes, you know, trying to decide which one he wanted. [laughter] I was on the job with that guy not too long ago and we laughed about the story. He's like, "Don't you got any one-legged white guys over there?" [laughter] A blind guy, maybe? Somebody else?" Oh, I remember that story. And after a while he goes, "Okay, send me the black guy." And that's pretty much how it is.

FECTEAU: Has it gotten any better over the years or no?

S. H.: Maybe a little better. But without affirmative action and federal jobs where they have to have a woman, why would they? I kind of look at it like a football team. They're building a football team. Even though there are different aspects of playing football — speed, running, throwing, kicking — the majority of it is physical. Now, they're making a team, why would they take a woman to put on this team, when you know they figure they can get a guy to do this? Well, it's the same way with construction.

CRAWFORD: Do you have an answer to that question?

S. H.: Why would they take us? Well, believe it or not, we're hard workers. We can do this. We don't have to do it like they want us to do it or how they think it should be done. Women have a knack of making it their way — it works for them. Somebody else might pick it up and throw it on their shoulder and take it to wherever it's supposed to be, but a woman, if she can't pick it up and take it over there, she'll find another way to get it over there. And she'll get it done.

And like I said, sheet metal work is diverse. There's a lot of other things that . . . I said the majority of it is physical, you know, up and down ladders, and all that kind of stuff. But we do have detail work and we have computers. We have welding. We have a lot of other aspects of our trade that is wide open for women. And we need hardworking women with these skills. Women are good organizers, they're good with people, and all this stuff can be utilized. And the only way to show companies, contractors is to hire a woman. We do have one that runs a shop. She's in charge of getting the material out. And she's good at it. And there's other women. Women are good welders. They're

steady, they can do this kind of stuff. Drawing, the computer part of it, you know, all this — estimating, numbers, service work — is all part of sheet metal work.

RAUCHER: Unless there are more questions about the job in the shop, I was sort of interested in what happened when you went outside the shop, which has got to be a different work environment, I would think.

S. H.: Oh, definitely.

RAUCHER: And so you might want to talk about that. You said you were in the shop for three years.

S. H.: Yeah, I was in the shop for three years.

CRAWFORD: Could I ask one question that kind of leads into that? Does your training that you get in the shop in terms of making the ductwork, does that sufficiently train you in the installation techniques?

S. H.: No, not at all. It's two different skills. You do different things. It's a whole other line of skills that you need for that, too. That's why I said there's so many aspects of our trade, that if you don't like one or you're not good at one, you can find another one.

CRAWFORD: So it was sort of like starting your apprenticeship over again.

S. H.: Yeah. There's stuff there to learn, something every day.

CRAWFORD: What was that first day like?

S. H.: Oh, that was another one . . . They kept me in the shop three years and I had to complain to get out. After two years, I'm like, "Okay, now I'm going to get to go out in the field." Well, things got slow and there was no work, so they kept us in the

shop, painting equipment and stuff like that, kept us busy. So it took about a year until work picked up. And I'm like, "Well, how about now? I want to go out in the field."

And the boss he-hawed around about it and then, "Yeah, okay, okay. We'll put you out there." And they put me out there, and it's totally different. You're installing this stuff that you've made, but you've never seen it go in or anything like that. So now it's something new again that I have to learn. And I'm a three-year apprentice. So I was there three days working on this job.

CRAWFORD: What kind of job — industrial, commercial?

S. H.: I think it was Ford's. You know how Ford has different buildings. I'm not sure — it was a wind tunnel or something like that that we were putting some ductwork in. But I was there three days and there was talk of working on a Saturday. You know, the whole three years I was in the trade, we never worked a Saturday. So the boss I was working with called the shop. And the shop superintendent said, "Well, we got to have her back in here. She's got to be back in the shop."

Sure enough, the next day they send me back, and you feel a little bit better about going back in the shop because you got out a little bit. Well, I come back in the shop and I find out that there was nothing to do. They were sweeping the floor. I don't know why he wanted me back in the shop, but he wanted me back in there. And I said, "Okay" — you know, like I said, I felt a little better because I got to go out and find out that there is some life after the shop.

And I seen the guy that I was working with [on the outside] come through the shop. I said, "Well, am I still going to get to work with you on Saturday?" He goes, "As far as I know, it's still on." So I asked the superintendent, and he's like, "No, no, no.

You can't work — you've been in the shop. You can't go out on a job when you're in the shop." Anyway, it was just a bunch of crap, is all it was. And it really just kind of ticked me right off.

So, I think it was like the next day that the Joint Apprentice Committee met. So I went before them and I asked to go out in the field. Three years as an apprentice, I want to have some field experience. And they agreed with me, and I thought they would have this company send me out in the field.

But what they did, they said that, "We've had trouble with this company before. They're not listening. We told them, 'You've got to make our apprentices go out,' but they're not listening. We've had it with them. So, as soon as a company calls wanting another apprentice, you're going." So I think they're going to yank me out of this company that I've been with for three years — and this is all I know — and they're going to send me elsewhere when my name gets to the top of the list, when they need an apprentice. You know, that's kind of rare.

So, this was Thursday. My school day was Monday. I go to school Monday and the apprentice teacher comes and tells me, "We found another company for you. Tomorrow you'll be at this company, you'll be in the field." And so I have to go from school — like I said, I lived close by the shop where I was working — I have to go in there, get my tools and say, "I'm leaving." And that's what I did. I picked up my tools on the way home and went to another company the next day, out in Ann Arbor and that's where I got started in my field experience, really.

And the job was the Chemistry Building in Ann Arbor, University of Michigan. And on this job was an out-of-town contractor. So when you have an out-of-town

contractor, they have to get their manpower from the hall. So the hall sent this crew that was out there. Well, the crew consisted of mostly Local 80 radicals, union officials and everybody else that can't get a job. They sent them all out there. Oh man, they complained at the drop of a hat. They had the business agent for the local out there any time they had a complaint.

You know, before that, when I worked in the shop, I didn't know we even belonged to a union. Nobody talked — they didn't go to the union meetings. And I come out to this job and it's nothing but radicals. They want to burn the joint down, you know, if they didn't get their way. And I'm like, "Whoa." And this was my first dealings with people that said, "We're in a union. We can stick together." And they talked picket lines and stuff like that. They went to union meetings!

And it probably was the best thing that ever happened to me, going to that job. I got involved with the union. Even though you feel comfortable, you get settled in one spot, you go there [to the shop] every day and I could have maybe got into a position there where I could have stayed and didn't have to worry about where my next job was going to be — I could have been a "steady," as they call it — it's probably the best thing that ever happened to me, getting shipped over there to a new job.

NUZNOV: Sounds like it was the beginning of your union education.

S. H.: Yeah, it definitely was. The president was there, pension trustees were there, executive board people were there — all of them. Any radical that was in Local 80 was on that job. And the president of the local was the steward on the job. This building was attached to an existing building and there's no bathroom facilities on this job. Well, this guy made sure that I had a key to get into the other building to use the facilities. And

I'm like, "No, no. I don't want you going to all that trouble. I don't want to be no different." But this guy made it his point to see to it that I was accommodated. And I felt kind of guilty about that, you know.

RAUCHER: But you were the only woman on the job.

S. H.: Yes, I was the only one. But it was the union, they're the ones that stood up. When there was a problem, they took care of it. And they talked like a union should talk, that we're together, we're all together in this. And I liked that.

CRAWFORD: So, when did you run for the executive board? Or did you run for another office first?

S. H.: No. Six years ago — this is my second term. Like I said, I'd been in a while and there was few females in the trade. And it seems like things mostly happened to the apprentices, because they're new, they don't know where to go when they have a problem. But like I said, I make a point to meet them and I told them, "If there's a problem or something I could help you with, feel free. I'd be glad to." Because like I said, nothing was easy for me and I know how it can be.

And there was an incident that happened with a female apprentice, with her boss. He took a liking to her, you know. And well, the other people on the job resented that. And she just wanted to learn the trade. But he wouldn't give her a job. He wanted her to basically follow him around and she wasn't learning anything. But she was married and her husband came to the job and it was a big problem — he had it out with the boss.

So the boss was scared of her husband. So then he just kind of tucked her away to the side. And she wasn't learning a thing. And I'm, "Well, what can we do about this? Here's an apprentice that they've just basically pushed aside — they don't want to teach

her anything, for whatever reason. And it's just wrong. And I'm like, "We've got to do something about this. Okay now, where do we go?" There's nowhere to go. I tried — they blew it off. "Well, you know, that's what happens when you got women in the trades. What can we do?" And it was frustrating that no one would help. I tried to get help for her at different places, but pretty much nothing was done about it. So that just nagged at me.

And then, I don't know how much later, a similar situation occurred again. And I felt mad at myself. I'm like, "If I had run for the executive board before, I could take care of this. I'd be in a position where I could see to it that something got done." So I said, "Well, that's it. I have to run." And so I ran, and I was elected.

RAUCHER: When was this?

S. H.: It had to be six years ago, 1999.

CRAWFORD: How many people are on your executive board?

S. H.: There are five executive board members, but it also consists of the president, the vice president, recording secretary.

RAUCHER: How do you think you got elected? I mean, did you know a lot of folks in the local by then?

S. H.: Yeah, pretty much. By then, I'd gone from job to job. Let's see, six years ago, that'd be fourteen years in the trade. I knew quite a few people and they know me. They know how I think. And I think they think pretty much like me; otherwise, they wouldn't want me representing them. And yeah, they elected me and re-elected me three years ago. And I was the highest vote-getter on the executive board, which I laugh at,

because the first time I ran, the business manager mentioned to a friend of mine that, "Local 80 will never elect a woman to office." I liked having him eat his words on that.

RAUCHER: Did you go out there and campaign, or what?

S. H.: I did a little. Like I said, that was all new to me. I wasn't really sure how it all worked. But I did it a little bit. I learned for the next campaign.

RAUCHER: How does it work? Do they have to be present to vote?

S. H.: Oh, yeah.

RAUCHER: So they have to come to the meeting, to the election to vote?

S. H.: Yeah, right.

CRAWFORD: Did you do a mailing?

S. H.: No, nothing like that. It's kind of funny. There's quite a bit of power involved in the executive board, but it's not a job that a lot of people flock to. I don't know if they'd rather be a business agent or a business manager or something like that. But the executive board overlooks all those people. And pretty much, if they know you — I hate to say it's a popularity contest — all the campaigning in the world isn't going to help, because they've got their mind made up. They know you from meeting you and if you had a bad impression then, you got a bad impression now, no matter what you've done to fix it.

And it was funny too that when I was going to be nominated for this job, the guy that said that Local 80 would never elect a woman came up to me and wanted me to run for a lower position as a trustee. It's an important position, but there's not a lot of people wanting it. It doesn't . . .

CRAWFORD: They don't do very much.

S. H.: Right, there's not a lot of power involved in it. And he pretty much wanted to keep me where I'd be out of the way. A funny story about my first E-board meeting. People gave me a lot of advice. They told me, "When you first get on the E-board, you should listen and kind of watch and see how it works, what goes on." I said, "That sounds like a pretty good idea." So the very first meeting I go to and we get to the Good and Welfare part of the meeting — whatever is on your mind — and I brought up a point, I said, "Well, what about this?" And this person, he got all defensive and he goes, "Well, that's the business agent's area. He's not here. You got to bring it up with him. I don't know nothing about it."

And he was getting loud and pretty much wanting to put me in my place. And he embarrassed me in front of the rest of them. And he was like, "That's not your job. You don't even know what your job is on the executive board." And I go, "I know exactly what my job is on the E-board." He's like, "No, you don't. What is it?" And I felt that he wanted me to quote the constitution. I said, "I know exactly what it is. It's to make sure you do your job." And it kind of startled him. He didn't know what to say after that. And it kind of shut him up there for a minute. And I felt that I was able to hold my own with him at that time, that some of the rest of the members took me more seriously, that the guy in charge is trying to make me look silly, you know, he's trying to make a joke out of it and then he was kind of put in his place — "Well, maybe we better listen to her," that type of thing.

And the same thing, I don't know if it's just different views, but even sitting on the executive board, women have different ways of looking at things and wanting to help the members than certain men do. And I had no problem with giving my opinion. And

so they know that just because the guy likes to embarrass different ones that don't agree with him, I have no problem with still voicing my opinion to him.

NUZNOV: The fact that you got the most votes in your second election, does that mean that you're the chairman of the board?

S. H.: No. The president presides over the executive board. But the highest vote-getter does have certain privileges, or however you'd like to call it. Like for instance, at contract negotiation time the business manager, the president and the business agents sit in, but also the highest vote-getter on the executive board gets to be involved in things like that.

NUZNOV: So there's some clout with that.

S. H.: There is a little bit, you know, a little bragging rights. Like the first time I ran, I beat out an incumbent. So there's a little bit of pride with that.

NUZNOV: Absolutely.

S. H.: Especially after they said, "Local 80 will never elect a woman."

RAUCHER: What was it like — because it sounds like there're about ten years in between the time you went out in the field and you got on the executive board. So what was it like being out there in the field for those ten years? I mean, was it pretty good? Was it better than being in the shop, in terms of your relationships with the other workers?

S. H.: For me, yeah, it's a totally different atmosphere, the shop and the field work. When you finish a job, they either lay you off or if they have another one, you go to another job. There's some thinking involved in the field — it's not the same thing every day. Even if all you're doing is running ductwork, just running straight, you know,

everything is different. You might have to go hoist equipment or material or something. It's different every day. You're doing something different.

RAUCHER: Was it a problem going on different jobs, meeting new guys or new workers?

S. H.: It's like the first day at school when you go to a new job. It's the same thing. But when you've been around a while, there's usually somebody you know. But you got to prove yourself every time you go to a new place, you know, that you can do it, that you're not just there because of a quota, or whatever.

CRAWFORD: How many of your members work in construction and installation, roughly?

S. H.: The majority of them, seventy-five percent. I like it so much better. There's problem solving. Even though this is where it's supposed to be, you have sprinkler lines in the way, you have conduit in the way, you have everything in the way.

CRAWFORD: We always move our stuff for everybody. [laughter]

S. H.: Except for the big stuff. But there are problems that you figure out. And like I said, I like it so much better.

NUZNOV: So it's safe to assume you haven't really done much shop work since they let you out of that one shop?

S. H.: No. I haven't been in a shop in a long time.

RAUCHER: And you had guys showing you what to do in the field.

S. H.: Oh, yeah, yeah. Like I said, it was three years I'd been in the shop before I ever put a drive on — that's what connects one piece with another. I only did that when I went out in the field. And this is what sheet metal people do — they make connections,

drive connections. For the longest time, when I first got out, I was sorting — I got to look at the blueprint and I was sorting material. And I'm like, "Are we going to get to put some ductwork up?," because I'd never put any up. And they look at me like, "Well, yeah, that's what we do." "Well, yeah, but I don't get to do it."

And so we had to sort it out — you have the prints, you go and get these pieces, you line them up, and you put them up. And my partner, an older guy, he gives me the drive. I'm like, "Okay, you're going to have to show me how to use it." He's like, "Oh yeah, I forgot." And they were all good about it.

CRAWFORD: Is a drive like a ratchet?

S. H.: The drive is a piece of metal that's been folded over that connects these two together. You drive it on — each piece of ductwork has a lip on it, so you put these two lips together and you take a cleat and you drive it over the top of them and it holds it together.

RAUCHER: It sounds as if you were treated so well on the job, I don't understand why they thought it would be difficult for a woman to get elected to the executive board.

S. H.: Oh (laughs) yes, I've been lucky, pretty much. Most of the prejudice against me has probably mostly been behind my back, unlike some of the other ones that . . .

RAUCHER: You mean other women?

S. H.: Yeah, other women in the trade.

RAUCHER: And have you worked on jobs in the field with other women or have you mostly been by yourself?

S. H.: There's not too many times when you'll find a couple women sheet metal workers on a job. But yeah, two of us did Compuware. We were actually partnered up. We also partnered up on the Alliance Training Facility.

NUZNOV: That's where I met you.

S. H.: Okay. In Allen Park.

RAUCHER: And what was that like, being paired with a woman?

S. H.: Well, she was a friend of mine — we go way back — and so it was fun. I remember years before that, though — remember I said there was a female apprentice, a black woman that eventually quit the trade. Well, before she had quit, we were partnered up together. And they didn't like that at all, because like I said, two women together, you know, they don't know nothing, they're going to hurt themselves, they're going to talk. And we didn't stay together long, because they just didn't want us together. They figured, "They ain't going to get nothing done, they're having too much fun." But yeah, for the most part, I've been treated pretty well. But there again, like I said, you have to go out and you have to show them you can do the job and overcome their prejudice.

There was this one time, though, and that was how I met Sue [Jantschak]. She was a carpenter on a job. And like I said, I hadn't really had too many problems. They see I can do the work and they'll let me work. I come in every day on time and I work. Well, I was working for this one outfit in Ann Arbor. They had two jobs. They had the cancer building and right down the street the VA hospital. And when we got done with one job, we were going down to the other job. And Sue was on the other job. And so I was working on this one job and everybody started going down to that other job.

CRAWFORD: To the VA Hospital job?

S. H.: Yeah. And people that had been in the trade longer than me, they want these guys down there and I'm like, "That's understandable." But then they started sending people that hadn't been on this job as long as me. They started sending people that hadn't been in the trade as long as I have, to this job. And it was just blatant that everybody was going to this job but me. And it made me mad, because like I said, it was never that blatant. I'd never been discriminated against like this.

CRAWFORD: Passed over like that.

S. H.: Yeah. They may have done things behind my back, but I think I've had it pretty good. And this was just right in my face. So I went to the boss on the job. I'm like, "I thought I was going to go down there, me and my partner were going down there." (They took my partner down there.) "No, you're staying here." And I kept being left behind. And I went to the boss and said, "What's the problem?" They're like, "We don't know. We thought you were going down there."

And well, jobs just being that close, you hear things, "Well, the boss on that job, he doesn't want you on his job." I'm like, "He doesn't know me. He never met me." And this job I was on, the few that was left, I think three or four of us, were all going to be laid off. Well, a couple days before our last day, I found out those last three guys were going down to the other job. I was the only person that wasn't going to be sent down to that other job. Now, I had been willing — we were doing overtime — to, okay, let it go. But when they said now they had taken everybody but me, I'm like, "I can't let this go. This looks bad for me. This is just blatant. This is going to tarnish my sheet metal reputation that they don't want me." [laughter] And like I said, I wasn't used to this kind of thing.

Anyway, we met up after work. I had a couple drinks and people from the other job came down. Well, Sue was one of them. And now I'm just mad. And I'm thinking about how am I going to talk to the EEOC, because this job down there is supposed to have women on it.

CRAWFORD: It's a federal job.

S. H.: Yeah, there was no women on this job. There was no minorities on this job. And I'm like, there's one spot. Besides that, this guy is a tin knocker that's keeping me off of this job. We have bylaws and stuff, you know, about tarnishing a sheet metal person's reputation. And this is what he's doing. And I'm trying to figure out what I'm going to do.

Well, anyway, I run into Sue there. And Sue tells me she's the president of the Michigan Tradeswomen Association. I'm like, "Maybe they can help me." And she goes, "We got a meeting Saturday." We had a union meeting Tuesday and I knew the boss on this job was going to be at the union meeting. It was about money and the pension and he's all over that stuff. And I had been thinking about talking to him at this union meeting to see what the problem is.

And so anyway, in the meantime, I run into Sue. And I'm like, maybe these Michigan Tradeswomen can help me out. And she goes, "We got a meeting tomorrow. Come on." So I go there and I see other women that's been in the trades. And a friend of hers that was there was a plumber, Beth. And they started talking to me about this situation. And they said, "You need to address it on the job. You need to go there Monday." See, I'd been laid off by this time. "You need to go and talk to him on the job, businesslike." And I said, "That makes sense." And I'm still thinking, well, this is a

waste of time, but I'm going to do it, and if nothing else, it can give me some grounds for charges and whatnot. So I thought it was a great idea.

So Monday morning bright and early, I'm in the trailer before he even gets there. I knew who he was. I'd seen him and he had seen me, but that was the extent of it — I never worked for him. And I'm sitting there in the trailer and he came in and he kind of stopped, you know, and he said "hi" to me. I said, "When you get a minute, I want to talk to you." And so he went about his business. He kind of put me off for a while and walked through there.

He goes, "Okay, you want to talk, let's go outside." So he takes me outside. And so I confront him, "What seems to be the problem? Why didn't you want me down here? Do you have a problem with my work?" And he's like, "Well, I" — and he he-hawed around about it, you know. "No, I really don't know you. I don't know your work." I said, "Well, you're making me look bad. You took everybody — why not me?" And he didn't want to say the real reason, but eventually he goes, "Well, we did have a female here once and it just didn't work out." I said, "What does that have to do with me?" Anyway, he was at a loss for words. And he's like, "Well, do you want to work?" And I'm like, "Yeah, I want to work." And all this time I had in my mind I was going to let it go, I was going to go on vacation. And so now I'm talking to him. And he's like, "Well, all right, I got a job if you want to work." I'm like, "Well, yeah." So anyway, he goes, "Well, I'll give you a chance if you want to work." And here I am, I've already stuck my foot in my mouth, so now I got to take this job.

So anyway, it ended up he kept me for — I was there thirteen months and never missed a day. And he still remembers that, me confronting him. And he told me that he

didn't like it, and I'm like, "Well, what was I supposed to do?" But because of Sue — she gave me good advice — I was able to be on that job for a while. And the funny thing, too, is that years later, when I was on the executive board, he came before the executive board. Somebody had wrote him up — different ones in the company — on charges. So now he has to come and explain his actions before the executive board, before me.

RAUCHER: Do you still have contact with other women in the trades? I mean, you said this started with Sue Jantschak and her organization, but have you kept that up at all?

S. H.: Kept up with other than sheet metal workers?

RAUCHER: Or all women in the trades — through organizations or through your union affiliation or anything like that.

S. H.: As far as the sheet metal women, I have. You know, I attend the union meetings and union functions and stuff like that. And I feel, too, that's why a lot of other people know me, that I get involved in picket lines and handing out literature and other stuff where we need to be involved. And people know me. But yeah, as far as the sheet metal, I try to stay in contact with them. And Sue is so busy. I see her every once in a while, but she's pretty busy with her activities.

NUZNOV: She's got a huge job.

S. H.: Oh, yeah. And she is a great example for the rest of us. And she's got a lot to overcome there, too, being a business agent organizer and doing such a good job. That's the thing, when we get these jobs, we have to prove ourselves, every job. And we

got to show up and do the work. And eventually they'll say, "Well, let's give her — give them a shot."

RAUCHER: Did you folks have any other questions? I think we've got about ten, fifteen minutes left.

CRAWFORD: So how big of a difference did it make when your siblings got in? How does it feel when you guys get together?

S. H.: Oh, it's funny. We're pretty close, but we really don't talk too much sheet metal work. I'm more involved in the union than they are. But as far as me personally, it made a big difference. You know, like I said, when I started the apprentice program, it was all new to me. But my brother started two years after me and he had the same school day, so we were able to go to school together. And for some reason, after he was there — I don't know if it became easier or it wasn't as big of a problem or a hardship — I liked it a lot better.

CRAWFORD: You felt more comfortable.

S. H.: I guess.

CRAWFORD: You knew there was at least one person that you could rely on.

S. H.: That's probably it. But just him being there made school better, because, like I said, at the time, they threw you in. And me not having all the field experience and being kept in a shop, it made it harder. It was hard — like I said, some didn't want to teach you and you had to take it upon yourself to learn it. And now you're going to school and you're supposed to be building there on what they've been teaching in the shop and in the field and I haven't been in the field. But after a couple years, it was a little better.

RAUCHER: What do you think the future looks like for women in the trades, specifically in your trade?

S. H.: It is better than it was. But I worry about how the trade's going to be in the future, you know, with the economy and the restrictions government has been putting on the labor movement and stuff like that. But as for women, it's such a great opportunity that they're not taking advantage of. They come in and they don't realize how hard it was, that they didn't want the first female sheet metal worker there. Like I said, I didn't know her at the time, but I met her at a union picnic, the first female in the trade. Her dad didn't want her in the trade. There was a rift between them because she got into the trade. And she had it a lot harder than I had it.

And the females that come in now, they don't realize how hard it was and they don't take advantage of all the possibilities. And I don't know if it's the generation it is, you know, but the work ethic, showing up every day on time, kids don't see that as important. But being a female, that might be all you got — "She shows up every day and she tries. We'll keep her and let the guy that doesn't show up all the time go." I don't know if it's a generation thing or what, but it's going to be tough.

NUZNOV: Is this a version of what you just asked, Margaret? What advice would you give other women that were thinking about entering your trade?

S. H.: What advice would I give? That to show up every day, on time, and try your best. Like I said, I wasn't no natural to this. You can learn this stuff. Give it a try. Make it your own, too. Like I said, you might not be able to do it the way they showed you to do it, but do it the way you can get it done. But if you try, they see that. So that's what I say, give it a shot. Give it your best.

RAUCHER: Are you able to attract very many women at all into the trade? You said there are only twenty of 2,000, so it sounds as if, you know, you don't have them . . .

NUZNOV: Beating down the doors.

RAUCHER: Yeah, right, beating down the doors to become sheet metal workers. Are there trade fairs? I mean, are there sorts of places you can go to attract women to the trade, or no?

S. H.: Not really, that I'm aware of. The women out there that have certain skills, this is not the first place they look to. You know, they have math skills, they have computer skills, they can use them other places and make money at it. But we do make a very good living and that attracts some people, the wage. But it's more important that they develop the skills to be a good sheet metal worker.

RAUCHER: Well, I guess if there are no other questions, then I'll ask you if you have anything you wanted to add, or something that we missed?

S. H.: No, nothing to add. It seems like I've gone all over my whole career there, all the stories I can remember.

RAUCHER: Well, thanks so much for being with us.

S. H.: Well, thank you.