

## **Metro Detroit Skilled Tradeswomen Oral History Project**



**Sue Jantschak**

Carpenter

Interviewed on May 16, 2005

Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs  
Walter P. Reuther Library  
Wayne State University

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## **Metro Detroit Skilled Tradeswomen Oral History Project**

### **Interview with Sue Jantschak**

**MARGARET RAUCHER:** The Metro Detroit Skilled Tradeswomen Oral History Project is here at the Reuther Library on May 16, 2005 to interview Sue Jantschak, who is a business agent with the Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters and Millwrights.

**SUE JANTSCHAK:** And we represent floorlayers, piledrivers and millmen.

**RAUCHER:** This is Margaret Raucher and I'm going to start out the questioning by asking you what your life was like before you got into the trades, your family life and growing up and going to school and hobbies and friends and things like that.

**JANTSCHAK:** All at once? [laughter]

**RAUCHER:** You can just start talking and if we have questions, we'll ask them as you go along.

**JANTSCHAK:** All right. I think I had a middle-class upbringing, very protected. I was pretty naive and gullible when I became an adult. My mother was a homemaker. My father was a restaurant manager. And my father was a German Army officer from World War II, and he ran the house like that.

**RAUCHER:** You mean, he emigrated to the United States?

**JANTSCHAK:** Right, after the war, along with Mom. And so they're both from Germany. And we learned a good work ethic. We always had our chores.

**RAUCHER:** Can I ask when you were born, the date?

**JANTSCHAK:** 9/14/55.

**RAUCHER:** September 14, 1955.

**JANTSCHAK:** I'll take diamonds, gifts. [laughter]

**RAUCHER:** And you were born here in Detroit?

**JANTSCHAK:** I was born in Indianapolis. That's where they immigrated to.

**MICHELLE FECTEAU:** I was wondering, why Indianapolis? What brought them there?

**JANTSCHAK:** They had friends there that my father knew, American friends, where he got his first job in the hotel business. And he had a degree in hotel and restaurant management. And so that's where I ended up, that's where I was born.

**FECTEAU:** So he ran a hotel in Germany?

**JANTSCHAK:** No, he had an degree. He was actually an officer, a German Army officer.

**FECTEAU:** So even before the war.

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes. He was college educated beforehand. The schools in Germany were really good and they came out knowing several languages. My mother was an interpreter. She knew Russian, French, German, English, so it worked out quite well for her. They came over here and they already knew the language.

**RAUCHER:** And you have brothers, sisters?

**JANTSCHAK:** One brother, fifty-three, older.

**RAUCHER:** And so what was it like growing up in Indianapolis?

**JANTSCHAK:** Well, no, I was born there. I grew up in Fraser, Michigan.

**RAUCHER:** So how old were you when your parents moved here?

**JANTSCHAK:** I think I was two.

**FECTEAU:** Why did he move to Michigan?

**JANTSCHAK:** He got hired by the Sheraton Cadillac in Detroit. I remember the riots. I was raised in those halls down there, back when it was still a big fancy hotel, back in the old days. And when I was a little girl, I used to run through the pantry, by the pantry chefs and the little pastry women. And they always gave me pastries and hard rolls and spoiled me rotten.

**CARRIE WELLS:** And your father managed the entire . . .

**JANTSCHAK:** Nope. He managed the restaurant businesses within the Sheraton Cadillac.

**RAUCHER:** So you went to public school, then, in Fraser.

**JANTSCHAK:** Went to public school, yes.

**RAUCHER:** Was there anything in particular that you wanted to be when you were growing up?

**JANTSCHAK:** I wanted to ride horses. [laughter] That's not much of a goal, but I wasn't asking for much. In Fraser back then, there were horses.

**RAUCHER:** It was country, huh?

**JANTSCHAK:** It was country. I got a ticket there recently, because I drove down my old road and there was condos where the woods were and the lake was filled in and there was a subdivision there. There was a stop sign where no road had been before, so I did not recognize where I was. That was my road I grew up on. I mean, I lived there through high school graduation. You turn your ticket over and there's three things on the back. It says, "guilty," "innocent," or "guilty with reason." So I wrote the judge a letter saying, "Yes, I did it, but back then there were swamps there and there were horses over

there and now there are apartments and condos and whole houses.” And my friend said, “You didn’t really write him that.” And I said, “Well, absolutely. It was the truth. That road wasn’t there when I was in driver's ed.”

**RAUCHER:** Did he let you off?

**JANTSCHAK:** He let me off as long as I didn’t get another ticket. [laughter]

So, truth always works.

**RAUCHER:** Yeah, maybe. [laughter]

**JANTSCHAK:** He probably got a good laugh out of it anyway.

**RAUCHER:** So what does your brother do for a living, by the way?

**JANTSCHAK:** My brother does CAD, computer-aided design.

**FECTEAU:** So neither you nor your brother went into hotel management — you weren’t interested in that?

**JANTSCHAK:** No.

**FECTEAU:** Why do you think that is?

**JANTSCHAK:** I don’t know. I liked animals and things like that. I liked nature and animals.

**FECTEAU:** So, being outdoors . . .

**JANTSCHAK:** I love being outdoors, yeah. My parents always called me the black sheep, because I liked everything that nobody else in the family ever liked before.

**RAUCHER:** I wonder, you say you spent a lot of time with your dad on the job, but you grew up in a suburb of Detroit. Did being on the job introduce you to things about the city or about people in the city that you wouldn’t have known otherwise?

**JANTSCHAK:** It introduced me to meeting people of color, which I wouldn't normally have got to do at Fraser High School. It was a 100 percent white high school. And I grew up with a very open heart about African Americans, because I loved those ladies.

**RAUCHER:** Who worked at the Sheraton?

**JANTSCHAK:** They were pantry chefs and did pastries and things like that. So when the riots came, well, I really didn't have any concept of prejudice. I was completely open-minded. And to this day I really try to help a lot of the black women in Detroit get work, because I know they're just people, same as everybody else.

**RAUCHER:** Well, what did you think of — you were, what, twelve when the riot came, right? So what did you think? Was your dad still going into work while . . . ?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yep, every day.

**RAUCHER:** But you didn't go in with him then?

**JANTSCHAK:** No. I'd just go in on weekends with him. I think he was giving Mom a break.

**RAUCHER:** So, did you just take a regular curriculum in high school, or what sorts of subjects did you take or were you interested in?

**JANTSCHAK:** I took a lot of math and science and some accelerated courses, became a member of the National Honor Society, a lot of clubs, the science club.

**RAUCHER:** So you were planning on going to college, it sounds like.

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes. I was planning on going into medicine of some kind.

**CRAWFORD:** Because your parents were European immigrants, do you feel like they held you guys to a higher standard than if they'd been native born?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes. They expected a lot. But we didn't realize that it was a lot. When you're raised that way, it's just a natural way of life for them to expect that of you and for you to give it back. If that's all they wanted, that was an easy thing to give, you know, just live up to their standards, do your studies and be good at them and do your chores.

**RAUCHER:** Are you bilingual? Did they speak German at home?

**JANTSCHAK:** I know a little bit of German. I know a little bit more Spanish than I do German. I'm trying to prepare for the future, when a large majority of the United States will be Hispanic. I'm already interested in bringing a lot of the Hispanics into the Carpenters Union. They work very hard and a lot of times the language is a barrier. I try to get them into English classes and to get legal. And when they get legal, they come back, they call me back.

**FECTEAU:** I'm curious about your dad and being in management in the hotel industry in Detroit. Did they have a union where he was at?

**JANTSCHAK:** No.

**FECTEAU:** Did he or your mom ever espouse any kind of view about unions, one way or the other, or do they hold any position on it?

**JANTSCHAK:** No.

**CRAWFORD:** Or politics? Do you know where they stood politically?

**JANTSCHAK:** They were active in politics, yes.

**RAUCHER:** Were they conservative, liberal, Republicans, Democrats?



**JANTSCHAK:** Oh, I think they're Democrats. Actually, they weren't. They were leaning toward that just before my mom died, but they voted for whoever they thought was the best person.

**RAUCHER:** I'm surprised that the Sheraton — the waitresses, anyway, or waiters, whatever they had, weren't unionized.

**JANTSCHAK:** They may have. But at that age, you don't really know. I never saw any struggles going on there.

They were quite strict, though, my parents, very strict. I had to be in long before the time the streetlights were on. They had to know where I was every minute. So, a lot of that has changed. A lot of the kids have more freedom nowadays.

**FECTEAU:** Not my kids. [laughter]

**CRAWFORD:** How old were you when your mother died? What did she die of?

**JANTSCHAK:** She died of cancer in '93.

**RAUCHER:** Is your dad still alive?

**JANTSCHAK:** My dad's still alive. And he's just had to go into a nursing home. He's having trouble walking. But he lives in Florida and he won't come back to Michigan.

**RAUCHER:** You said your mom was a homemaker?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes.

**RAUCHER:** So she never worked outside the home?

**JANTSCHAK:** She did after I came back from college for a visit. And I said something that deeply hurt her. I said, “Mom, I just don’t want to grow up to be any old housewife.”

**CRAWFORD:** Like you.

**JANTSCHAK:** I didn’t say, “like you.” But at that point she went to work doing microfilm for the Bechtel Corporation, and she was very successful in her job. She was very, very educated, a very intelligent woman.

**RAUCHER:** And you think it’s just because of that comment that you made that she . . .

**JANTSCHAK:** I know it is, because she told me about it years later.

**CRAWFORD:** What did your parents do between the end of World War II and when they immigrated here?

**JANTSCHAK:** Germany was a country that was basically destroyed. There were no buildings. Mom and Dad both have stories of bombs falling around them and starvation.

**RAUCHER:** What city were they in?

**JANTSCHAK:** Berlin. And it was a pretty devastated country. There was no future for many, many years to come. And they came over here, because there was no war here on this soil, and there wasn’t going to have to be any building up — it was ready to go. And they were pretty well welcomed by the American people.

**CRAWFORD:** What year did they come over? Just before you were born? Or was your brother born here, too?

**JANTSCHAK:** I think they came over in '49, '50. My brother was born in '53. One thing they taught me about this country is — I'm a very patriotic person. I know we have problems with our government at times, but this is a great country, because we've never had a war on our soil from a foreign power — I mean, once we were unified states. And they beat that into me, how lucky we were to be able to not worry about a knock on the door in the middle of the night, to be able to express our opinions and our desires and chase our dreams without somebody telling us how to do it and when to do it. And they said this was a great country.

**RAUCHER:** Another question I had was about your friends in school. And did you do all the sorts of typical girl things, dolls and proms and dances and all that sort of stuff?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yeah, yeah.

**RAUCHER:** So you were not a tomboy, okay.

**JANTSCHAK:** No — well, I could climb a tree pretty good. [laughter] And my favorite thing to do was go to the woods and climb trees with my friends and ride bikes through the woods. My prom, I was at a horse show. So I bypassed my senior prom and went to a horse show instead. I liked horses better than boys back then.

**RAUCHER:** I was going to ask you: You said your dad had American friends, and that's how they ended up coming to Indianapolis.

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes.

**RAUCHER:** Did he meet them in Germany after the war?

**JANTSCHAK:** He met them after the war, in Germany.

**RAUCHER:** They were military?

**JANTSCHAK:** They came there after the war to help reorganize the devastation over there. And my mom did work as an interpreter and my dad worked in, I think, some kind of an embassy or something to help the country regrow after the devastation. That's where my mom met my dad — working for the Americans.

**CRAWFORD:** So they were in the American sector of Berlin when it was divided up?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes. As a matter of fact, when I was thirty, I found out I had a half sister and a half brother on the other side of the Iron Curtain from my father's previous marriage during the war. So, if that's not a shocker . . .

**RAUCHER:** Well, have your parents ever been back to Europe?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes, they have. They've gone over there to visit. And Dad and Mom both went over there to visit my half siblings.

**FECTEAU:** Well, I'm curious about your chores and about what kind of got you into thinking about carpentry. Was there anything in your childhood that you think kind of was guiding you in that direction?

**JANTSCHAK:** No. [laughter] Not in my wildest dreams did I ever want to become a carpenter. As a matter of fact, I still tell people about that. I grew to love carpentry. I graduated from Fraser High School in 1973, and at that time, women weren't allowed to take wood shop. The thought would never even cross your mind to try and go into wood shop or car shop, anything like that. You're going to do home ec. And I hate sewing. I think it's absolute torture. [laughs]

So when they do the aptitude tests in college, an important thing that will show your mechanical aptitude down the road as far as being a carpenter and being able to

understand a blueprint is problem-solving. It's kind of like playing a game of chess. If you can see a problem three steps beforehand, you save the company money. The mechanical aptitude tests that they give in high school — which way the pulley goes when you pull the rope or which way the box unfolds, spatial perception — a lot of that is geared toward whether you're a good mechanic. And you can tell a lot from your high school scores.

Now, back then, they said I would make somebody a good mechanic, but for a woman, it would be a sculptor. They wanted me to be a sculptor, because of my spatial perception.

**WELLS:** That's very practical. [laughter]

**JANTSCHAK:** Right. I like doing metal studs and drywall way better than I like sculpting. But I did place in the top two percent of the men's scores in high school for mechanical aptitude, so carpentry was really a natural thing once I got beyond the point where . . . I had to accept it first, because it was very difficult for me to wear work boots and things like that.

**CRAWFORD:** But first you went to college, right?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes, I went to college.

**RAUCHER:** Where did you go to college?

**JANTSCHAK:** I went to Michigan State University.

**RAUCHER:** Right out of high school?

**JANTSCHAK:** No, I skipped a year, worked as a dental assistant, and then I went. And I also worked three days on a conveyer belt for the auto industry, because it

paid twice as much money. And then I decided the autoworkers deserved to make all the money they're making, because you couldn't pay me enough to work a line.

**RAUCHER:** You worked on the assembly line?

**JANTSCHAK:** I worked on an assembly line.

**RAUCHER:** Where? What plant?

**JANTSCHAK:** It was called Hoover Chemical, in Whitmore Lake. You couldn't pay me enough. You ought to walk a mile in the autoworkers' shoes. You couldn't pay me enough to do their work.

**RAUCHER:** So you just quit.

**JANTSCHAK:** I quit after three days. They told me I couldn't quit. And I was throwing up from the fumes. And when I started to throw up on the line, after telling them for a half hour that I needed to go throw up, they came up and said, "Oh, you really were sick, weren't you?"

**CRAWFORD:** Got to wait for the break, guys. [laughter]

**JANTSCHAK:** At this point, I said, "I am not an animal." I said, "You can take this job and shove it." And I went back to work the next day as a dental assistant. So I have a very, very high sympathy for the autoworkers and their work on the assembly lines. Because eight hours a day you're sitting there and your mind is absolutely numb. Eight hours seems like twenty-four. If you've got any kind of brain at all, you can't do it, because your mind is racing. So I say, "Give them all the money they want."

**WELLS:** So then you decided to go to college?

**JANTSCHAK:** I had already applied for college, but they accepted me into pre-vet.

**FECTEAU:** I knew you were going to say pre-vet.

**JANTSCHAK:** But I wanted to get into veterinary technology, which is a technical program, a lot more scientific, microscope work and diagnostics and things like that. And it was a two-year program. I graduated and went right into the field. Worked thirteen years in the field, and then I became allergic to dogs and cats.

**FECTEAU:** Oh, man!

**JANTSCHAK:** Dogs, cats and flea spray.

**RAUCHER:** Just all of a sudden?

**JANTSCHAK:** It was gradual, but it got quite bad. And there at the ripe old age of thirty-three, the allergist said, “I suggest you find yourself another profession.”  
[laughter] Okay, well, let’s see what I want to be when I grow up. I thought I was grown up.

**RAUCHER:** How about horses? Were you allergic to horses?

**JANTSCHAK:** Nope. I sure wasn’t.

**RAUCHER:** You could have gone and worked with horses, perhaps.

**JANTSCHAK:** I could have, but actually, it was a good time for me to change professions. I had gotten quite disillusioned at some of the callousness that veterinarians had toward their patients. So, that’s a whole other story. I was always the one in the hall with the crying woman, an old lady whose poodle was dying. And I really felt for them. And so I have a lot of empathy, because I know where they’re coming from. So it was hard.

I would never put animals to sleep. That was a prerequisite for my hiring, where I worked. I told them, “I cannot put my heart and soul into saving animals and then have

you turn around and tell me to put them to sleep.” I said, “Don’t ask that of me.” You can’t bond with a dog that’s dying and try to save it — and you really try to get the animal to bond to you, because they’re really lonely. They’re in that hospital hooked up to an IV line, on mats because they’re urinating all over themselves. And that’s somebody’s little baby that’s been cuddled and nurtured and you want that animal to want to live — and then just treat it like a book.

**RAUCHER:** Could you have done something behind the scenes, where you don’t actually have to work with the animals, where you’d be doing stuff where you wouldn’t be exposed to that?

**JANTSCHAK:** I could have gone into research. But I made a decision a long time ago that’s not how I wanted to earn a living. Though I believe that some research is good, I did see some unnecessary research done at Michigan State University, just for the grant money. And I know I wouldn’t want to be the first guinea pig that some doctor does surgery on. But there was a lot of people just skating along on their grants.

**FECTEAU:** I went to Michigan State, too. I was pre-vet. I used to hear the dogs howling sometimes. They were howling in pain when I’d go by some of the research labs — at least that’s what it sounded like to me.

**RAUCHER:** So anyway, you got out of the vet business. And then how did you decide to go into . . .?

**CRAWFORD:** Before we move on, the period between when you got out of college — you were probably twenty-one — until you were thirty-three, when you got out of working in veterinary medicine, what was the rest of your life like? Were you married? Were you dating?



**JANTSCHAK:** Oh, I date. I still date.

**CRAWFORD:** No, I mean, what was your social life like and other interests?

**JANTSCHAK:** Oh, I have a lot of interests. I love hiking and camping and . . .

**CRAWFORD:** Well, I mean, you bought a house? You moved out of home when you were . . .

**JANTSCHAK:** No, I didn't. I wasn't able to buy a house until I became a union carpenter in the apprenticeship in my third year.

**RAUCHER:** So you were living at home the whole time you were working at the . . .

**JANTSCHAK:** Nope. I rented old farmhouses. I never went back home after I went to college. I was free. And like I said, my parents were very strict. And I was pretty naive, so I had a lot to learn about the world.

**FECTEAU:** But you liked hiking and camping.

**JANTSCHAK:** Hiking, camping, reading. I like to paint, garden. I have horses and cows and chickens and geese now. I've got my own little farm and I'm just ecstatic, I'm so lucky. And it's just a great sense of peace. I don't even want to go on vacation. If I get a day off, I'm at home. It's a vacation.

**FECTEAU:** Where do you live?

**JANTSCHAK:** I live in Milan, well, actually in Augusta. It's a township right near Milan. And I'm just real happy, trying to reclaim a hundred-year-old farmhouse, watching the glass come up from the ground and the metal, the bailing twine, and get it all cleaned up, and put flowers in. A hundred-year-old house without a single flower. So of course, I've gone haywire on that. I'm having a good time.

**FECTEAU:** So what got you into carpentry?

**JANTSCHAK:** I actually hired in at a bank for a short time, and I hated it because you had to wear a dress and high heels. I was a branch administrator and they really liked me — I did a good job. And they taught me computer.

**CRAWFORD:** Now, did they hire you in as a branch manager?

**JANTSCHAK:** As a branch administrator. It's a little bit different. I'm the one that sits out at a desk in the lobby and says, "Can I help you?," when they come in and they're angry. And I used to tell them, "Look, I know you're angry now, but you will be happy when you leave. So I'm here to make you happy." And that would calm them right down.

It was a very low-paying job, the bank. They wouldn't let the tellers or anybody in there take a second job. It was more or less a job for somebody's wife or something. You had to wear a dress and high heels, so they kept you to a certain standard. And I just felt like I was acting the whole time. I'm not a high-heel, dress kind of person.

**CRAWFORD:** So how long did you do that?

**JANTSCHAK:** I guess probably no longer than six months. And then in the meantime, I had taken the carpenter's test.

**RAUCHER:** How'd you find out about the test?

**JANTSCHAK:** I have a very good family friend named Dave Dyer — I've known him for many, many years. He's a friend of my brother. And he had gone into the Carpenters apprenticeship. And knowing that I was always kind of a country girl, you know, that I'll get out there and fix it if there's something broken, work hard . . .

I dearly treasure my father's 1960 set of Craftsman stainless steel tools he gave me when he bought new ones. They had no safety on them. I still have them, they still work — a drill motor, a sander and a circular saw with a six-and-a-quarter-inch blade. And they're heavy and they're full power. There is no safety. No safety, no slowdown, nothin'. It's like a jet engine starting. [laughter]

But then I started to show dogs — I'd already shown horses — and made jumps, made all the obedience equipment for them, and repaired barns. And if I needed anything, I built it, because I couldn't afford it any other way.

**RAUCHER:** And at what age were you doing these kinds of things?

**JANTSCHAK:** Since I graduated from college, I would say. If something needed to be done, built, I would just build it.

**RAUCHER:** And you taught yourself how to do this?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yeah, it was pretty easy. I don't know about the quality. [laughter] I mean, if you have a diagram of what you need, it's very easy to do.

**RAUCHER:** I mean, your dad wasn't the one who sort of introduced you to the tools and showed you how to do stuff?

**JANTSCHAK:** No. He tried to teach me how to clean fish. [laughter] And I still can't bait a hook.

So anyway, Dave was in the apprenticeship. And you know, I was in dire straits. You cannot keep putting your credit card down on car insurance; I realized that. I had taken a cut in pay when I left the veterinary hospital. And I thought it would be easy to live on \$5.50 or \$6.50 an hour back then, and it wasn't. It was very difficult. I was

always good at budgeting, but I had no concept of what it cost to actually live. And you know, cars break down. And I finally decided, well, I have to do something.

The day that changed my mind was when my dog broke into my refrigerator and ate a week's worth of food in there. And I sat in that pile of crumpled papers and cried, because I had no food.

**RAUCHER:** Your dog broke into your refrigerator?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yeah, he used to open it when he got hungry. He finally learned to shut it, though. [laughter] For a week, I learned what it was like to be hungry. I lived out in the country and I tried to eat the soybeans from a farmer's field. Another farmer had a refuse heap from his garden and I snuck in there to get an old watermelon he had thrown out, just anything I could to have food.

**RAUCHER:** You didn't think about going to your parents and asking for help?

**JANTSCHAK:** Oh no.

**FECTEAU:** Why not?

**JANTSCHAK:** Because me and my dad were — I was too proud. I was too proud. I was too proud to ask my parents for help. I mean, my dad had always — you know, we're kind of like a couple of snarling dogs circling each other, because we're both very, very, I don't know, assertive. And I guess I got my stubbornness from him. We're probably equally stubborn.

So for a week there, I figured out I know what it's like to be hungry. It was an eye opener. At that point, Dave mentioned to me that the Carpenters apprenticeship was taking applications. And I went down there and applied. And they called me in for the testing, which consisted of a math test and a practical test. We had to build a metal stud

wall. We had to build a sawhorse. And we had to put some nails into the ceiling and sideways and under the floor.

**RAUCHER:** And what year would this have been?

**JANTSCHAK:** That would have been '88.

**RAUCHER:** And you already knew how to do this stuff, all these practical tests?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yeah. I just kind of taught myself. You have to. You have to do what you got to do when you got a farm. And I had rented a small farmhouse. You can't always look for the man to do it when you need it done.

**FECTEAU:** So are you gardening food now ?

**JANTSCHAK:** I grow my own organic food, organic chickens, organic eggs, organic beef, organic lambs. That's because I'm too cheap to put fertilizer down. [laughter] Tomatoes grow just as good in a little hole in the weeds as they do . . . As a matter of fact, some of the neighbors that get sick, they would only eat my eggs and my tomatoes. I had an older gentleman that was dying of cancer, and he'd only eat my stuff.

**PAT NUZNOV:** So you said you applied . . . Oh, I'm sorry. I'm Pat Nuznov. We met at a picnic at Clark Park. I was with Elaine.

**JANTSCHAK:** Oh, I remember that. I didn't arrange that. [laughter]

**NUZNOV:** It's okay. I don't remember too much else other than that I was there. And my question is: You said you applied for the apprenticeship and then you took the test. What kind of timeline was that, the test, the interview, the getting in? Did it take a year?

**JANTSCHAK:** No, no. It was probably within a month. And then I didn't hear anything for a long time.

**NUZNOV:** And you stayed at the bank through that time?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes. That's when I was at the bank. And then I guess what happened was — they didn't teach me anything about what I needed to do to go get a job. Nobody taught me that there was other trades out there.

**CRAWFORD:** So you had started your classroom apprenticeship?

**JANTSCHAK:** Nope. Because in the Carpenters, you have to get your first job before they'll take you into the class. Of course, they never explain that either. So there was a lot of lack of information back then.

**NZUNOV:** So how did you get through all of that lack of information?

**JANTSCHAK:** Well actually, what happened with my first job was the business agent out there got in a real — excuse my French — pissing match with somebody out there doing a residential job and thought he would send a woman to them just to make them mad. [laughter] So in the middle of the summer they called me up and said, “Hey, we got you a job.”

And I showed up out there, and boy, it was like eight inches deep in the clay, and it'd stick to your feet. It was kind of funny, because I showed up with a crew and I had all my tool pouches and everything and the foreman looked at me and said, “Well, go plumb them jams and shim them headers,” and I'm like, “What?” He said, “Plumb them jams, shim them headers!!!” [laughter] And I said, “What are you saying?” He looks at me and he says, “How long have you been a carpenter?” I said, “This is my first day.” [laughter] And the whole crew laughed.

This guy was a screamer, too. But he kept me quite a while, because I was a hard worker. The conditions were nasty out there. I didn't know that you could wear rubber

boots to cover your regular shoes. I was soaked all the time. And clay — I had to go by the car wash to wash my feet off every night. I went to my brother's door like a block away from there once, and he wouldn't let me in. [laughter]

**RAUCHER:** But you didn't know that you could get these other sorts of clothes?

**JANTSCHAK:** No, because nobody would talk to me.

**RAUCHER:** On that job?

**JANTSCHAK:** Right. Finally, somebody took me aside and said, "Look, I'm going to show you how to hammer," because they could see I was really trying. I'm trying to work hard. And even the foreman had walked in, and I was crouched behind something, doing something, and he said to somebody else, "She's done with that already?" So I think I was working pretty hard. I was getting my work done. And he kept me for probably six months until the project was done.

**FECTEAU:** Do you remember who it was that pulled you aside? Do you remember anything about that person?

**JANTSCHAK:** I remember what he looks like.

**FECTEAU:** That's all?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yeah. And then, a while later actually, I moved in next to a guy that did siding. And he started to tell me a story about this poor woman they used to give all the bad work to over on that apartment complex out there. And I said, "Oh, that was me." [laughter]

**FECTEAU:** So how did you persevere? How did you hang in there, given that situation?

**JANTSCHAK:** I didn't have much choice. I didn't have any way to go. You just do what you have to do.

**FECTEAU:** Did you feel like they were trying to make you quit?

**JANTSCHAK:** No. [laughs] I enjoyed it. I focused on my job, just did the best I could. But I didn't know anything about power tools and I had no training. They did not teach me how to use power tools.

**RAUCHER:** So you did it all on your own.

**JANTSCHAK:** I did it on my own. I didn't know how to set ladders, so I realized that I was quite unsafe at times.

**RAUCHER:** How did you — I mean, to go to work every day, you just didn't talk to anybody and no one talked to you?

**JANTSCHAK:** Well, one of the problems with women in the trades is that sometimes the foreman doesn't know how to talk to women. I think everybody pretty well knows that a lot of times, especially when she's younger, the foreman doesn't know quite what to do with a woman. So it's easier to put the woman on repetitive, monotonous, dirty work and keep her there so that she doesn't need a partner and they don't need to keep directing her or teach her. That's what they did with me

And a lot of women, when they do turn out of the apprenticeship program, have gotten that treatment, and they find it difficult because their training is lacking, because they've been given all these monotonous, repetitive jobs, where nobody had to talk to them or where they didn't have to learn from a partner. So I try to address that problem with the young females now and make sure that their education is diversified.

**CRAWFORD:** How do you do that?



**JANTSCHAK:** Oh, I talk to them. Everybody's got my phone number.

**CRAWFORD:** Yeah, but I mean, since they have to find their own jobs, how do they get a well-rounded work experience?

**JANTSCHAK:** They don't know unless you teach them. They can't come out after insulating for four years. And they'll do it.

**CRAWFORD:** So you asked some questions like, "Well, what have they put you on, and they say, "I've been insulating for two years."

**JANTSCHAK:** I insulated for one year after that residential project. I went to twenty-seven job sites, and I knew they were hiring, but nobody would hire me. Finally, I went to the twenty-eighth job site and the guy hired me, because by then I was starting to get mad. And I walked into his office and I said, "I'm going to be the best damn woman carpenter this side of the Mississippi. Better hire me now while I'm cheap." And he leaned back in his chair and tilted back and put his glasses back and he said, "I think I'll hire ya."

Well, as it turned out, it was the company my apprenticeship instructor worked for and he didn't want me in, so he was pretty pissed at me. But after he got to know me, I endeared myself to him, and we actually like each other. But he was hiring all the other apprentices but me. And the first day of school, he actually took me aside and said, "What are you doing this for?" He says, "You're taking away some work a guy needs to support his family. You're taking away that spot."

**CRAWFORD:** And this was the apprenticeship instructor.

**JANTSCHAK:** That's the apprenticeship instructor. The other one told me, since I was thirty-three, that women were washed up by the time they're forty, physically,

and that I was wasting their time. I found that other apprenticeship instructor at the age of forty-two and I wagged my finger in his face and let him know that I didn't appreciate what he had told me back then, and that he was quite mistaken.

**FECTEAU:** Did he respond to you?

**JANTSCHAK:** He apologized. He said, "I don't remember saying that to you." But I told him it was burned into my memory. So sometimes you remember those hurtful words and you can quote them word for word.

**FECTEAU:** What year was this?

**JANTSCHAK:** That would have been '89, '90 — just beginning '90, I think, I went into the apprenticeship.

**CRAWFORD:** So you didn't really start until 1990?

**JANTSCHAK:** I started my job in '89, but they didn't put me into the apprenticeship program for a while.

**WELLS:** Why is that?

**JANTSCHAK:** I don't know. Because they have terms, I think. I think they have quarterly terms, so you have to wait until the quarter starts, I think. I don't know. All I remember is that the whole apprenticeship committee was there when I walked in, and they had set the clock ahead. They saw me coming and they had set the clock ahead. And they said, "You know, you're late. We're going to tack on extra hours." And I looked at them and I said, "Well, you set the clock ahead." And I just walked away. And they could see that I caught them. You know, I was an adult.

**RAUCHER:** This was at the apprenticeship class?

**JANTSCHAK:** It was at the apprenticeship school itself — they have the JATC, the Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee there.

**RAUCHER:** And how often did you go to the class?

**JANTSCHAK:** I went four nights a month, in a row. We called it “hell week,” because first you went to work and then you went to class. And you were dirty and tired and sore and hungry.

**NUZNOV:** You went right from work to school?

**JANTSCHAK:** Right from work to school.

**NUZNOV:** And then how many hours?

**JANTSCHAK:** It was like four hours a night.

**NUZNOV:** And four nights in a row?

**JANTSCHAK:** Right, four nights in a row. And you had set assignments to build. You had projects, certain projects that you were supposed to do, like forms or a metal stud wall or frame a small building. So everybody had a certain task. You’d make a piece of furniture. So you’d learn how to use dadoes and do rabbits, routers.

**RAUCHER:** Did anyone talk to you there, in the class?

**CRAWFORD:** Were there any other women?

**JANTSCHAK:** There was one other woman — Patty Stiegel had come in roughly when I came in — and another woman that dropped out.

**WELLS:** Did the instructors teach you specifically at class? You said you weren’t learning things on the job.

**JANTSCHAK:** I followed the instructions. And if I had a question about the saw, a lot of the guys helped me. A lot of the guys in the class helped me. So I’d go up

and ask them. One apprenticeship instructor kind of ignored me and the other one didn't like me because I was taking the job away from a man. It did take a while, but they both accepted me eventually. The other couple women had a much worse time of it.

**CRAWFORD:** Why?

**JANTSCHAK:** I don't know. I think back then, also, there was a token mentality — the token woman for the company, the token woman on the job site, the token woman for the federal- or state-funded job. And so, some of the women that had been in had considered themselves to be tokens and they didn't have to have the same skills as the men, because they were fulfilling a quota, I think. As a matter of fact, I even talked to some that had that feeling, and that's one reason that we started the Michigan Tradeswomen Association, to bring better trained women into the skilled trades. Because I got tired of hearing about Diane and her sexual favors, or whatever, and how women didn't work and they didn't work out. So I decided the way to be a good carpenter is be the very best at what you do and really try to make the contractor money. And that's the best way. And I think it worked.

**RAUCHER:** What you're saying, then, is that there were women who thought that they would somehow slide through just on the basis of being a minority or a token.

**JANTSCHAK:** Right. When we started to teach young women about all the skilled trades, and when they had apprenticeship openings, we wouldn't sugarcoat it. We'd tell them, "You're going to be dirty, tired, you're going to want to quit six times your first year. Your fingers are going to swell. You'll think you're going to die when you go home. You're going to be cold, you're going to be chapped. People are going to call you a lesbian. There's a lot to it. And I said, "Now, why would a woman that was a

lesbian want to work with men? Come on. Yeah, right! That's one of the perks, we get to look at your tushes." Did I say that on tape? [laughter]

**FECTEAU:** I'm just wondering, too, about the women who kind of went along, if they may have initially come in to be carpenters, to learn the trade, but then there was so much resistance they said, "I'll just get my paycheck and do what I've got to do to survive."

**JANTSCHAK:** A lot of them left because they were just tired of the bullshit. And it's hard for women, still, to get work. A lot of the contractors aren't complying with . . . Affirmative action was created so women and minorities could get the opportunities to learn the job. And then you don't need it anymore, because you've got a reputation that precedes you. If you're a good carpenter, the companies are going to know it. And they did. I never lacked for work after I became a journeyman. I worked year-round. I worked for two companies and when one wasn't working me, the other one did.

**FECTEAU:** Do you feel you have to work twice as hard as a man?

**JANTSCHAK:** Oh, absolutely, because they're watching you.

**FECTEAU:** So the standards aren't quite the same?

**JANTSCHAK:** No, the standards are not the same. We have to be very good at what we do. And that's what we try to teach the younger women coming in, is to be the very best at what you do, learn everything you can. And when you feel like you can't take one more step, take it. It all adds up. And don't close the door for the next woman to come in; leave the door open so that she can work for that company too.

And I think a lot of the women that came in early on as tokens closed doors for the women to come. Like even at U of M [University of Michigan], I went and applied there and the guy in the plant told me that women carpenters weren't very good. Women plumbers and electricians were okay, but no women carpenters. They tried one once. And I remember his name to this day, and I'm not going to say it. He was an Arabic gentlemen. And on the basis of that one woman they had employed there, he denied any further employment to female carpenters.

**RAUCHER:** When things were so bad on the first job you had, was there anyone to talk to off the job, that you could go to with the way you felt?

**JANTSCHAK:** Just my boyfriend. They don't really have a clue. They don't have a clue of how hard the job can be, and how physically demanding it is.

**RAUCHER:** Yeah, talk about that part of it, just being a carpenter and what the physical demands are and what that's like for a woman.

**JANTSCHAK:** Well, you have to get in shape. We try to get the young women into some kind of physical training. You have to pick up heavy weights and learn a lot of leverage for the heavier things.

Now, I'm a strong woman. I'm almost as strong as one of the strongest men out there. I used to hang drywall and do framing. Then I figured out there was easier jobs out there, like trim work and cabinets. But it was nothing for me to pick up a 120-pound sheet of drywall and swing it over my head. You get very strong. And you get used to it. Now I try and pick that sheet up and it feels really heavy. And it's like, "Whoa, how could I swing that around?"

I used to tell them, “Doing drywall is like dancing with a good partner,” because it’s all a dance. If you know how to handle it and you know how to use the leverage, the partner goes wherever you want it to go. And so it’s a matter of outsmarting what you’re doing.

**RAUCHER:** And you’re expected to do that alone, right, not to ask somebody else to help you lift?

**JANTSCHAK:** Often women are asked to do things alone they wouldn’t ask a man to do alone.

**CRAWFORD:** “Hold that piece of drywall in and get those first two screws in.”

**JANTSCHAK:** Piece of cake. Use your head. That’s why it’s bald right here. [laughter] No, it was a lot of work. And you learn how to handle it. And it eventually becomes easy. I still like hanging Sheetrock. Everybody thinks I’m crazy, but there is some finesse and some pride when you crack the board, and everybody goes, “Ooh!” But it’s been a while for me. Now the only time I’ve done that is like on a Habitat house. So it’s been a long time.

**FECTEAU:** So, was there somebody who taught you some of the skills that you needed? How did you get more diversified in these skills?

**JANTSCHAK:** Actually, some of the men used to joke about it. When I first showed up with the company, they used to say, “Don’t let her work around me.” But they became my friends eventually, and my partners. And they were very good. And especially the older men, they appreciated having a young, hustling apprentice. And I’d say, “I’ll make you shine; you train me.” So the older carpenters would definitely like my hustle, and they would train me. So I’d wrap their cords up and carry their tools. I’d

make their life easy, and I'd make them very productive. All they had to do was teach me.

Actually, I remember the first commercial job I worked on, and that was for that company where the apprenticeship instructor was working for the company and hadn't wanted me there, and I didn't realize I'd gone over his head. The day I showed up, when I came back to the break room at lunch, there was a box of dildos hanging there on the wall next to where I'd been sitting.

**FECTEAU:** A whole box?

**JANTSCHAK:** A whole box.

**FECTEAU:** I didn't know they sold them by the box. [laughter]

**JANTSCHAK:** Oh yeah, they have little whirligigs and . . . [laughter] And when I left the break room, the instructor said, "Well, what do you think of that?" And I said, "Well, I feel sorry for any man that had to spend all that money to please his wife." [laughter] And I walked out.

Well, as it turns out, it was a plumber that had left it there. And the project manager came up to me and his face was just beet red. He was really angry. He had heard about it and he was having the guy fired. And I said, "Look, it was a bad joke. It was a joke. I didn't take it as an insult." So he didn't fire the guy. And after that, things were a lot easier, because, you know . . .

**FECTEAU:** You had more integrity than he did.

**JANTSCHAK:** He was just some numbskull.

**NUZNOV:** Did it ever come out that you said not to fire him?

**JANTSCHAK:** I don't know, but I bet it did.



**NUZNOV:** Because you could get mileage out of that.

**JANTSCHAK:** Men talk worse than women. Their gossip is way worse than women. We'll talk about things and our lives and stuff, and they'll talk about the other guys and their wives and their girlfriends. I don't know, maybe I'm wrong, but that's my general impression, because I was really surprised at how much the men gossip, and gossip about each other.

**NUZNOV:** I have to say, that really surprised me, too.

**JANTSCHAK:** Did it?

**NUZNOV:** It really did.

**JANTSCHAK:** It was a shocker.

**NUZNOV:** You know, because of what we're all told, that the grandmas all hang over the fence and talk.

**JANTSCHAK:** Yeah.

**NUZNOV:** Well, it isn't the grandmas. [laughter]

**JANTSCHAK:** It isn't the grandmas; it's the grandpas saying the grandmas do that. But that first day on the job, the gentleman that had me as his apprentice — now, I'd never done commercial before — he left me with a screw gun with an apex that went like this . . .

**NUZNOV:** Oh, it was bent.

**JANTSCHAK:** . . . and like ten pieces of top track to go up on top of — I was working at Dominos Farms, and what's that, thirty feet in the air? — a set of scaffolding and a laser I'd never even seen before and said, "Build it," and left. And I really did try. [laughs] And I finally figured out how to get the scaffold together. Laborers came over

and they felt sorry for me, showed me how to use the laser. But when it got to that apex and screwing into that metal, man, I think I got maybe four sticks up the whole morning.

And that afternoon, a young man felt sorry for me and he was not using his screw gun, so he gave me his screw gun and I hung at least three times that amount in the afternoon.

**FECTEAU:** So you're saying they gave you a faulty . . .

**JANTSCHAK:** They gave me a faulty gun as a joke.

**CRAWFORD:** Yeah, it had a bent tip.

**JANTSCHAK:** Well, I went back to the superintendent that evening and I said, "I hung this much in the morning with that screw gun you gave me and I hung this much in the afternoon with a good screw gun." I said, "Do you want me to be productive?" And he said, "I'll get you a new screw gun tomorrow." So the journeyman that left me there and when he saw I had only done those four sticks that morning, looked at me and said, "What are you, stupid?" I looked at him and said — I enlightened him about the difference between stupidity and ignorance and how it was his responsibility to train the apprentices according to the JATC rules. And I reamed him out pretty good, because by then I was getting pretty irritable. So he was a lot better with me after that.

But my whole philosophy is I get even twice as bad as they did to me. [laughs] I had a guy pour concrete into my pouches once, my tool pouches, at lunch.

**RAUCHER:** You're kidding!

**JANTSCHAK:** No. So I went and filled his screw boxes up with fiberglass and drywall mud, and in his hardhat I put the fluorescent orange chalk, so that he got hit pretty hard when he got back from lunch.

**CRAWFORD:** How did you know who had done it?

**JANTSCHAK:** Oh, I knew. He was a troublemaker. So then the foreman came up to me that afternoon and asked, “Do you know anything about that, whoever did that to his screw box?” “Boy, there’s a prankster on the job.” I said, “It must be the same guy that put concrete in my pouches.” [laughter] And he looked at me and smiled, nodded, and walked away. So it stopped the problem. And he had a big orange blob on his head all afternoon [laughter], right on that shiny bald spot.

**CRAWFORD:** So when did you start going to union meetings?

**JANTSCHAK:** I started going when I was an apprentice, because I wanted to know where my money was going.

**CRAWFORD:** Okay. Was there a requirement that apprentices had to go to so many meetings?

**JANTSCHAK:** No.

**CRAWFORD:** Not at all?

**JANTSCHAK:** No. I just thought I was paying them a lot of money and wanted to have some say in where it was going. I was always one of those people that said, “I pay you, you work for me.” It’s still my philosophy, to this day.

**CRAWFORD:** Did the union help in any way during your apprenticeship with these kinds of incidents? Was there a steward on the job? And did you feel like the union was there for you in 1990?

**JANTSCHAK:** No. Actually, the unions back then were having turf wars, a lot of battles, because the Carpenters were being reorganized. And they actually had come out and threatened me, and tried to kick me off of several jobs.

**FECTEAU:** The BA did?

**JANTSCHAK:** The business agents, yes.

**FECTEAU:** Why? Just because you're a woman?

**JANTSCHAK:** No, because the different areas were fighting with each other.

So they kicked me off of one job, came out to try and kick me off another one.

**FECTEAU:** But it's your own union kicking you off your job?

**JANTSCHAK:** Right. I didn't know anything about their political battles. This is not about political battles, this is about making a living, being a productive member of the workforce and doing the best job you can for the contractor. I actually lost a job because of them. I ended up writing a certified letter to the Council saying, "Well, if they can kick me off this job, then out in Ann Arbor we should be able to kick them off our jobs. Am I correct? But I couldn't find the rule written down, so it must be one of those unwritten rules." And they had to admit that I was correct, because it was all documented, what had happened. Of course they kicked us off the job.

Then they came out on another job that was ten miles from my home, tried to kick me off there. And I remember the gentleman still works for the Council. And I pulled my hammer out and told him, no, I wasn't leaving. They kicked another apprentice off the day before. And I was perfectly happy to threaten him.

So my company tried to hide me somewhere else, at a job in Livonia. And I was doing laborer's work and painter's work. I was doing demolition and painting. And they sent two or three business agents out there to kick me off the job. And I looked at them and I said, "I'm sorry. Please don't tell the laborers that I'm doing demolition. Please don't tell the painters that I'm painting. But I'm not doing carpentry."

So, by then they called me a “little rebel leader” out in Ann Arbor. And at that point, I had already gotten my Department of Labor certificate.

**CRAWFORD:** Your apprenticeship completion.

**JANTSCHAK:** Correct. I had done every extra credit project I could. And I turned out of the school after two and a half years. And I started making journeyman wages because the company felt I was worth it.

And they were trying to kick me off the job because they felt I was still an apprentice. And so I took a different tack. I said, “As far as I’m concerned, I never went to your school. This minority never went to your school. You never trained me. And I’m going to be a minority contractor someday, and I suggest that you be a little nicer to me, because I could be a non-union minority contractor.” I said, “I’m going to be your worst nightmare,” because they had really made my life miserable.

So they said they weren’t going to bother me anymore. And the Executive Secretary/Treasurer called me up and asked me if I wanted my graduation certificate. And I was told to take it by the other business agent. And I said, “Well, there’s ten other apprentices that graduated before me, and I want theirs, too.”

**FECTEAU:** You mean other women?

**JANTSCHAK:** Other men. They were men, but they had been denied their apprenticeship certificates also, because of the takeovers and the turf wars back then. And after that point, they left me alone.

**FECTEAU:** Did you get them to give up the ten?

**JANTSCHAK:** Oh, yes, yes, because I had a pretty good case against them, of harassment, threats. They weren’t very nice back then. But they weren’t prepared for a

woman standing there with a hammer saying, “Try and kick me off.” Because when you’ve turned all four cheeks, you don’t have anywhere to go. And I feel I’d gotten slapped and I’d gotten kicked, and at that point, I was mad. I’m a very calm person, but don’t corner me.

I think that’s one of the things about a lot of the women in the trades: they let a lot go, but don’t back them into the corner, because we’ve all got a good fighter inside of us or we wouldn’t be where we’re at.

**NUZNOV:** So these turf wars, they were going on at the beginning of your career as a journeyman — is that right?

**JANTSCHAK:** Right. But we didn’t know what was going on. It was unions’ separate locals battling for area. It was the stupidest thing. We were used as their little pawns in the battle. “Well, we’ll kick them off and they’ll kick them off.”

It stopped at that point, because I had set up a case against them that was so rock solid with documentation. And I had gone down there and I had told the apprenticeship instructor exactly what I was going to do to him and where I was going to stick the apprenticeship certificate. And I’m a really nice person, normally. And he didn’t expect to see me down there across from his desk. So that’s when the turf wars stopped. They stopped using the apprentices as pawns, and that’s all I wanted.

**CRAWFORD:** So it was only apprentices who were getting kicked off jobs.

**JANTSCHAK:** That’s correct.

**FECTEAU:** It didn’t have anything to do with their wanting there to be more journeymen on the job?

**JANTSCHAK:** No. It had to do with jurisdiction. We were from the Washtenaw County area and everything else was Detroit area, so they didn't want us working outside of our area. And Detroit took over our apprenticeship program and Lansing took over our benefits and everything else. That's since calmed down.

**NUZNOV:** So how many years did these battles go on?

**JANTSCHAK:** The only time I was affected was a year, maybe, between the time I graduated with my Department of Labor certificate and the time they offered me my graduation certificate from Detroit.

**NUZNOV:** And so you said that your apprenticeship took you about two and a half years. And if you weren't someone that worked real hard and did extra things, how long would it have taken you?

**JANTSCHAK:** Four to seven.

**CRAWFORD:** So it's a four-year apprenticeship?

**JANTSCHAK:** It's a four-year apprenticeship. And I had enough hours in after three and a half to get my certificate from the carpenters. Apprenticeship is a combination of on-the-job training and schoolwork. So when I completed my schoolwork, I still had a year left to go to get my on-the-job training hours, which I did complete six months ahead of time, also. So the contractors were very good to me once they figured out I was out to make them money. I'm a good worker.

**FECTEAU:** I'm just curious, you mentioned about being hungry and really poor before this started. How was the pay? How did that affect you when the paychecks started coming in as an apprentice and then a journeyman? How did that change your lifestyle?

**JANTSCHAK:** Oh, I thought I died and went to heaven. [laughter] Out there on that residential job and all that mud, and I was making ten bucks an hour. Forty below — I was the only one that would work in the forty-below wind chill. And I remember the guy that was running the project came out and asked if I was the only soldier there that day. And I said, “I’m making ten bucks an hour!” [laughter]

I thought it was great. And I still do. I think it’s a great opportunity for women to get equal pay and also to get training and get the benefits and a pension. And a lot of the women that we brought in, first thing they did was dump their significant other, because — it’s true — all of a sudden they’re financially independent and they can raise their children and they have their health insurance. It’s a big thing. It offers a woman the chance to be out there, gives her the ability to take care of herself and her family. And a lot of the women have been, one way or another, abused, either mentally or physically. And they were real happy. So it was empowering.

**FECTEAU:** How did your father respond to you . . . ?

**JANTSCHAK:** Oh, he wasn’t very happy. Well, back in Germany, carpenters are considered low class. So, they always said, “Don’t tell your aunt what you’re doing. Don’t tell any of the family.”

**RAUCHER:** And your mom felt the same way as your dad?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes, yes. It was from the German culture, it was blue collar.

**RAUCHER:** But did they gradually come around, or do they still feel that way?

**JANTSCHAK:** I think they think it’s weird, or they did think it was quite strange. But it was the only way I could get the good pay and get the ability to take care of myself. And we’re not talking upper class, we’re talking middle class, just a middle-



class lifestyle, the same wages a man makes, you know, what men have gotten all these years. To have that ability and get the pension and the annuity and the health and welfare and to be making the same wages and get the training, it's a wonderful thing for a woman.

**RAUCHER:** But were there other things about the job that you liked other than just the money and the benefits? I mean, just the work itself?

**JANTSCHAK:** I liked the fact that I wasn't working with a living, breathing animal that died. A carpenter, you could leave your studs there until Monday. But the animals, they'd chew their IV line out or pee or poop on themselves or throw up, seizure. And sometimes I didn't feel it was right to work over the animals hard eight hours a day and then leave them for sixteen. It didn't make any sense to me to let their IV bags run out and let them get all wet. It just didn't make any sense to me at all. Hospitalization should be a twenty-four-hour-a-day thing, not an eight-hour-a-day thing.

**FECTEAU:** So there's also an emotional investment?

**JANTSCHAK:** Oh, absolutely, yes. Little old ladies didn't come in and cry over those studs and say, "My stud died," you know, "That's my baby." It was a much more even keel, emotionally.

**NUZNOV:** So even with the abuse and the turf wars and all that, working with inanimate things that weren't going to die was nice.

**JANTSCHAK:** That was rewarding, yes. It's also rewarding to stand back and see something that's . . . How many jobs do you have where you can stand back and go, "It is finished, it is beautiful, no punch list.

**NUZNOV:** "I built that."

**JANTSCHAK:** “I built that.” And I do, I drive down through the U of M and pass buildings and go, “I built that. I remember being out there on a swing stage.” It really does bring up good feelings, because you see what the finished product is, and it’s beautiful. You do have an amount of pride, because you did the job to completion. And how many people can say that in their jobs?

**NUZNOV:** Not many.

**JANTSCHAK:** Not many, no.

**RAUCHER:** Did you work with women very often on jobs?

**JANTSCHAK:** Not very often. It was quite a while before I actually met another woman on the job site.

**RAUCHER:** And what was that like when you met another woman?

**CRAWFORD:** What job site was that? A really big job site?

**JANTSCHAK:** Well, the first time I worked with a woman was with the other apprentice that had come in. And she had already been working for this commercial company. And she was threatened that I had started. We were honest with each other. I taught her a new way, that work was to have fun. So we’d do our job and we’d sing and have fun and we’d banter with the men. I never thought of the work as being a hundred percent work. You know, you’ve got to have fun while you work, if you’re enjoying it. You shouldn’t hate what you’re doing. So we’d sing. And she said, “I’m looking at it a lot differently after this.” But she was threatened, because she thought that — she had that token mentality, she was the token — I was going to take her job, which was part of the problem that we were trying to fix with the tradeswomen. Because it’s not about

being token, it's about being a carpenter. And if you're good at what you do, it shouldn't make any difference what your sex is.

**RAUCHER:** Did life change for you at all after you finished the apprenticeship and went out onto the job as a journeyman?

**JANTSCHAK:** Oh, I loved it. I loved it. That was really my blooming, because I wasn't restricted by the apprenticeship ratios any longer, and nobody could tell me where I couldn't work and where I could work. And I just loved it. I absolutely loved it. I love working with the men. They were great. Even going on to a new project, a lot of times I felt like I was coming home again.

**CRAWFORD:** Is that because you knew a lot of people, and you would keep running into them?

**JANTSCHAK:** The same people, yeah. Because I worked, basically, most of the time around the Ann Arbor area. And even all the other trades, after you see each other, you know, you become . . . I wouldn't party with them. I don't think they should mix partying and work, especially women, because I think you're going to have problems, myself. But they were good friends and we'd banter and joke at work. As long as we were working, as long as you're moving and working, there's no reason why you can't talk or sing. That used to be my second job, was singing.

**FECTEAU:** Oh, it was?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes, it was.

**FECTEAU:** You got paid to sing?

**JANTSCHAK:** People paid me not to. I'd tell them, "I'll quit singing if you pay me a couple quarters." And they'd throw them at me. [laughter] So yeah, I really

enjoyed working on the job. I really felt like I was coming into my own. I knew what I was doing. It was like a flower blooming.

Because that first year, I wanted to quit so many times and it was so rough and I felt like nobody wanted me there and I didn't have anywhere to go. But later I felt like I was there and I knew what I was doing and I had a solution to every problem. And I was very, very confident. A lot of guys told me, "There's nothing worse than a competent, assertive female to scare men." [laughter]

I knew I could do the job. Piece of cake. Especially after you get stronger. And that's something I like to tell the younger women, "I know right now you think it's hard, but it won't always be that way. And you won't always be sore and you won't always not know what you're doing." And I think it took about a year, really, before I looked at a problem and said, "I know how to fix that." And I knew exactly what I was doing. It was like, "Wow, ding!" The light bulb went on. Before I was just trying to understand what I was doing.

**RAUCHER:** You always worked union?

**JANTSCHAK:** I never went and sought further work. I did some side jobs when I was an apprentice, but for me, that income was comfortable, because I'd been so poor before. Like I said, I felt wonderful, I felt like I was rich. Ten bucks an hour and I thought I was rich, because I could buy car repairs, I could buy food.

**NUZNOV:** Was that the most money you'd ever made per hour?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes it was. And that's terrible, because I got paid more as an apprentice than I did with a college education.

**CRAWFORD:** I know that the bank paid poorly, but how about the veterinary tech job?

**JANTSCHAK:** I think I was making like \$8.25 as a technician. It was close to \$10 as an apprentice, and I didn't even know how to swing a hammer. So I was willing to work real hard for that.

**CRAWFORD:** So how many women do you feel like you have gotten into your trade and how many active journeywomen do you think there are today?

**RAUCHER:** Before you answer that, Sue, could we sort of backtrack a little and find out how you got active with the union, which is what you do now, right? At some point you made that transition and so now you're involved in different things.

**JANTSCHAK:** Right. I do believe in the union, very much so, because it created an opportunity for me and made my life a lot better. And I did want other women to know about that.

**RAUCHER:** How did that happen? How did you get active in the union?

**JANTSCHAK:** They started asking me to do volunteer projects, political projects. I'm sure they do it with all members. They ask for help when they need help doing politics or Habitat for Humanity or Project Ramp or other things to help people.

**FECTEAU:** Project Ramp is where you put . . .

**JANTSCHAK:** . . . handicap ramps for low-income people. Or right now, we're doing one for a church in Monroe, putting in a ramp for them.

**WELLS:** But you were always at the union meetings, so they knew you, they knew your face.

**JANTSCHAK:** Yeah. It was kind of hard at first. I felt kind of weird, because I was the only woman. Now I don't care. I mean, the guys are great. I feel like I'm part of them, a part of the union — I don't look at it as a man/woman thing any longer. I love the guys, and I know they respect me. I get a lot of respect. I'm in awe at the respect that I get.

**NUZNOV:** So what is your position with the union? Sorry, I wasn't here at the beginning, so maybe I missed that.

**JANTSCHAK:** I'm an organizer, business rep.

**CRAWFORD:** And when did you start that position?

**JANTSCHAK:** In '98. At that time I was running the Michigan Tradeswomen Association, as some of you know.

**RAUCHER:** What is the Michigan Tradeswomen Association?

**JANTSCHAK:** It was a mentoring group. I ran meetings once a month since 1995 at Washtenaw County Community College to teach women about the skilled trades and the opportunities that exist. Because part of the problem was that there wasn't enough women out there, so we had no voice, and the contractors had no selection of tradeswomen to pick from. Some women are better at one thing and some women are better at another thing. Some women are better at trim, some women like hanging Sheetrock, like I did. We like being the buffalo.

**RAUCHER:** But these were tradeswomen, in this group that you met with monthly?

**JANTSCHAK:** No. They were women that came in from job fairs, word-of-mouth, from like, the Women's Resource Center, Soundings for Women in Ann Arbor,

the Girl Scouts. We had a lot of referrals — welfare. The whole point was, back then, Ann Arbor was kicking women off of welfare and back out into the field. And the problem with that is that there weren't any good jobs available to these women with no training.

So they were working service sector positions, thirty-two hours here, thirty-two hours there, and they weren't even making as much as me, no benefits. And they were leaving their children alone, because they had no money to pay for the child care. They needed to learn about one good job with a future, as long as they worked hard for it and they were willing to get trained.

And what I wanted to do was teach them about all the trades, because nobody taught me that I could be anything but a carpenter. So I wanted to teach them about sheet metal workers and marble tile terrazzo and the plumbers and the electricians and what the prerequisites were to get into these trades.

**RAUCHER:** Were you the only instructor, or the only person there to talk to them?

**JANTSCHAK:** I was the one that started it, and then other women started to come in. And we actually became quite successful out in Washtenaw County. And I think the unions at first were a little bit suspicious of the women uniting in that fashion, an organized women in the trades association, and they thought that we were doing something to maybe hurt them.

And they finally found out what we were doing was pre-mentoring women for the trades jobs so that when they came in, they knew what tools to bring, they knew how to apply, what to expect, how to handle sexual harassment, discrimination. I mean, they

even knew to expect your fingers to swell up and how to pack your lunch and about tools that were made for women's hands. So they were prepared to go to work.

And I actually had companies come to me for female laborers that had been mentored and to handle problems on job sites with other women as an independent association. And all we'd ask — we didn't charge any fees — we just asked for them to bring another woman in.

And I'm still meeting these women out on the sites. I don't even remember who they are or how I met them, but we've brought a lot of women in. They say, "Oh, you brought me in." But I can't remember. I talked hours and hours and months and months and years. So I mean, it was a big thing.

**RAUCHER:** Then they would go into an apprentice program?

**JANTSCHAK:** They'd go into an apprentice program or . . .

**RAUCHER:** Do they exist any longer? Does Michigan Tradeswomen Association exist now?

**JANTSCHAK:** It exists on paper. But shortly after I became a business agent, I got hit by a car on a picket line and I turned over the authority of the association to a couple other women, and the group fell apart rather quickly, right after the picnic that we all went to.

**RAUCHER:** Which was when?

**CRAWFORD:** I don't remember exactly, but it could have been in '98 or '99.

**JANTSCHAK:** It had to be '98, '99. And I couldn't handle my job. I was in a lot of pain, and I couldn't handle my job and more work after work. It was just too much.



**CRAWFORD:** I think this had to have been before your accident. Because I don't recall . . .

**JANTSCHAK:** Just before? Yeah, I was in so much pain I could barely crawl home and be in a fetal position. And that was about three years I had trouble walking.

**FECTEAU:** That was before you became a business agent?

**JANTSCHAK:** That was just after I became a business agent.

**FECTEAU:** Well, I want to know about what happened on the picket line. I also want to know how you became a business agent.

**JANTSCHAK:** Well, Mr. Mabry, who is our EST, Executive Secretary/Treasurer, called me down there to talk to me one day. And I was a foreman on a job, I was running a job site at the time, making foreman's wages. And I didn't really know what he wanted. I assumed he wanted to talk about women's topics, because at that time, we really had a great network going with women in different trades. And we talked constantly about our problems, about our successes, about bringing other women in.

And he called me down to his office, so I expected he was going to talk to me about some of the problems with the females in the trades, because I felt it wasn't right for the women to have to go solicit their first job the same as the men, because they would hire the men as soon as they applied. I was an example of that — twenty-eight job sites. They were like, "Yeah, right! Ha, ha, ha." From a couple companies, I got a, "Women can't do metal studs," I got a, "We don't hire women." Back then, they would freely tell you, "Yeah, right! Ha, ha, ha. What are you, the building inspector?" So there

was overt animosity about the hiring of women back then. Now it's gone a little bit below board and they're a little more careful what they say, but it still exists.

**FECTEAU:** So Maybry asked you to come down and talk with . . .

**JANTSCHAK:** He asked me to come down there and talk, and I brought a bunch of paperwork with me. And then I proceeded to ream him out for a half hour about the problems with the way women were brought in and how they were treated once they came in, the difficulty in finding jobs, and what the apprenticeship instructors were telling the young female apprentices about what they could and couldn't do because they were girls.

I got to admit the man has a big heart, because after me reaming him out for about a half hour, he sat back and asked if I'd like to work for him. And I told him I'd have to think about it, because I wasn't . . .

**FECTEAU:** Were you surprised? You must have been shocked.

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes, I was. I wasn't expecting that. So I think I called him back a few days later and said I would come on board, but I had to give my company at least a month, because that would be a good breaking point, the phase one would have been done. And the company had been very, very good to me. Any time the boss came on the job, the owner of the company, and I'd ask a question, he'd say, "Whatever you want to do. You're the boss." So I really tried to work hard for them and make money.

**FECTEAU:** So when did you start as a business agent?

**JANTSCHAK:** Spring of '98.

**RAUCHER:** So what was that like? I mean, were you happy that you had changed jobs?

**JANTSCHAK:** No. [laughter] I hated it.

**CRAWFORD:** How were the other business reps?

**JANTSCHAK:** Terrible. Terrible. I think they gave Ralph a hard time about hiring me without talking to other people.

**CRAWFORD:** Did you feel he did it on kind of the spur of the moment?

**JANTSCHAK:** Uh-huh, I'm sure he did.

**RAUCHER:** And you were the only woman business agent?

**JANTSCHAK:** Correct. I'm the first one in the state, and the first woman in the Carpenters. Actually, I don't think there are any other women business agents in the state, even now, in all the trades. And my goal has been trying to do a good job, which I am. And the other trades in my area come to me frequently for solutions to their problems, but I don't see them turning around and hiring women for business agent positions.

Other women have come to me and said, "Well, we don't have any representatives in our union for the women and we don't have any business agents and we don't have any officers." I said, "Well, did you run, or did you apply?" Now, I think Mr. Mabry hired me because a lot of the women had sent him applications in an effort to try and get a woman on the staff. And I think I was the only one that didn't apply. It'd been brought up with me a couple of times from a couple of the business agents, and I'd laugh at them. I'd say, "Yeah, right, you got a spot for a woman in your regime."

**FECTEAU:** How many business agents are there?

**JANTSCHAK:** I think there's somewhere around fifty.

**FECTEAU:** And this is statewide ?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yeah, statewide.

**RAUCHER:** Talk about the early days, though. You said that it was awfu.

**JANTSCHAK:** Oh, it was like being an apprentice all over again. And you still have the men that don't want to ride with you. It's the same philosophy as when you come into the skilled trades as a first-year apprentice. They don't know how to talk to you. And you know absolutely nothing about laws, which is a big part of our job. They actually told me to go drive around on every dirt road in Washtenaw County checking for jobs. And that was a way to keep me busy.

**RAUCHER:** Were you surprised that it was no different than working with the guys on the job site?

**JANTSCHAK:** It was different. It was totally different.

**FECTEAU:** It was better or worse?

**JANTSCHAK:** It was worse. I hated it. I finally decided I had to focus on doing the best job I could for the membership and not focus on what other people thought of me. And that was a solution to my problem. I don't worry about what anybody else does, I don't care what anybody else does, as long as I do my job. And I work for the members, and they're happy with my job performance. And I really do truly care about them.

**FECTEAU:** Do you have certain employers that you work with? What's your jurisdiction out of all the business agents? Is it an area?

**JANTSCHAK:** I have my own county now. I have all of Monroe County and a small amount of Washtenaw and a small amount of Wayne attached to that, from Toledo to the airport, roughly. It's a big area, but they won't give me any more than I can

handle. And I'm doing a good job, I think. And I help the other agents as much as possible.

**FECTEAU:** Did you get training? Did you seek out training on your own about the laws and things like that?

**JANTSCHAK:** I had to.

**FECTEAU:** Where did you go and how did you get it?

**JANTSCHAK:** I just started doing research on my own and asked questions.

**RAUCHER:** Of the other business agents?

**JANTSCHAK:** Right.

**RAUCHER:** And they would help?

**JANTSCHAK:** A lot of times they wouldn't know the answers. [laughter]

**CRAWFORD:** So the Carpenters, on the international level, they don't offer training for business representatives?

**JANTSCHAK:** They do, it's called core training. But for some reason, they didn't send me for several years.

**NUZNOV:** Several being more than four.

**JANTSCHAK:** No, I think it was like three.

**FECTEAU:** So you eventually did get some core training?

**JANTSCHAK:** Well, actually, they decided that I was a permanent fixture. And my boss hadn't been telling them of my successes. I had several successes that no man had done, as far as the laws in the state.

**CRAWFORD:** You mean Mabry wasn't telling them that you were successful? You said your boss.

**JANTSCHAK:** My direct superior at that time would take credit for everything I did, the companies I signed up, and then he would put his name on it.

**CRAWFORD:** But your direct superior was the business manager.

**JANTSCHAK:** In that particular area, yes. And I'm not faulting him, because he did that to the guys, too. And I had a lot of learning to do on my own. So I researched. I'd go over to the library anywhere I could and study laws regarding equal opportunity. And I was really interested in helping women with my position, because I was in a position to help women like no one has ever been before in this state, and now I have the opportunity to actually put young women on jobs. And I do that every opportunity I get. Companies don't really have a problem with women, apparently, when I go up to them and say, "You don't have a problem with a woman apprentice, do you?" [laughter] "Oh, no, no, no, no!" [laughter]

So, I've decided I'm going to do the best I can, one at a time, because sometimes if you try too hard, you spread yourself too thin. And I'm going to count my successes on each finger of my hand now, one at a time. And once I started to focus in that manner, it started to work better, because I wasn't so overwhelmed with phone calls. And I'm sorry that I can't help everybody, but it's better to help at what capacity you can so that you don't lose your mind. And I've started doing that since I bought a small farm, since now I have a separate life, too.

**RAUCHER:** Have the other business agents come, over time, to accept you more?

**JANTSCHAK:** Oh, yeah. They're great now. They're wonderful. Yes. They're absolutely wonderful. I was pretty well isolated the first few years because the

gentleman I worked for wouldn't allow me to talk to anybody else. Yeah, I don't know about how you edit things here [laughter], but I'd better not get into some of the problems that occurred on that job, which are direct, flagrant violations of discrimination laws and sexual harassment laws, assault and battery included.

**FECTEAU:** When you were a business agent?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes.

**NUZNOV:** So, kind of in that vein, were you surprised at how little the contractors knew about the laws that protected employees from harassment, assault and all that?

**JANTSCHAK:** Oh, yes, absolutely flabbergasted. Absolutely flabbergasted.

**NUZNOV:** And I would assume that part of what you've done is help to teach this information.

**JANTSCHAK:** I teach this information, yes, so that women know, when they go on the job site, what a hostile work environment is, how to say "no" to sexual harassment. There's more than one way to skin a cat. My way isn't always the right way. They have to take the different ways and decide which way works best for them. My best reaction to sexual harassment on the job site has been to pull my hammer out and tell him it's going between his eyeballs next time and then smile, and it works pretty good. And I handle it one-on-one.

And there's a lot more to it, sexual harassment and job discrimination. Because we call the woman that complains or sues the company — sometimes it's necessary — we call her the sacrificial lamb, because she will get blackballed and her name will get around, even if she does sign an affidavit saying that she will not reveal anything if

there's an out of court settlement. We call her the sacrificial lamb, because she'll never get hired again. She'll find it very difficult to get a job, because contractors talk. But she just opened the door for the next woman, because that company won't probably do it twice. They're going to make sure that the women work. But that woman probably is going to have a harder time finding work because of it.

**CRAWFORD:** So that's a hard decision for somebody to make.

**JANTSCHAK:** It's a hard decision, and we let them know ahead of time. With sexual harassment, you've got to say "no." You can't just laugh at it. You have to tell them it's unacceptable behavior. That's all you've got to say is, "No, this isn't acceptable." You go to the foreman, half the time they think it's a whining woman, when she's got a legitimate complaint. What guy on the job site has to put up with a woman grabbing his ass? And what makes that such a funny thing? It's not funny. A lot of the younger women, especially, are intimidated by it. They don't know how to handle it. And it's demeaning.

Now, some women like it, okay. There are a few women out there I know that actually allow it to happen. But it should be their choice. And I don't exactly agree with it.

**CRAWFORD:** Sue, do you feel like you have had an opportunity to educate the other business reps? And have they ever come back with stories to tell you that show that that's sunk in and they have dealt with these problems? I mean, here you are, you're in one part of the state, and I'm sure you're doing just a great job. But there's those other forty-nine guys out there. Do you feel like you've been able to educate them?



**JANTSCHAK:** Yes. For some reason, now they call me one of the best business agents in the state. And I've heard that from the other guys. For them to admit that openly to me, when I don't really know them, I think it's a great honor. But I didn't really do anything except do my job.

**NUZNOV:** But that isn't that common, I think. Myself, I watch people and their work and I think there's a lot of mediocrity everywhere.

**JANTSCHAK:** Credibility is very important. If you make a promise to somebody, always follow through. All you've got is your word, and if you lose your word and the trust of the members, you've got nothing. They know they can call me with a problem and I'll address it, and we'll see it through.

And I don't think of any of my members as whiny. A lot of the guys think, "Well, that member is just a chronic complainer." Well, I find that they usually have a real problem that maybe I can help them with. And I think maybe women are a little more nurturing, perhaps, and listen to their problems. And sometimes, yes, they are a pain in the ass, but I'm glad when they come to a solution and then they quit calling me. [laughs] So that's my goal. And then they'll send other people to me, both union and non-union.

**FECTEAU:** If you had become, let's say, head of your union and you could institute . . .

**JANTSCHAK:** I wouldn't want that job. [laughs]

**FECTEAU:** . . . and if you could institute any kind of policy or program to make the union more inclusive of women or other groups that have been excluded, do you have any ideas how you would do that?

**JANTSCHAK:** The problem is that we're restricted in what we can do to get minorities on jobs by the Federal Register of 1968, which was used to set goals for women on job sites in the different trades. And also, in that Federal Register it states that unions are not directly accountable for affirmative action on the job sites. So what that means is that we're not there to enforce it. And the contractors have sued us, our union, in the past, for trying to enforce affirmative action.

But I would like to implement something, and that would have to be something where we wouldn't get sued and where we'd be working with the government making sure that the minorities and females got the jobs. And as much as I hated this job when I started, I knew that eventually it would help other women get their jobs and leave doors open, if I did a good job.

**CRAWFORD:** Do you see any other woman coming behind you who will be a business rep?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes.

**FECTEAU:** Will it be after you leave or will it be with you?

**JANTSCHAK:** I don't know. But we have several women that are very, very good quality. And I've got to admit that I groom constantly for business agent positions. Every woman that I see that's intelligent, a very good union member and good in her heart and honest, I think deserves that chance. There are a lot of women interested in it. And what I tell them is, "Get your application in, because they're not just going to hand it to you. You have to apply, you have to become involved, you have to be active, you have to run for positions." Because you can't just sit there and complain, if you're being inactive yourself.

**RAUCHER:** Do you have any sort of relationship with tradeswomen or carpenters nationally, outside of this area? Do you belong to groups or go to conferences, or is there something within in the Carpenters Union?

**JANTSCHAK:** I go to a lot of them. I've been to the AFL-CIO Conference in Chicago. It was absolutely wonderful. And I've been to the first and second UBC International Female Conference. So the Carpenters have implemented that. And I think it's wonderful, because I always come back really empowered and knowing that I'm not so different from the other women, and there are women out there that get treated the same and have the same problems still. And a lot of them are organizers and reps from the other states.

So, I feel like I did when I was an apprentice, actually. I'm starting to blossom and I'm becoming very comfortable in my job. And for the first time, I'm really enjoying it, actually, because it does take a while — they say five to seven years to train a business agent. And I really, other than once when I got assaulted on a job site and they threw me down on the concrete . . .

**RAUCHER:** What happened?

**JANTSCHAK:** I got assaulted on a job site.

**FECTEAU:** And you didn't talk about that picket line thing, too. I wanted to hear about that.

**RAUCHER:** You mean, as a business agent, you were assaulted on a job site?

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes. Because I was asking them FOIA information and they weren't paying their workers prevailing wage on a federally-funded job. And so, they came up and they decided they were going to take my car door and not physically touch

me. But he grabbed my truck door, reached inside, got my keys out, threw them in the ditch, and then took my truck door and slammed me to the ground. And I really hit hard.

So there are dangers out there.

**RAUCHER:** So what'd you do? Did you bring any charges against them?

**JANTSCHAK:** Well, it was four to one, so they filed assault charges on me.

**FECTEAU:** Oh Jesus!

**JANTSCHAK:** [laughs]

**NUZNOV:** There were four of them and one of you and you ended up on the ground.

**JANTSCHAK:** Well, what they told the police was that I jumped out of the car, ran over, started swinging at them, ran back over to my car, ran into the side of it and fell to the ground.

**FECTEAU:** What did the cops do?

**JANTSCHAK:** Well, the cops pressed charges against me.

**FECTEAU:** The cops didn't press charges against the . . .

**JANTSCHAK:** No, they didn't, because I had no witnesses.

**FECTEAU:** What town was this in?

**JANTSCHAK:** It was in Rockwood. Now, as it turns out, I believe that the officer that showed up was a friend of one of those guys. And he was outside of his jurisdiction when he filed charges on me, among other things. There was a lot more to it.

**CRAWFORD:** So the union came and bailed you out, because they have a bond on you?

**JANTSCHAK:** No, I used our membership attorneys. We have a legal service that services our locals.

**CRAWFORD:** Right, but the union has a bond on all their reps.

**JANTSCHAK:** Well, I didn't go through their attorneys. I was in the right! I think when you're being honest, it really ultimately shows. And the judge didn't believe their stories. They had four different stories, but each story said I'd run into the side of the car and fell to the ground. I do that on a frequent basis. I just start running around wildly flailing at people and run into the side of my car and knock myself out, yeah.  
[laughs]

**RAUCHER:** And what about the injury that you had?

**JANTSCHAK:** The injury was caused by somebody that had a lot of animosity toward the union and thought he'd come in and bump me going twenty-five miles an hour. And I didn't realize how badly I'd been injured at the time. I went to the doctor, I think it was like the following day. But I started to have trouble walking real quick after that. And the doctor misdiagnosed my problems. So I had a sacral torsion. And my tendons and ligaments had all been shrunk on one side, stretched on the other, so my pelvis was not in line with my spine. It was a torsion, it was twisted, and it got stuck like that.

**RAUCHER:** So it turns out that it's more dangerous being a business agent than being a carpenter, huh?

**JANTSCHAK:** Absolutely. Absolutely. I've been injured more times being a business agent. It is dangerous.

**FECTEAU:** Because I would imagine, if you're going out to a work site . . .

**JANTSCHAK:** I tell you what, I'm very, very low key, and I'm not threatening. A lot of the guys will go in pairs because of the possibility of physical injury.

**CRAWFORD:** Not to mention needing a witness.

**JANTSCHAK:** That's the one thing that I don't have, is a witness.

**FECTEAU:** You need to get a kind of remote control video. A carpenter friend of mine put a burn hole in his baseball cap and put a little camera in there.

**JANTSCHAK:** Yeah. I believe in the a union as a cause. For me, it's a cause. And it's a good thing for people. But contractors that don't want the union in really don't understand. In the past, their unions were different. The unions have changed quite a bit, but a lot of the old animosity still hangs around. And so they feel sometimes threatened when we come on the job sites. I'm very non-threatening, so . . .

**FECTEAU:** Except that one time with the door and on the picket line.

**JANTSCHAK:** Yeah. Because I wasn't putting on my girly-girl act, you know, if you go over there and you're smiling. So I just go up and I say, "I've come to preach you the gospel of the union." [laughter] And they go like, "Oh, no."

**RAUCHER:** You said that in addition to women, you're also working with Latinos to bring more of them into the Carpenters Union.

**JANTSCHAK:** Right, because they are minorities and they're very good at what they do, but there's a language barrier and also a cultural barrier there. And all they really need is for somebody to say — same as for a woman in the trades — "Hey, you can do this. This is an open door for you." But one thing I tell them, I say, "You need to learn English," so they don't have the *jefe* — the one person running the whole group — taking a cut of their income.

A lot of times they purchase falsified I.D. And I understand, because if I were in their position, I'd be coming across the border, too. I've grown to admire their work ethics and how they take care of their families. I think they deserve to have the opportunity to come into the Carpenters. I mean, we should have an open-door policy — we do, actually. And a lot of the companies are very happy with the Latinos.

**FECTEAU:** Do the other business agents feel the same way as you?

**JANTSCHAK:** No. Members don't either, sometimes. I've actually had members come up to me and say, "They've got all these illegal Hispanics working for them" — or "illegal Mexicans" as they call them. And I look at them and I say, "They're not illegal. I signed them up." [laughter] They work hard, you know. I usually focus on the harder workers. And I did learn a little Spanish in order to be able to talk to them. And there's always somebody in the group that speaks English, and they all speak a little bit more than they let on.

And they're very proud people, because I remember meeting with a group — and I'd actually hired an interpreter out of my own pocket — and they had left work early to go clean up, shower and dress to come back to the meeting. And they missed out on some work because of that. But we need to break these cultural barriers and embrace people of all cultures, because that's what America is all about. My parents came in from another culture, so maybe I've got a little more empathy.

**FECTEAU:** Most of us did.

**JANTSCHAK:** Right, somewhere we all came from another culture.

**RAUCHER:** Well, we've got five minutes left. So is there anything that you wanted to add, Sue, that we haven't covered?

**JANTSCHAK:** I probably shouldn't let on about anything else. [laughter] I'm probably in enough trouble as it is.

**CRAWFORD:** Are there very many journeywomen carpenters?

**JANTSCHAK:** There's more coming in all the time.

**CRAWFORD:** But do you have a number?

**JANTSCHAK:** I don't have a number, and I've asked before. [laughter]

**CRAWFORD:** This is an old story.

**FECTEAU:** This is common. The numbers are guarded very closely.

**JANTSCHAK:** Right. Most of the unions will say, "Yeah, we have two percent women." And I know the operating engineers have close to fifty percent women in the apprenticeship. Now, that's got to be a neat job. I mean, not too many women want to go out in the trenches and get all dirty, and things like that.

**CRAWFORD:** You must know Carrie Harding.

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes, I know her well. She's a wonderful woman and very much a woman leader.

**WELLS:** So can you give us any numbers for women carpenters?

**JANTSCHAK:** Oh, I think we've got about 100 women.

**CRAWFORD:** Around the state?

**JANTSCHAK:** No, maybe just in our local.

**NUZNOV:** How many people in your local?

**JANTSCHAK:** About 10,000. So we're running about one percent.

**RAUCHER:** And they can find jobs?



**JANTSCHAK:** No, they can't, not necessarily. One thing I've noticed is that the women, they may be members, but the way to find out if they work is to find out if they have health insurance. Because most of the women don't have the health insurance, because they don't work regularly enough. Women are still primary caregivers in the family and when the child gets sick, the woman stays home. A lot of them feel that they have to work very hard and lift heavier weights than they should. They get injured. You know, repetitive injuries, carpal tunnel, rotator cuff problems, back problems, because we don't want anybody to tell us that we can't do that and we can't lift what a man lifts.

**CRAWFORD:** You got to be twice as good, huh?

**JANTSCHAK:** You got to be twice as good. I know, because I lifted a lot of Sheetrock and I wouldn't let nobody touch my board. And I know what my back looks like on the x-rays. There's nothing left there, a lot of discs just aren't there anymore.

**CRAWFORD:** Yeah, I think you looked a lot taller the last time I saw you.

[laughter]

**JANTSCHAK:** Yes. I'm actually shrinking in my old age. Actually, I've gotten wider, so it might be all this eating out fast food. I think that has something to do with it.

**FECTEAU:** That's the business agent thing.

**JANTSCHAK:** Yeah, I know. I gained all this from my injury, from being very sedentary. I didn't do anything for three years. I didn't even ride my horse, because it was quite painful.

**NUZNOV:** So is it all okay now?

**JANTSCHAK:** It's manageable. I can manage it.

**FECTEAU:** Did you sue the guy who hit you?

**JANTSCHAK:** He fled the state the next day and had produced falsified I.D. And I have reason to feel it was buried by the police department.

**CRAWFORD:** Because it was a labor issue.

**JANTSCHAK:** It was a labor issue.

**FECTEAU:** And what town was this? I'm just curious.

**JANTSCHAK:** In Ypsilanti. And one of the police officers filed charges that I had falsified a report, because it was a labor dispute. And he wasn't even there. He had friends there. So, nobody believes you when there's a labor dispute.

**CRAWFORD:** Even though you have other picketers to verify your story.

**JANTSCHAK:** Right, I did. I had two witnesses that stood there and watched the guy swerve at me. And then he got on the other side of the gate and told me how ugly I was.

**NUZNOV:** Well, Jeez, if we can't kill her, let's insult the shit out of her.

**JANTSCHAK:** I'll tell you what, I was so mad at that point, I didn't even know I'd been hurt. And then I started having trouble walking and if I sat down, I couldn't get back up.

**FECTEAU:** So did the other people on the picket line stand up for you?

**JANTSCHAK:** Oh yeah, they were mad. The guy left skid marks. You know, it's not personal, but a lot of people think it is. A picket line isn't personal.

**NUZNOV:** It's business. You know, you are an incredible woman. And I'm going to keep you in mind as I struggle along my path. [laughter]