THE 20th CENTURY TRADE UNION WOMAN: VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Oral History Interview

with

DOROTHY HAENER

United Automobile Workers

by

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VITAE

DOROTHY HAENER

Dorothy Haener was born in Detroit, Michigan on December 18, 1917, the daughter of a Swiss immigrant and a German immigrant. At the age of three, she and her family moved to New Boston, a small rural Michigan community where she still lives today.

She began working at a very early age picking strawberries and other produce to help support her family. Her responsibilities were particularly heavy after her parents were divorced in the middle of the Depression. Soon after her high school graduation, Haener began working in higher paying factory jobs. In 1937, she went to work at Wayne Wire Cloth as a spot welder and punch press operator. Two and a half years later, she was fired for being involved in an attempt to organize the plant. She then got a job at Central Specialty, a small factory in Ypsilanti. It was at this factory that she first became a union member.

In 1941, Haener went to work at the Ford Bomber Plant in Willow Run, Michigan as a clerk and later as a small parts inspector. She became a member of the United Auto Workers Local 50. After World War II, she, along with most of the women at the plant, was laid off when Ford Motor Company sold the plant to Kaiser-Fraser. Haener then worked for a short time at a toy factory but remained active in the UAW's women's struggle to be rehired at Kaiser-Fraser. Haener was successful and after being rehired as a department clerk, helped organize the office and engineering workers into UAW Local 142. In 1947 she was appointed to the Ford Regional Women's Committee.

In 1952, Haener went to work for the UAW's Office and Technical Department. As an International Representative, she was involved in numerous organizing drives, including the one for the AVCO Corporation in Bridgeport, Connecticut. In 1960 Haener began working for the UAW Women's Department, a position she still holds.

In addition to her union activities, Haener has been very involved in the women's movement. She was one of the founding members of the National Organization for Women. She recently went on a trip sponsored by the Coalition of Labor Union Women to observe child care in Israel, Sweden and France. Haener, also an active member of the Democratic Party, served in 1976 on the Democratic Platform Committee and was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention.

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INTERVIEWER: Can you give me your name and where you were born?

HAENER: Dorothy Haener. I was born in Detroit, Michigan.

INTERVIEWER: OK, and can you give me the first....You said you were born on a farm?

HAENER: I was born in Detroit and my family moved on a farm when I was three years old.

INTERVIEWER: Was it in Michigan?

HAENER: Yes, it was. It was about thirty miles from Detroit.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. And you lived on a farm until you were how old?

HAENER: I still live on a farm . . .

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you do!

HAENER: Yeah. I still own the home and the property on which I grew up. The home I grew up in burned down. But three of my brothers have built their homes on what was our farm so that really we have.... my family are all quite close.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, that's very nice that they all live right in the same area.

HAENER: Right in the same area.

INTERVIEWER: Not too much of that happens . . . [laughter]

HAENER: No, it is unusual. And it is, in terms of the children growing up in that situation, they have a relationship that you very seldom see anymore, with their grandparents and their aunts and uncles.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, real good. OK, when did you get your first job?

HAENER: Well, my first job I got when I was still going to school, working part-time in an ice cream stand in the state park about five miles from my home.

INTERVIEWER: How old were you at that time?

HAENER: I was seventeen.

INTERVIEWER: And you worked, went to school part-time and . . .

HAENER: Well no, I went to school full-time but I did this while we were off for the summer. Because, you know, if you say when did I get my first job, when I was a very small child I worked for neighboring farmers, picking strawberries and picking berries, picking beans, when I wasn't occupied at home. Because my father didn't do that kind of small marketing farming, he worked more in the area of potatoes and apples and rhubarb, which he raised.

INTERVIEWER: When you were out picking berries, were you paid for that?

HAENER: Yes, we were. We were paid so much a quart. And I really can't remember the amount but it was really a very small amount. You know, if you got two cents a quart for picking, you were doing pretty good.

INTERVIEWER: Did you consider that work or was it more an activity which you enjoyed when you were young?

HAENER: No I didn't. I considered it very definitely work because when we moved into the Depression we were extremely poor and that was the period in which I did that kind of work and it really was work for me. And, in fact, if you hear about migrants who do stoop-farming.... picking berries, especially strawberries or green beans, is stoop-farming in its most miserable aspect.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So there you contributed whatever money that you made towards your family?

HAENER: Sometimes I did. Sometimes I was allowed to save it in order to buy shoes or clothes or, you know, various things that I needed. But it was, it was work to me, it was not a pastime I did because I enjoyed doing it. As a matter of fact, I really decided at a very early age, having grown up in a farm, that there has to be an easier way than this to make a living.

INTERVIEWER: How old were you, about how old were you when you were picking berries and doing that kind of work?

HAENER: Oh, I would say between the ages of ten and sixteen.

INTERVIEWER: OK. Can you tell me a little bit about, a little more about that?

HAENER: I tie that in very closely because I had my appendix out at that time, you know, they almost ruptured and I was terribly ill. The thing is that during those years I can remember when we did the kind of work I'm talking about for other farmers, like picking green beans and strawberries and such. The thing I will always remember is being out in the field and picking beans and the farmers coming home with a load of beans that they picked at market and couldn't sell and saying to us, like about eleven o'clock in the morning, "There's no sense in picking any more 'cause we can't sell what we took today."

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see.

HAENER: And that's how terrible . . .

INTERVIEWER: So you would have done all that work . . .

HAENER: Well, they paid us for what we picked up to eleven o'clock but the point is that they were going to let those beans just wither on the vines because they couldn't sell them. Is that the sort of thing that you're interested . . .

INTERVIEWER: Yes. In your own family's farm or the neighboring farms, were they forced then to plow the lands? Were they told often by the government not to plant or to plant only a certain amount because there were some AAA [Agriculture Adjustment Act] policies . . .

HAENER: Well, there were....yes, later on, because you see that didn't start until the Roosevelt Administration that you had the policy of paying farmers not to produce. And, of course, this was in '29 and '30 and '31 and those times. But what literally happened was that, at least in those years, farmers were getting paid not to produce. What was happening when we were going through the worst part of the Depression was that, like not only were the beans not picked because they couldn't be sold but one year my father didn't even harvest his potatoes because he couldn't sell them. Now he harvested what he could store, where he had facilities to store, but the rest of them he just left in the field. There was no sense in using the gas and horses to go out and harvest what you couldn't sell. People that he knew who were friends of ours, you know, he let them come out and harvest what they could, but they just rotted.

INTERVIEWER: That's really the crime of the Depression, people were starving . . .

HAENER: Yeah, yeah. The same thing was true of apples. People were starving in the city and people on the farms couldn't buy shoes. Like I wore shoes with cardboard shoved in the holes.

INTERVIEWER: But you always ate?

HAENER: That's one thing that we had, like salt pork besides potatoes. We had potatoes and we had the pork that we raised and the chickens and the eggs. So that we didn't literally starve but we really didn't . . .

INTERVIEWER: You had no gas . . .

HAENER: We didn't eat....No, no, like in the wintertime, one way or another, like for instance we always managed to subscribe to a farmer's magazine, two magazines that we subscribed to. And I can remember as a kid reading the articles about mothers talking about how they enticed their children to eat the lettuce off the plate when they served the salad, like the jello molds and so forth. I thought, I would think....'cause, you know, lettuce was unheard of for us, from the time we quit growing it in the summertime until the next summer we just couldn't afford to purchase it. Even then I thought to myself, you know, that there is really something seriously wrong, that we're in a situation where we can't ever have lettuce and yet they talk about throwing it out because they can't convince children to eat it.

INTERVIEWER: When you used to work, when you used to pick berries and all, about how many hours a day did you do that?

HAENER: You would work in the morning from the time that the sun come up and it really dried off enough so that you wouldn't damage the fruit by having it too wet or the bed too damp, until sundown. I mean you would work . . .

INTERVIEWER: So they worked you a full day, even a ten or eleven year old?

HAENER: Yes, that's right. You work....it didn't occur to them not to work your full day.

INTERVIEWER: So you must have been pretty tired, your muscles ached and all that?

HAENER: Well, when you first started to do it your muscles would ache terribly. But, of course, picking strawberries or beans, my knees never quite reached the point where they didn't hurt, because that hurts to be on your knees. But after awhile, in terms of your muscles, you would adjust and it wouldn't be that terrible. But the work was tiresome and monotonous and difficult and was hot and warm and whether or not I did it for other people, like picking beans and strawberries, or did it at home, doing work that I had to do, hoeing corn and hoeing potatoes, whatever it was. You know I really can remember this--I felt very early on that there has to be an easier way to make a living and that some of my cousins who I knew from the cities had it so much easier because they never had to work during school vacation. Or I used to keep looking up at the sun and the clouds and praying that it would rain so we could quit working.

INTERVIEWER: But you were attending schools the nine months of school . . .?

HAENER: Yes. We walked a mile-and-a-half to a country school unless the weather was simply outrageous when possibly one of the neighbors or someone would come and pick us up. But I graduated from a one-room school.

INTERVIEWER: So you said education has always been a point in your family. Can you tell me about some other values that might have been . . .

HAENER: Well, the other values that were stressed, in particular by my mother....My mother had very strong religious convictions, and we were raised with being very strict Catholics. You know, it was really almost a most terrible thing to be caught stealing or lying in my family. So that we were raised very, very strictly, in the old sense with values that some of which I have learned to think were really unkind to a child because it....we grew up in an atmosphere where we were fearful. You know, we weren't convinced, if there, if you have a God who is not loving, who is going to be watching for the least transgression and pounce on you, that's the kind of God that I knew when I was a child.

INTERVIEWER: When you were seventeen and went to work at the ice cream stand, were you still living at home?

HAENER: Yes, I was.

INTERVIEWER: It must have been quite a distance . . .

HAENER: It was. It was a state park that was probably about five miles away. And normally, of course, I could drive at that time but we didn't have that many cars. Someone would normally take me or come and pick me up at night. It was an atmosphere in which I knew the people involved. Like we knew the man, Mr. Wilson, who had charge of the state park. And even though, some of the time, you were in that little stand all by yourself, especially during the week. On Saturdays and Sundays and Friday night it was busier. You know, you didn't feel completely isolated. And, of course, one of the things that I really liked about it, I was allowed to eat as much ice cream as I wanted. [laughter]

INTERVIEWER: What year was that?

HAENER: Well, that must have been about '36, '37. I graduated from high school in '36.

INTERVIEWER: OK, so did you bring the money you made home to your family?

HAENER: Yes, I did. And it didn't occur to me not to do that.

INTERVIEWER: Did you go to that job to bring in extra cash or because you wanted a change from the farm work? Were you needed on the farm at that time?

HAENER: Because it paid more money and because I wanted to do work that was easier to do. But by that time we had moved, you know, we

HAENER: were starting to have some changes in how we functioned on the farm. Because of the Depression and the inability to sell what you produced, there had been a real slowdown in the kind of farmwork that we did and the amount of farmwork. And, of course, I was the second youngest of a family of seven and by that time my brothers too had decided that they wanted to find jobs that were different than farming and they were looking for work. And, of course, part of the time they were able to find jobs. But in those years all of us brought home whatever we earned because it was the only way that we could survive.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Yeah, that seems to be, that was the case with every single woman I talked to.

HAENER: That everybody....isn't that interesting . . .

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, sometimes you got money back from your father, a little of the spending money, but it was never, you know, except for some women who were working during the war that would split their paycheck instead . . .

HAENER: Well, see, the other thing that happened in my family [the divorce], and I don't know if you want me to make this point or not but . . .

INTERVIEWER: Well I find it very interesting . . .

HAENER: You do, eh? In 1931, at really the depth of the Depression in '31 and '32. It was '31. My mother and father, who were within one month of being married for twenty-five years, were divorced and so that it literally meant that we really had to bring it home or else we would not have stayed together.

INTERVIEWER: And that must have been really hard because divorce wasn't that common at that time.

HAENER: And it was an extreme, oh, you know, it was just a terrible thing to have happening in your family. Especially if you were Catholic. And among my relatives it was absolutely unheard of on my mother's side of the family. Of course, in retrospect, it was something my mother should have done a long time before. I wouldn't have been around by then because of it. But the point is, in all kindness to herself, she should have done it many, many years ago, because my father was extremely difficult to live with. And, you know, the things that he did to her were just absolutely outrageous. For a long time I absolutely hated my father but over the years I understood his problems too. You know, he was sent over here from Switzerland as a child of twelve, having been left behind after his mother died and his older brothers and sisters and his father had immigrated to this country. They finally sent back money to bring him over here. And they put a tag around his neck and just shipped him over here in a boat and then when he got here they, you know, pushed him from family to family, I guess none of them caring too much about him.

HAENER: So that really his attitude ties into many of the problems the women's movement is having nowadays, because talking to my mother later on in life, his one basic problem was he didn't want any children. He was absolutely furious when my mother became pregnant with the first child and wanted her to get rid of it. Of course, my mother was absolutely horrified because this was contrary to all, any teaching that she had ever had. And so, one of their big bones of contention over the years was the number of children they had. And, of course, she had seven of these children, in addition to a couple miscarriages. And he would have been impossible to live with anyway, but at least I developed a certain amount of sympathy for him over the years.
But he did outrageous things to her. You know, my father was a very intelligent, fairly well-educated man. He could speak three languages coming from Switzerland. He could speak English, French, and German. And coming from Switzerland where they are mechanically-minded, he was very skilled in the whole area of mechanical operation. He was among a group of three men who was the first man to drive a truck from New York to San Francisco and the Packard Motor Company made a pamphlet about this, of course. I just had the pamphlet reproduced for my nieces and nephews and for all the grandchildren who might want it, my brother and sisters....At the point we moved out to the country, we were quite financially well off. My father owned three trucks. He had set up for himself....he had a trucking company. And he was really advised to move out to the country because he wasn't well, he really had asthma very serious. So, but the thing is that, when my father drove that truck from New York to San Francisco he just left my mother with two children and one on the way and went off, without giving her any explanation at all. You know, at that point in time she just should have wrote him off, right? [laughter]
But anyway, it, I had, in terms of my father abusing me, he never did because by the time I come along my older brothers were old enough that they wouldn't let him do it. But he really, he was terribly abusive to the other children. He beat, physically abused them, physically abused them something terrible.

INTERVIEWER: Did he want your mother to get an abortion or to give away . . .

HAENER: Oh yes, as a matter of fact he got her pills to try and get rid of it. And he really wanted, yes he really wanted her to get rid of the children.

INTERVIEWER: What nationality is your mother then?

HAENER: My mother was German. My grandparents come from Germany and my oldest uncle was born in Germany. Then my mother was the first child born in this country. And, of course, my father come from the German part of Switzerland, so that they had a great deal in common then. But it was, he just didn't want any children.

INTERVIEWER: When your parents got divorced, then you lived with your mother, right?

HAENER: Right.

INTERVIEWER: So your father moved off the farm . . .

HAENER: My father by that time, when my parents got divorced, my father had overextended himself during the Depression. And the original forty acres that we started out with he was able to hold on to. But the, roughly about eighty acres that he had purchased, one plot of forty acres about a mile-and-a-half away and the other plot right adjacent to us, he lost all of that and he was lucky to hold on to the original home. But that forty acres was split in two so that each of them, that was the settlement. She, my mother, really was not very wise. The attorney she had didn't do very well for her. So that really she ended up with twenty acres of land and the house. And he had the other twenty acres on which he had built a large storage barn for apples and he, of course, got the apple orchard which was the most productive segment of the farm. It was extremely difficult for my mother to hold the family together.

INTERVIEWER: So your father then was living next door to you pretty much?

HAENER: Uh-huh, but for a short period of time. He eventually moved off.

INTERVIEWER: You were what, about . . .?

HAENER: I was about fourteen or fifteen at that point in time.

INTERVIEWER: So most of the kids at that time were old enough to really help out with the family, so your mother wasn't left with small children.

HAENER: Yeah. No, I have, had one brother who was younger than I. Who was about eight or nine years old at the time.

INTERVIEWER: Did she hold off the divorce until the time that she knew that you kids were old enough or was it just that she'd reached her limit at that point?

HAENER: No, I think that, she had separated on a number of occasions before that. But she had never got a divorce because, well, number one is how would she support these children, but the other part was that my father had always told her that, you know, she could not testify against him because she was his wife. And that she would never be able to support the allegations that she was making against him.

INTERVIEWER: OK, so you entered the Depression with your mother as the head of the household of seven?

HAENER: Uh-huh, yeah. Yeah, we didn't really, the Depression started in 1929. We were really a couple years into the Depression before my parents divorced, but we were really into the depth of the Depression at the point that they . . .

INTERVIEWER: That must have been very, very difficult then. Did you become, were you very close to your mother?

HAENER: Yes, I was very close to my mother, much closer than to my father. I never really felt close to my father and I blamed him for the problems we had. As a matter of fact, I quite literally hated him towards the end because he made life so difficult and miserable for all of us.

INTERVIEWER: OK, so, I'm interested....let's see . . .

HAENER: You know, I'm the only member of my family, a family of seven, that graduated from high school and basically the reason is that the nearest high school was nine miles away. And, of course, you had to pay tuition because we didn't have a high school in our school district. And I had kept telling people when I was in the seventh and eighth grade, for instance, that I wanted to go to high school. And of course my father was very active in politics, he held the position of a judge and, you know, he really knew politicians, not just at the township level but the county and state levels. And I would talk about my desire to do this openly to the point where my father was in the position where if I decided that I really wanted to go, he almost had to allow me to go. So that I, the first year that I went to high school my mother and father were still living together. I went to high school and it was extremely difficult to go and I used to just dread to have to ask my father for the money I would need for certain things because, you know, he was, he would be reluctant to give it to me. He would make it difficult for me to have it. But I really persisted and it's funny because I, the three friends of mine that I went through grade school with, two of them were in my class lived across the street in a farm, and we would walk back and forth from school and, of course, the oldest daughter there wanted to go too. And of course, her family was not in any much better financial condition than ours. But I remember her oldest sister saying to me one day when I was over there, "You know, Dorothy, you're very foolish to keep saying you're going to go to high school. You know your father will never pay that money." And the point is that I felt he wouldn't either but I really felt that if I pushed hard enough that he would feel compelled to do it. And of course he did do it and that I think is indicative of the tension and stress I was under, because I knew he did it really under duress and because he did it to save face, not because he really wanted me to go.

INTERVIEWER: But you were able to finish high school then?

HAENER: Yes, I was able to finish high school. And I think the one point, I never really felt badly about bringing my money home and giving it to my family is because, unless the rest of my family had been willing to do that, I never would have gone to high school.

INTERVIEWER: You really had that support, that everyone was in favor . . .?

HAENER: Of my doing it, yes.

INTERVIEWER: They all chipped in a little extra on chores and . . .

HAENER: Helped, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel that you viewed the world any differently living in a female head of household at that time?

HAENER: At that time I think I did, because you see at that time I always felt that my mother was the really weak member of the family and my father was the strong one. But, in retrospect, I know that wasn't true. I know that, essentially, it was my mother that held that family together, that it would have completely disintegrated if my mother had passed away, my family would have disintegrated. My father could never have held it together. Things that happened after my parents were separated begin to make me aware of the fact that my mother was really the strong member of the family, which I think is interesting because I never looked at it that way when my father was home. I quite literally, as I told you, really hated my father and it was a number of years before I reached the point where I'd go visit with him and accept him as he was, because he basically was a product of how he was raised.

INTERVIEWER: Let's kind of move up to when you were at the ice cream stand. OK, what did you do, what was your next job after that?

HAENER: I worked in an ice cream stand and, of course, the work I did there was to serve. We served ice cream and hot dogs and candy, and that was pretty much all that we served. And I got this job essentially because my sister had had it to begin with, and when she could no longer work there I sort of got it by kind of default. But I really enjoyed working the ice cream stand. I don't remember how much I made but on a comparative basis the work was so much easier and it paid fairly well comparatively, although the wages were not that good. And I was allowed to eat as much ice cream as I wanted, which was really a wonderful thing for me.

INTERVIEWER: You worked there one summer or more than that?

HAENER: No, I worked there one summer and then I think I helped out a few times the summer before that when my sister worked there. But essentially I just worked there one summer where I worked by myself.

INTERVIEWER: And then when you graduated high school, did you go out to work or did you just help on the farm?

HAENER: When I graduated from high school the first year, I graduated in '36 and it was absolutely impossible to find a job at all. I didn't do anything but work on the farm and maybe, really, do the

HAENER: kind of work I talked about earlier, where I helped work for other farmers, picking beans and strawberries. We had, we were raising strawberries ourself by that time and in some cases I would oversee the people we brought in to help pick strawberries. But basically I didn't get a job until 1937. I went to work in Wayne Wire Cloth and this was a plant where they produced, had punch presses and welders and soldering equipment. And I worked there as a spot welder and also I worked on the punch press part of the time.

INTERVIEWER: Was that a difficult job to get?

HAENER: Well, it was difficult in the sense that I had to go repeatedly to put my application, and to stand in line to get hired. You know, you didn't automatically just put your application in and wait for someone to call you.

INTERVIEWER: So there were long lines and there were a lot of people that needed that work.

HAENER: Yes, there were. Yeah, there were a lot of people who were absolutely desperate for the work. And I felt it was almost a miracle when I finally got hired.

INTERVIEWER: Were you eighteen at that time?

HAENER: I was eighteen.

INTERVIEWER: Were you able to, you were within the age . . .?

HAENER: Yes, and of course I was eighteen and so, under the laws of Michigan you had to be twenty-one to work the afternoon and midnight shifts, don't ask me why but that's how it was. And so that I really considered myself very lucky to have been hired in and put on the day shift.

INTERVIEWER: Was that factory located very far from your home?

HAENER: It was located in Wayne, Michigan, which is about ten miles from my home. And, you know, those were the days in which you would go to work in the mornings and if there wasn't work available you'd stand there and wait for them to see if there was going to be a job. And sometimes you would wait for two-and-a-half or three hours and then they would send you home 'cause there wasn't work and you wouldn't get paid for it. Those were the conditions under which we worked at that time.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get to work?

HAENER: Well, sometimes I, a member of my family would drive me because we didn't have enough cars for me to have the car. But there were a number of people who worked there from the New Boston area or from the Waltz area where they would be coming through New

HAENER: Boston and most of the time I could find a rider. The problem is that if we all rode in together and it happened that my job didn't have work, then I would end up not having a way to get home and, of course, I would just stay there.

INTERVIEWER: You'd have to stay there . . .?

HAENER: For the whole day, right.

INTERVIEWER: OK, can you tell me a little bit about some of the other conditions that you worked under at that time?

HAENER: Well, you know, the conditions, they were extremely difficult. You didn't have, as you have today, automatic rest periods. Depending on what the atmosphere was with your supervisor, you know, you could get complaints, they would complain to you or tell you you were taking too many breaks to go to the restroom. And, particularly with a woman and especially during your period, if you really needed to go more often then, once in the morning, once in the afternoon, you know, they had a tendency not to think this was legitimate and to really insist that you not do it. In some situations, especially if you were in a line operation, they would just shut the line down for a break, for everybody. And of course if that happened to be at a time when you didn't need a break that didn't really matter at all, and there was nothing you could do about it.

INTERVIEWER: So they didn't send relief people in to . . .

HAENER: Not on that job they didn't. Or the other thing was that, when I was doing the spot welding for awhile, you wore the big aprons and the clothes, but some of the welders, the sparks would throw, they would throw sparks. Now a spot welder is a welder where you're not using a tool, you're just pushing a foot pedal, I would push and it would bring the welder down to spot weld. And, you know, you would complain about you're gettin' burnt but there wasn't anything you could do about it. They would bring somebody eventually maybe to fix it, but until it was fixed you just worked that way.

INTERVIEWER: So it was unsafe work, and there weren't the proper safety precautions?

HAENER: No, there weren't. And as I said, I worked on the punch press for a short period of time and I did convince them to move me off of it because I was terrified of the punch presses. And there were people, you know, that got injured.

INTERVIEWER: Lost their fingers . . .

HAENER: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: You know, I've heard that from almost anybody that I've talked to that worked in a punch press.

HAENER: Yes. I really was literally always terrified of punch presses. And some of the women told me I was foolish because, you know, you could make good money if you did, it was piece work, it wasn't straight wage. That if you really made out on punch presses you could make good money. [laughter] But I didn't think it was worth it. No, no, I really didn't.

INTERVIEWER: So all the jobs were piece work?

HAENER: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any area like to eat your lunch in or did you have to eat it by the machines?

HAENER: We ate by the machines. We had a restroom that was very, quite small. Some of the people would take their lunches and go there, but not, you ate pretty much by your machine. When you quit working you just found a spot there and ate.

INTERVIEWER: Were you allowed to talk to the people next to you?

HAENER: You could talk to them as long as you didn't interfere with their work. But you couldn't stop doing what you were doing to go over to talk to them.

INTERVIEWER: Was it mostly women working there or . . .?

HAENER: I would say it was split where I worked, roughly about forty-five - fifty-five, with about fifty-five percent of the employees being men. Because some of what they considered the heavier, really heavier work or the big punch presses, just the men were allowed on them.

INTERVIEWER: Did they resent women being there?

HAENER: You know, at that point in time, I really don't think they did, because the definition of what was a woman's job and what was a man's job, at that point, was so clear-cut that there really seemed to be not this strong feeling of resistance against women. For instance, all the welding that was done on wire cloth was so small and tedious that they never put a man on that job. They never put a man on the small punch presses. And I did not become aware of this kind of resistance until I moved into the next job I had where, you know, it became more evident.

INTERVIEWER: So there wasn't that kind of resistance that there was a Depression and the men needed the job and that women, that you were taking the job away from them?

HAENER: No, there wasn't. And the jobs that the women did naturally received less money, even on the presses, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember how much money you were making?

HAENER: You know what I do remember is that when the minimum wage went into effect that--and the limitation on the forty hours--that I did get an increase but I really don't remember exactly what I was making but it was very, very small.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a problem with the foreman wanting, you know, like the other women there to go out with them or to have to give any gifts and stuff like that?

HAENER: You know, there was that, not in terms of the gifts so much but in terms of wanting to go out with them. There was that kind of thing. And, you know, coming from the background I come from it was really very difficult for me because I just was not, I was comparatively young and very close at home, it just would have been an impossible situation for me. But that went on, it was, you know, just expected. But, you know, I didn't get, I think, fired because of that. I think that what happened to me is that jobs that were preferable or easy I never got because I was not cooperative. But in terms of literally losing my job, I didn't. I did, later on, lose my job at that plant so, and I think that the reason I lost it was because I had been so foolish as to talk to people about the fact that I thought union was a good thing. And even though I did this with people that I thought it would never get back, it did and I was let go and I really felt terrible about it because I needed the work. And I had friends of mine check the personnel there to find out why I had lost it and there was no justifiable reason why I lost my job. So I really believe it was only because of that.

INTERVIEWER: When did you lose your job, how long did you work there before you lost it?

HAENER: Well, I worked there off and on because of layoffs and so forth. I would say about two and one-half years.

INTERVIEWER: Well, what I want to know was, how did you get, where did you first get your idea in your head that a union was a good thing?

HAENER: Well, because, of course, the union was being organized. I had a sister who worked at Ternstedt's when the sit-down strike took place. And, of course, she was not in there when they sat down, but they brought their lunches and gave it to the people at work, handed it to them through the windows. And, of course, she was involved in that. And then I had brothers who worked at Ford's where they were trying to organize although they were not successful until a couple of years later. But I was sympathetic to the whole concept because you see when my brothers hired in at the Ford Motor Company, I will never forget it, you know, we lived out, far enough in the country that it was a twenty, twenty-five mile trip for them to go to the Ford Rouge plant. They would get up around twelve-thirty at night and put on all the warmest clothes they had and then they would go down to the Ford Rouge plant.. And they would have to stand in line, out there in the cold, you know. Day after day they did this and then when they'd open

HAENER: the doors in the morning to take the applicants the secret service men would just stand there and say well, you know, "You ten can go in and put your application in, you ten just leave, and then the next ten can come in," and it was very, you know, arbitrary and very inhuman. And, you know, you just had to be sympathetic to the concept of organizing unions.

INTERVIEWER: But nobody in your family before that had had association with the union?

HAENER: Because it was just not heard of. You know, my older brother had worked for the Ford Motor Company in Flat Rock before the Depression and for a year-and-a-half maybe before the Depression here. But even then the union wasn't talked about at that point in time. So that, no, we had absolutely no association. The only association we had with the concept of the union was that my grandfather come from Germany where the trade union movement was strong, and he was a carpenter. And, of course, he belonged to the union during those years when he was at work so we had that concept of what a union was all about and that it was a good thing. But we had no identity at all with being associated with anyone who was a member, that I can recall, when we were growing up.

INTERVIEWER: So your sister and brothers became sympathetic to the union because it made sense to them . . .

HAENER: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And then that was transmitted to you.

HAENER: Yes. And at the Ford Rouge plant, the practice of giving bosses a bottle of whiskey at the end of the week, or the practice of giving them gifts, was so entrenched that everyone knew this was what you had to do. I recollect that my brother that's closest to me, he's my third oldest brother, you know, he purchased a new car and really the reason that he purchased it was that he had been promised that if he purchased it through this certain dealer that he would see to it that he kept his job. And, of course, eventually he got laid off anyway. And I remember that he hid the car way out in the woods because it was going to be repossessed. And it was just outrageous. But, you know, how could you grow up in that time and not be sympathetic?

INTERVIEWER: So when you went to that plant there wasn't organizing efforts going on?

HAENER: There wasn't. That's the thing, you see the thing is that I don't know how I knew, but I instinctively knew that talking about a union would be dangerous there. And that plant was really one of, was not organized till many years later, even after the Ford Motor Company, and Ford Motor Company was not organized until around 1940, you know, '40 or '41 it was organized. I knew that it would be dangerous for me to do that so that I had not even mentioned it

HAENER: at work. I mentioned it to people outside of the work place, some of whom worked there. But I do know from friends of mine that I had checked it out, that that's one of the reasons that I was just let go. There was really no reason to let me go. I was just absolutely fired, without any warning or any reason at all.

INTERVIEWER: Just because you started to talk to people about it?

HAENER: Yes, that's the only, you know, there really wasn't, I had not done anything wrong. I hadn't got any reprimands, I hadn't . . .

INTERVIEWER: So what did you do after that, did you look for another job?

HAENER: I looked for another job and it was again very difficult to find jobs. I finally ended up getting a job in Ypsilanti at Central Specialty. It was a combination foundry and produced saws. It did the final production on assembling many of the craftsmen's saws that Sears Roebuck and other companies sold. They produced them for Sears Roebuck. And that's, I went to work there in I think 1939, and then that plant was organized in 1940 or '41.

INTERVIEWER: And you were there for the organizing?

HAENER: Yes, I was there when we organized that plant. You know, I was part of the effort to organize it and we picketed and there was not much difficulty. It was comparatively easy to organize it.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that was kind of an aftermath of all the big sit-downs and strikes and a lot of publicity about the union.

HAENER: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me a little bit about your job there?

HAENER: I worked on various jobs there. I worked on the assembly line doing various jobs and helping to assemble the saws. And the work you did there was kind of a combination of, you know, you had a bench beside the line and you would assemble part of what went on the saw on the bench and then you would install it on the saw. It was fairly fast work but the line didn't run as fast as, for instance, some of the car lines run nowadays. And then later on, I was given a job there which I was doing nearly at the point I left, of going over everything that was sent back, that was produced wrong or that there were complaints about. And I would open the boxes and check their names and log what the complaint was about. And generally it was a combination of sort of clerical work and shop work because, you know, I was really doing physical labor in terms of taking the boxes apart. But that's . . .

INTERVIEWER: That was pretty interesting work.

HAENER: Yes. I was very glad to get off the line. I've always hated working on a line, it drives me up a wall.

HAENER: I went to work at Ford Bomber Plant in 1941 and I did that because it paid, the wages were much higher, in spite of the fact that we did get an increase when the union come in at Central Specialty. You know, the wages that were offered in a war production plant were much higher, and of course the prospect that they would continue to have work was much better. It was really very difficult for me to get a job at the Ford Bomber plant because, by that time, the employers in the area were up in arms because the bomber plant was stealing all their, what they called "skilled help," although they didn't treat us like skilled help. But they were very bitter and angry about it and they were protesting to the point where Ford's was getting reluctant to hire us. And I went out there a number of times before I finally was able to convince them to hire me. And I think then I convinced them to hire me because I convinced them I was qualified to do clerical work which was work different than I did do at the Central Specialty. And they did finally hire me as a department clerk.

INTERVIEWER: When you were working at Central Specialty did you work days there or nights or what shifts?

HAENER: I worked days a good share of the time, but part of the time I worked afternoons.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have to wait in long lines there also, were there a lot of applicants?

HAENER: Yes, you had to wait in line and put in your application but they, the lines were not as long as when I went to Wire Cloth in Wayne. And, of course, the treatment I think was, at that point in time, a little more humane, because they really needed the help.

INTERVIEWER: Were you working at that time primarily for the money?

HAENER: Yes, only for the money.

INTERVIEWER: Only for the money.

HAENER: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't feel like you wanted to help them more because of the war?

HAENER: No, I really, that connection was not in my mind at all.

INTERVIEWER: Did you, did it occur to you at that time that, you know, that that job might only be temporary only for the wartime and by leaving your other job that you actually were losing your seniority there and it might be difficult for you to find another job after that?

HAENER: You know, up until that point in time every job I ever had had been temporary. And I really, I don't think, even considered that. All I considered was the fact that the job at Ford Bomber plant

HAENER: would make so much more money. Then, hopefully, somewhere along the line, because they were doing this, they were training people to do other jobs, that I could avail myself of some additional training.

INTERVIEWER: So you never expected to do any one job for a real long period of time . . .?

HAENER: No, at that point in time I really expected to do what everyone else, every woman who, you know, grew up under the circumstances I did, with the conditions and the culture we have. I really expected to get married and not have to work anymore.

INTERVIEWER: OK, you were telling me before about Willow Run recruited people from other areas of the country. Do you want to tell me a little bit about that?

HAENER: Well, when they got into the real production of the airplane, and they needed extensive help, and of course some of the men were drafted because even if you worked in defense work, unless you could justify not being drafted, you were drafted. They had to recruit from out-state Michigan so they sent recruiters, particularly down South, they sent recruiters. And the people who come from down South would tell me that recruiters told them that, you know, that you make very good wages, and the wages were good, and that you'd be trained to do the work and that, of course, they're building housing for you and they're going to provide various recreational activities and, you know, it really would be a wonderful thing for you to come up there. Well, so the people would come and . . .

INTERVIEWER: Would they come by themselves or would they bring their families or . . .?

HAENER: Well, normally they would come themselves just to get the job and then, of course, they would bring their families. In some cases, the families would come together and both the husband and wife would get a job because, you know, they really would figure that this would be the chance to make some money, that it's not going to last forever, but we will make the money while we can. But when they got there the housing that was built was pretty much firewood shacks. You know, it was very quickly put together and one house on top of another. As a matter of fact, it was connecting houses so that you had all these people right on top of you. You could hear, really, through the walls, they were so thin. And you'd have children and families just packed in these places because there wasn't enough of them. And the living conditions for the people that were recruited from out-state were really pretty terrible living conditions. But I do think that it is an indication of what we can do when we put our minds to it, because overnight this inadequate housing was put up and, you know, overnight schools were built to take care of the children that come. We could have done it better, the point is when we put our mind to it we really can do it.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of housing did you live in? Did you still live in the apartment?

HAENER: I lived in the apartment all the while I worked up at Central Specialty. Shortly after I got to work at the Ford Bomber plant, I did move back home. But the housing, our home had burnt down in January of 1941, so that we very quickly put up just any four-room home--one, two, three--yeah, it was four rooms. And considering that I had lived in a, what was an old, enormous farmhouse, it was a real come-down for us. But, by that time, our family was considerably smaller. My older, two of my brothers were married and my one brother was away in the service, so that my family--my one sister had passed away--so the family was really quite small. And we managed, it was a very, difficult the first winter because we didn't have an adequate stove and by that time the war effort was making it difficult to purchase the kind of things that we needed.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you decide to move home at that point?

HAENER: I really decided, not, I really didn't decide to do it willingly or gladly. I frankly moved back home because of the financial situation of the rest of my family and the help that I could give was needed. Now at that point in time we had reached the point where I didn't give my paycheck to my mother. I paid her board and she paid the bills out of that which was, you know, a better financial arrangement all around. But I really wasn't anxious to move back home, I had enjoyed . . .

INTERVIEWER: Living on your own. [laughter]

HAENER: [laughter] Yes, I really had.

INTERVIEWER: So you started work at this bomber plant in '41? You must have lived a considerable distance then from the plant . . .?

HAENER: Yes, comparatively, because the bomber plant was just a few miles short, closer than the plant at Central Specialty. But by that time there were so many people working at the bomber plant that come from my area that there was not much difficulty in getting a ride. And, of course, in addition to that, because of the problems in the housing and the need to recruit people from far distances from the plant, the Greyhound started up a bus service. So, for the first time in the history of where I lived and frankly to this day, we had bus service running past the house. And it's interesting that one of the things we did because of the gas rationing, and I guess it's OK to tell this now, is that we would get the gas stamps for our car, in order to have some gas, and then we would ride the bus and save the gas stamps so that we would have gas to get around with. And, of course, the same thing with the tires because the tires were rationed and you had to justify and get permission to buy tires for your car. So the whole thing, it was an interesting time to have lived through. But, you know, there were people who come from as far as fifty miles to work in

HAENER: that plant. Commute fifty miles, one way, which meant they had a round trip of one-hundred miles. I suppose you already heard that.

INTERVIEWER: I've talked to a bunch of women, different women that had to travel two hours to get to work everyday and then the same to get back.

HAENER: Yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: What shift did you work there?

HAENER: You know, I worked all three shifts at that plant. [laughter] It was terrible. I only worked the midnight shift for about two weeks and I finally got moved off that job. To me it was simply horrible. I never did adjust to working the midnight shift, I just couldn't. Now the afternoon and the day shift, you know, I worked in a job where every month we would have to shift and that, again, is almost inhuman because it meant every month you'd have to adjust yourself to a new schedule.

INTERVIEWER: Did you always work as a clerk . . .?

HAENER: I worked as a clerk for, I think, only about five to six months and I was not happy doing the work I had as a clerk. I was not happy with my supervisor or the superintendent really, it was not my immediate supervisor, the superintendent I worked for was extremely difficult to get along with. He, I, you know, had run-ins with him. Like for instance, the first year I worked there I took off Christmas Eve. It was a difficult time for us. Two of my brothers were in the service and my mother was feeling very lonely. It was the first Christmas that we weren't together. And I had asked to take off and he wouldn't let me have it. And, you know, there wasn't that much work so I just took off. And he really was furious with me so we didn't get along after that. And I used to complain all the time with the people I rode with, I was, at that point, riding with my older, oldest brother and some others, myself and three men. And I used to bitch all the time about my working conditions and they finally said to me one day, "You know, we have a union here now," and as a department clerk I was part of the union, "and we're getting awfully weary listening to you gripe all the time. You know, you either should go do something about it or just quit griping." So I finally worked up the courage to go and complain about it and to ask to be transferred on to another job. I got sent to school and trained to be an inspector.

INTERVIEWER: What were your major gripes?

HAENER: Well, he was terribly unfair. He was terribly unfair, you know, not only to me but in the kind of small things he did like, of course, none of us would dare to go and line up at the clock and punch out a couple of minutes ahead of time. And the people in

HAENER: the department across the aisle from us, their time clocks were quite close to us. You know, and not only did he stop us but he sent a memo through complaining about the people in the other department and getting their superintendent in trouble and making them not punch out ahead of time. There were just the kinds of things he did to people in his department, in making life miserable for them and, of course, things that you would be involved in simply because you had to do memos for him or you had to take some of the phone calls that were coming in for him. It was just not a good atmosphere. And, of course, after I had the run-in at Christmas time, it become increasingly unbearable for me. You know, he went out of his way to make life difficult for me.

At that period my father used his connections in the political field to get me a job doing censuses which, you know, didn't last for all time but, you know, paid pretty well comparatively while I was doing it.

INTERVIEWER: And that really helped out during that long period of time . . .

HAENER: Yes, and that was an interesting experience for me because they sent you to school to teach you how to do the census. And then, of course, just going door-to-door . . .

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about when you went to school for inspection.

HAENER: Yes, well, they really sent me to school at the Ford trade school. Ford always had a very excellent trade school. They taught me how to be an inspector. I had to take math and geometry, I had to learn how to read all the various gauges and tools and how to read blueprints. And it was an interesting period and time for me. I was trained to be a final inspector. As a result, I worked as an inspector in what was called the small parts department, which was at the, located in the corner of the "L", because the bomber plant is shaped like an "L". And because of the experience and the training I had--and I then continued to go to school part-time on my own time after that--when the plant folded up, I was, of course, laid off, arbitrary just like everyone else. And I complained that I had seniority to stay on and I processed a grievance. And I then was sent down to final assembly and I was really one of the last people from production. Of course there were maintenance people stayed on much longer than me, that was laid off. And the reason I stayed on was because I insisted that I was qualified and that I had the seniority and they did let me stay.

INTERVIEWER: How long did you go to training school?

HAENER: I think that we went full-time for all day, really for better than two weeks.

INTERVIEWER: You really learned a lot . . .

HAENER: Yes, you did. You really had to learn how to read blueprints.

INTERVIEWER: OK, tell me a little bit about your work as a final inspector or inspector in final assembly.

HAENER: Well, as a final inspector you were assigned a certain area and all, everything that was produced in that area you had to learn how to inspect. If something new come through, you know, you had to go check the blueprints out of the cribs because they were all filed in cribs. You had to have the various gauges that you needed to inspect various things. And you just needed to know how, you had to know whether a rivet was properly set. If it wasn't properly set and you let it go by, you know, you had to check off, you had to put your badge number on it, and they would be able to check it back to you. And you were the one that let it go through, because much of the work we did was rechecked again when it was actually put on the airplane.

INTERVIEWER: So you had a tremendous amount of responsibility on that job.

HAENER: Yes, really. You did have a considerable amount of responsibility. You were really responsible for the work that you checked out.

INTERVIEWER: Did they treat you in that way, that you had the kind of responsibility work?

HAENER: Strangely enough, because of the war effort and because there was such a need for employees, they did treat you with a certain amount of respect. They, you know, if you said it was wrong, it was wrong and they would repair it. Very seldom did they question what you said about it, you know, it isn't as it is now in many of the automobile plants where supervisors know it's wrong but they tell the inspector, "Go ahead and let it go through." You really felt responsible, you know, you knew that it was going to come back to you if you left it go that way. And you were inclined, at least I was, that if someone pressured you to leave it go, that you would question their right to do that.

INTERVIEWER: OK, were you on a production schedule at all or did they let you work at your own pace?

HAENER: The employees that done production work had a certain amount that they expected to get out. And, of course, we were expected to inspect whatever they put out. But you could take your time in doing it and there was not any pressure on that job. As a matter of fact, you know, it was the kind of a job where you were, really felt free to let your work set while you took a break. And then you would come back and just catch up on it. So that there was not any of the kind of pressure you had, I had been under on some of my other jobs.

INTERVIEWER: So that was a really good job then.

HAENER: It was a good job.

INTERVIEWER: Did you remain standing the whole time or did you get a chair?

HAENER: You did stay standing a good share of the time. Like for instance, one of the jobs I inspected was the, what they called the "nose ring" for the motors, and it was a big, round assembly that you absolutely had to stand up to check because it was really a great, big, round thing. And then you had to check both the inside and the outside in terms of the riveting that was done on it. So, much of the work I did, you had to stand up to do.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have pads under your feet at all or did you . . .?

HAENER: The way I recollect it, we used to get pieces of cardboard to stand on because standing on the concrete floor was really rough on your feet. So that we used to get padding of some sort at the spot where we stood most of the time to do our work.

INTERVIEWER: Was that just in staff you could have that or were there people in production also . . .?

HAENER: Well, yes, I think all of us, wherever we could manage to do so, tried to get something under our feet to stand on. And, unless you were on a job where you were constantly moving to some other spot, you know, you would have a tendency to try to find something to soften the concrete.

INTERVIEWER: Overall, were the conditions, were there safety precautions in the plant?

HAENER: In the area that I worked in, the safety precautions were pretty good. There used to be a great deal of fighting, among the women, for instance, who had to wear the nets over their heads, or the caps, because of working on punch presses or drills and so forth. There was a great deal of argument and fighting about that. By and large, the women did do it. Now there were some cases where people's hair had been caught and there were, of course, other areas of the plant where people had been injured very seriously. One woman was almost completely disfigured because they were starting, she got caught on a propeller, you know, they had told her apparently not to go in that area, but they didn't have the necessary safety precautions set up to prevent, and they started up the motor and she really got sliced, her whole face got terribly disfigured. And, of course, there were these kind of accidents that happened because it was a new kind of work, it was a new way to do it. It was the first time airplanes had ever been produced that way, on a kind of assembly line, because at the end of the war there was one plane coming off the line every forty-five minutes.

INTERVIEWER: Wow!

HAENER: It's almost impossible to believe, isn't it?

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Was the plant pretty clean?

HAENER: It was fairly clean, but it was terribly noisy. You know, my area was not as terrible as when you got down to the center wing section where there was such an enormous amount of riveting went on there. And it was so noisy that you almost had to wear earplugs of some sort when you went to there because you couldn't hardly stand it.

INTERVIEWER: So that might have served some damage to people's ears . . .

HAENER: Ears....there's no question but the noise would have done some damage.

INTERVIEWER: But would you say that like the overall conditions were better during the war than they were in similar plants after the war, as that more care was taken?

HAENER: I would say that because of the nature of that kind of work, you know, that it was a slower kind of work, that, generally speaking, it was a safer kind of work. That's my feeling. Just the very nature of the work, it was not the kind of pushy production sort of work that you have on an automatic car line, where you're doing one job every minute-and-a-half.

INTERVIEWER: Among the women, did you work with mostly women?

HAENER: No, it was a mixed group. I would say that, roughly maybe half and half that I was with. Like some of the inspectors I worked with were men, some were women.

INTERVIEWER: Were the supervisors men?

HAENER: Supervisors were all men.

INTERVIEWER: All men?

HAENER: All men. The only place where you had anyone in a supervisor capacity was, well like for instance, they had a woman in charge of the, maintaining the restrooms for women. And they had a woman who used to do a kind of policing job in terms of seeing what was going on in women's restrooms and criticizing if there were too many people loafing in there too much of the time.

INTERVIEWER: So you got watched when you went in there.

HAENER: Yeah, not all the time. I mean, there were so many restrooms that she couldn't watch them all. But she was policing and, of course, you know, during those years you were still not allowed to smoke. That was when Henry Ford was still alive. And naturally the women would go in the restrooms and close the door and take a quick smoke, and she would move around policing that . . .

INTERVIEWER: That's the major thing she was after.

HAENER: One of the major things she was after, yes. Had you heard that before?

INTERVIEWER: No, I hadn't heard that before.

HAENER: Oh, that's right, really, that was one of the big things that you just absolutely weren't supposed to smoke. Sometimes a group of them would go in at the same time and they'd station one person at the door watching so the rest could go in and take a quick smoke.

INTERVIEWER: I heard a story from one woman I talked to about how there was a woman, you know, that worked near them that had some hair experience, you know, hairdresser. And she used to go in and, you know, curl their hair during . . .

HAENER: And fix it, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Did anything like that go on?

HAENER: Well yes, I think it did. Like for instance, it, well maybe also that many women would put their hair up the night before and then wear a babushka to work or wear it tied up. They would come into work and someone would help them to comb it. I never had anyone comb mine for me but I know that whenever I washed my hair, and I didn't go to a beauty parlor, I'd put it up that night and then I wouldn't comb it until I got to work and I'd take my first break and get away and go and comb it because, you know, we worked nine hours. We finally went on two shifts, at least in my department, most of the departments had a nine hour day. And then they did away with most of the midnight shifts. You know, the amount of time you were at home was very limited by the time you figured the time to go back and forth. So, if you really washed your hair and done it up, you just didn't bother to get up early enough to comb it.

INTERVIEWER: And you probably were required to keep your hair covered anyway. OK, was there a lot of absenteeism among women?

HAENER: Well, of course, they complained that there was an enormous amount of absenteeism among women. I really don't think it was any higher among women than it was among other groups. The problem is that if you worked six days a week, nine hours a day, you almost had to take a day off once in a while, just to do some of the things that needed to be done. And I know that at one time I felt that I was entitled to an increase in wages because we did have some leeway. And I had processed a grievance, you know, because they wouldn't give me the increase and I thought that there were other people that had received it that were not doing any more, any better, or hadn't been there any longer. And the response on the grievance in the first step that I was absent too much. And then when they negotiated in second step, the committee man who come out on the negotiations with me, you know, he told me that they had went over my record and that, really, comparatively, on absenteeism on my record was not that bad, because they recognized that you had to allow some leeway. Now one of the big gripes they used to make, the management company, was that because of the war effort, you

HAENER: were absolutely obligated never to take a day off. You know, that was the whole pitch, it was just almost criminal. Like the incident at Christmastime, if you took just one day off it was criminal. So, but the point is that on that grievance they did win the grievance for me. You know, part of the settlement was that I would wait, would be like something like another month before I'd get it, you know, to determine, take another look at how much I was absent. But I did get the increase. So in that respect, the union really was fairly good to me. Like I would never have taken the initial step to move on to inspection if the union hadn't been there.

INTERVIEWER: Your initial complaint in your department was to the union?

HAENER: Well, not necessarily. But my initial, you see, I would have been afraid to even have questioned what the superintendent was doing if I had not known there was a union there to support me.

INTERVIEWER: OK, great. Were there any women stewards or committee women?

HAENER: There were some people, women, who were active in the union. My immediate steward was not, or my committeeman, were not female, were not women. But there were women who held appointed postions. Like for instance, Olga Madar was on the recreation committee and eventually that became a kind of full-time job at Local 50. And there were, some of the other women that held active positions. You see, it was broke down into districts and departments and in my department there were no women, that I knew of, that held an elected position.

INTERVIEWER: Did you remain minimal, were you active at all in the union at that time, beyond being, you know, paying your dues and . . .?

HAENER: Processing a grievance.

INTERVIEWER: And processing a grievance. You'd never attend meetings or anything . . .?

HAENER: No, I didn't. I really, well, I think I might have went to a couple of meetings, but I was not active in the sense that I got up and spoke, or had any particular problems, otherwise . . .

INTERVIEWER: Was there just not enough time for that kind of activity or . . .?

HAENER: Yes, that was a problem, that there wasn't enough time and that, you know, you felt that you had gained, that you, that the union was in there and it was functioning, as far as you were concerned, alright, and so you didn't feel any compelling need to get out. Like I voted in the election, I would do that. I knew quite well the man who was the financial secretary of that local, you know, he would come around and campaign. I knew that people would come around that were free to walk in the plant and campaign.

INTERVIEWER: Did you form close friendships with other women and men in the plant?

HAENER: Yes, I did form close friendships with a number of people during that period of time. And, you know, they were friends that kind of moved over into what was then, after the war when many of us hired back into Local 142. And I kept in touch with them over the years. I've really, at this point in time, kind of drifted away. Once in a while we will have a reunion. We've had, every once in a while, someone who has a list of these names and addresses will have a, what they call, a"142 reunion." But, really, when we get together we discover, you know, that not only are we "142" but most of us that get together are former Local 50's, bomber plant people, too. So, in that respect, we have maintained friendships.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me the most important thing, the woman I talked to had very fond good memories of the war, working during the war. One of the reasons was because of the friendships she made and the chance they had to be with other women and the whole, that there was a very good sort of social atmosphere, about that . . .

HAENER: Yes, yes. You know, like just the fact that you could get on the bus and ride and you got to know the people on the bus. And you know, really, got to know people not only in your own department but from various departments....and you made friendships with them. For instance, one of the fellows who is now a trustee in my township, both he and his wife worked at the bomber plant. You know, I don't even think of them anymore as being associated with, from the bomber plant. But, you know, they're friends of mine and that's originally where we met, you know, where she met him. They got married as a result of meeting each other at the bomber plant so that, you know, that kind of association I have with a number of people that I don't even think of as being old Local 50's. They're just friends of mine that I've had practically all my life.

INTERVIEWER: Did you....you had one day a week off, right?

HAENER: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever go out with any of that, you know, women or men at the plant then?

HAENER: Yes, we did. There were some, like for instance, of course there were occasions when a group of us would get together and plan that we would like to do that day, and we did that. Or there were occasions when some of us from the bomber plant, who had come from Central Specialty, would make arrangements to get together and, trying to think of the name of the bar we used to go to, but it was really quite close to the plant. It was a bar that we had went to where they had a band and music and we would go there. Not real often because, you know, the hours were so long and that it was extremely difficult to do that sort of thing.

INTERVIEWER: So you didn't really rest . . .?

HAENER: Yes, yes. But we did do that, we did make friends that way. Unfortunately, a lot of the, of course the fellows that I knew were drafted and they were gone during that period, so that they just weren't around.

INTERVIEWER: When you used to come home from work, did you have to help with any chores around the house, or during the week, during your day off?

HAENER: Yes. We all, you know, as a matter of, we always did help with the work at home. And even during that, during that period of time we continued to raise chickens and, for a while, we were still raising strawberries until it just absolutely got to be too much. But the chickens, you know, my mother really liked to have her own chickens and her own eggs. And, of course, that was a lot of work because in the spring of the year you had to babysit those damn chickens. [laughter] It really was a great deal of work and I don't think my mother really recognized how much work was involved.

INTERVIEWER: So you worked in final assembly until the end of the war?

HAENER: Yes, after I finished, after I was laid off in small parts, when that finished out, I then moved down to final assembly and I probably worked . . .

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you worked small parts, you were just the final inspector in small parts and then you went on to final assembly?

HAENER: At the end and down around final assembly I literally worked, you know, inspecting parts of the plane on final assembly.

INTERVIEWER: OK, now, what was that feeling, you know, from women that you knew, about being laid off after the, at the end of the war?

HAENER: Well, you know, my feelings at being laid off at the end of the war, you know, was unhappiness because I was losing this good pay, but also, you know, it was, we were very happy because the war was ending and the soldiers were coming home. Our friends and relatives and boyfriends and everything were all coming home and we were, you know, happy about that. We hated to lose our jobs but, on the other hand, there wasn't that kind of sorrow that you would have nowadays with plants folding up. You know, I just think that we all believed, I really didn't believe until it happened that Ford would not pick up their option on that plant. You know, I knew that Ford had options to take that plant and first options on it. And I just always believed that they would pick up their options and that we would work there again.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that's the feeling that a lot of women had, that they could get their job back?

HAENER: I think so. I don't, I really don't think that most women, at least I didn't, believed that we were going to get shafted the way we did, in terms of employers, you know, using the laws which they had ignored during the war years, to now say we couldn't work the number of hours or we couldn't do the weight lifting and all that kind of thing.

INTERVIEWER: So you say the feeling was, you're sorry to leave your job but you're very happy the war was over and you didn't necessarily worry about not having a job because you felt that you'd get all back to work?

HAENER: Yes. The thing is, at least in my situation, and I think it was typical of families in those days, that families really stuck together more and we had always, you know, I always felt that one way or other I would be taken care of. And I didn't have that, and of course in addition to that, the unemployment compensation had been implemented. That had been made effective. So I knew I was going to have my unemployment compensation, I had managed to save some money in war bonds which I had deducted from every pay. So, you know, I didn't feel terribly threatened.

INTERVIEWER: But you did protest immediately and . . .

HAENER: Yeah, because I really felt I was qualified to do the work and I knew that other men were being kept on, and I just resented it very much.

INTERVIEWER: So mostly the people that were kept on in the end were men?

HAENER: Yes, mostly they were men.

INTERVIEWER: Now, OK, then you got laid off. Can you tell me what you did at that point?

HAENER: Well, at the point I got laid off I really didn't try to hunt for a job. There was not much sense, there were no jobs available. I just stayed home and kind of had a vacation. As I got to the point where I finished drawing my unemployment compensation I began to get very worried, looking for work. But until I got almost to that point I wasn't, I wasn't really that terribly worried about it. You know, it was nice just not to have to work for a change after all those, that time of working nine hours a day, six days a week and sometimes ten hours a day. So, I can recollect, you know, after the war ended in Europe, and then we waited for it to be finished in Japan, especially as it got towards the end. You know, the first thing in the morning because we didn't have the Free Press delivered at that time, I used to go up to the store and purchase the newspaper to . . .

INTERVIEWER: To see if you had to go to work that day?

HAENER: To see, no, no, I was anxious to know what was happening in the Pacific, and anxious to know when it was going to be ended. And,

HAENER: of course, you know, when VJ Day did come we all celebrated all night and all got pretty well stoned. I remember I really got stoned for the first time in my life on, and I really will not touch it to this day, is sloe gin and pop.

INTERVIEWER: So when you started to get worried about....you were on a recall list, right, from Willow Run?

HAENER: Well, you see, I felt that I would be, because I felt that Ford would take that plant back.

INTERVIEWER: But when they discharged . . .

HAENER: When Ford would not purchase the plant, and when Kaiser-Fraser then took it over, at that point, you know, I still felt that because it was the plant I had come from and because they were going to use the plant, and that part of the Local 50 people were still employed in that plant, you know, doing maintenance and keeping up the plant because it had to be maintained to a certain extent, that I would eventually have recall rights. Of course, it was not until 1946, at the convention in Milwaukee, that the decision was made to give Local 142 jurisdiction and give those employees seniority, and take the seniority away from the Local 50 workers. So that all we had was the preferential hiring rights.

INTERVIEWER: OK, let's back up on that last point for a moment. When you did get laid off, I know that there were certain kinds of discharge, some of which were like terminal discharge, and some applied to being recalled. Did any of you get, from the bomber plant, did you get the kind of laid off slips or discharge slips that.... were they recall slips, that you expected to have been . . .?

HAENER: To be recalled. You know, I'll tell you the absolute truth, I don't remember. Is this true that they issued these at the Ford Bomber plant?

INTERVIEWER: I don't know if they issued them at the bomber plant, I know they issued them at other plants where there was two different kinds of discharge slips.

HAENER: See, I think that that's probably basically true. I think that probably, and I really would have to check this out with some other people, but those people who had absolute recall rights to other Ford plants, because they had transferred from those Ford plants, I think probably would have received that kind. I really don't know, I expect that I was prepared, to some extent, about finding a job in the future because I do know that at the point I had my last day of work that I went to the superintendent of inspection, with whom I'd built a fairly good relationship because of my arguments over not seeing a merit increase and because of my argument to go on to final inspection, which he finally OK'd without any question, and ask him if he would give me a letter of recommendation. And he did give me a very excellent letter of

HAENER: recommendation that I could use for future reference. So, you know, I expect that I probably had some concerns at that point of time, I would not have asked for the letter of recommendation.

INTERVIEWER: But you expected that Ford would buy up the option at the bomber plant, and then did you expect that you would have to go and reapply for work?

HAENER: Well, you see, I think, I expected that under, that I would be called back. You know, I know now that that was an assupmtion that was incorrect. But I just sort of believed that that would happen.

INTERVIEWER: And you think that a lot of people might have felt that, that they would be, you know, recalled because they worked there before?

HAENER: Yes, you see, because I can understand why I had that assumption because, you see, I had a couple brothers who were never laid off from the Ford Bomber plant and who were Ford Motor Company employees. And even when Kaiser-Fraser took jurisdiction and 142 got jurisdiction, they worked through all that period. They were never laid off at all. So, I think it was, although it seems crazy now, it's understandable why I assumed that because it was happening to some people that I knew.

INTERVIEWER: In what year did Kaiser-Fraser take over?

HAENER: Kaiser-Fraser took over in, really, 1945. Kaiser took over almost as soon as Ford quit operating the plant.

INTERVIEWER: And you went there at that time to try and get a job there?

HAENER: No, I really didn't because there wasn't enough, I knew there wasn't enough happening. And I had close enough friends in there to tell me when it looked like production would be getting started. Because what they were doing was really just tearing the place apart and installing machinery to produce the cars. And, of course, that was a long-range operation, you know, all the jigs and fixtures and stuff that they had to produce airplanes had to be changed to produce cars. So I really didn't try. I got hired in there....

They really did not get paid. And this, of course, was one of the best arguments that was advanced in terms of the GM strike, which was to increase the wages and still keep prices controlled at the level at which they were.

INTERVIEWER: How long did you work at the toy factory?

HAENER: All in all, I would say less than a year.

INTERVIEWER: But there was a lot of lay-offs . . .?

HAENER: Yes, and I didn't, it was not a whole year. And, of course, that was located, too, about ten miles from home, in Wyandotte.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what your wages were at the end of the war and what your wages were in the toy factory?

HAENER: You know, I would, in order to answer that honestly, I would have to try to check it out. I would say that my wages in the toy factory were, and it was piece work, were probably less than half than what I was making, less that half of what I made at the bomber plant.

INTERVIEWER: So you went then when you heard production was picking up, or beginning at least, at Kaiser-Fraser, then you went and applied for a job.

HAENER: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did they honor any of your seniority?

HAENER: Well, I applied for a job based on my preferential hiring status that I had. And, of course, I tried to apply earlier, just on the basis, before 142 had jurisdiction, just on the basis that I was entitled to a job, having worked at the bomber plant. But they were not honoring that concept. There were some people, some women getting hired but there were really very, very few initially, to begin with.

INTERVIEWER: So they didn't honor your seniority but they would hire you or they would hire Ford Bomber people before they would hire off the streets, is that the way it is?

HAENER: They didn't even do that. They, number one, really did transfer the people from 142 pretty much. You know, even before they achieved jurisdiction they were transferring people from 142 who obviously had worked on some of the machinery. Some of the skilled tradespeople who understood the machinery, they were transferring them. But, in terms of the women, where they did hire the women, primarily, when they started hiring them, was on the sewing machines, on the jobs that were traditionally considered women's jobs, women's work. On the small assembly work, they hired women. So that, you know, there were quite a few women though that were hired and there were quite a few of the Local 50 women who were given jobs because of that hiring. They hired enough of the Local 50 women under the preferential set-up to say, at least, "Well, we are hiring them." But myself, you see, my problem was that I had no history of having been employed at the Ford Bomber plant, either as an assembler or sewing machine operator. My whole history was as a clerk or as an inspector. And they were not about to hire a woman doing inspection.

INTERVIEWER: So they really tried then to get things back the way they were before the war, they wanted it, to get rid of those changes?

HAENER: Yes. In spite of the fact that Kaiser's was considered a more liberal corporation, and much easier to deal with, they weren't about to continue with all the changes they had had in the past.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, "let's just forget about what happened during the war."

HAENER: ....and go on from there.

INTERVIEWER: What excuses did they use, because certainly they knew by that time that women were capable of doing all that work.

HAENER: Well, the excuses they would use was that producing airplanes is different than producing automobiles, that the work on automobiles is much heavier and the women are not going to be able to do it, and that women really don't want to work in shops with all the men. And, of course, the other argument is that once they transferred the people from Kaiser-Fraser, there were all these GI's coming back who had to have jobs and that they ought to be considered and given work. You know, to a certain extent, they didn't really feel compelled to give any rationale for it because it was the feeling of people behind the scenes that the preferential hiring rights agreement was not absolutely binding, that it wasn't meaningful and that, you know, you couldn't enforce it before an arbitrator, in arbitration. And, for those reasons, they could go ahead and do pretty much as they pleased.

INTERVIEWER: OK, so even though there was that preferential hiring, that men off the street would get hired before women with preferential hiring rights?

HAENER: Uh-huh.

INTERVIEWER: Would it generally go that, would women from Kaiser-Fraser get hired before, or get transferred or recalled, before or after servicemen?

HAENER: Well, on the sewing machines was the one space, spot where they would hire women that had worked during the war in Local 50. That was one of the few spots where that was true. Most places they just wouldn't hire women, they would hire men. Now there was pressure put on, I don't know whether I'm getting ahead of myself but, you know, like I had told you once before that we really made an issue of this during the one negotiation where, after I got on the bargaining committee, and that took some time for me to get active enough to get elected to the top negotiating committee, at that time I really put pressure on them to finally recall all of the Local 50 women when they were hiring. And they finally did do that. It wasn't terribly meaningful because the company folded up a couple years later. And even while they were doing that, you know, you had to watch them very closely or else they would put the women on jobs that were deliberately too difficult, which they wouldn't have done with a group of men. But I do remember during that period of time that some of these people

HAENER: were, you know, personal friends of mine who would even call me up at home or come to me and say how desperate they were for a job which, you know, completely puts to rest this concept that the women didn't want the job. They really desperately wanted the jobs and they knew that if they didn't get a job working at this kind of a plant where wages were good, that they were going to end up the rest of their life like the job I had at the toy factory, you know, that I barely existed on. I could not have existed on that job if I wasn't living at home because I wasn't making enough to support myself. Because I remember when I finally got on the committee, they would come to me and it was just appalling because there was nothing you could do for them until I finally got a couple of the people on the committee. And I made such a big ruckus about it and the fact that this was a Local 50 caucus that had pushed to get them elected to the convention that finally got Walter Reuther in control of the International UAW Executive board. You know, it was our group that had finally pulled the votes together to do that, and that we really had a responsibility to try to do something for the women. And the men were very angry at me. And, you know, the thing is that they were part of my caucus, I could have understood if it had been the old Kaiser-Fraser guy who finally controlled the committee so that we had the majority on the committee. But it was, I really had to pressure our own people.

INTERVIEWER: And the men just thought the women didn't need a job?

HAENER: Yes, and they didn't care. And it was a terribly awakening experience for me. Now it was during that period of time that I first met Lillian Hatcher because she came out to our local union with Bill Oliver and I was a member of the Local 142 Fair Practices Committee. And, you know, I really believed all this stuff we preached and believed that everybody was going to do it. And it's a terrible disillusion to you to discover that, having got this far, now really have to fight. That's very depressing. It was really a very depressing time for me. Almost, the only other time that was more depressing to me was when I got on staff and discovered that the poeple on the staff, who obviously are under control of the UAW because they'd been appointed, that they feel just as strongly that way, you know, that they were as bitterly opposed to the concept of women moving upward or having a job.

INTERVIEWER: You fought a hard battle then.

HAENER: Yes, it was, but of course I'm sure Lillian has probably told you the same sort of thing which was basically true for both women and blacks.

INTERVIEWER: I'm going to back up a little bit again. You said you'd been having difficulty getting back to your same job at Kaiser-Fraser, now what, how did you finally get that job, or did you?

HAENER: Well, yes, I went and applied numerous times. I knew that they were hiring and I tried to get hired on, at least on jobs that they were hiring women, which was like sewing machine operators, what they considered typical women's jobs. They would never hire me on those jobs. I then started trying to get in doing the clerical work again because I, you know, the work I was doing at the toy factory was so difficult and so low-paying that almost anything would have been better. And I was finally able to get hired in as a department clerk, but it was not based on my preferential hiring rights because they were unorganized and, of course, they were comparatively, as a result, very low-paying. But that's where I worked.

INTERVIEWER: OK, and then what happened?

HAENER: Well, what happened was that there was so many of us working and doing the clerical work in the various departments, that we quickly figured out that the reason we were so low-paid was that we didn't have a union. And we were able to make the connection that the amount of money that we would make if we were organized. It was during the period when negotiations were going on with most of the major industries and, of course, the newspapers carry the accounts of the increases they got. To make a long story short, we decided to organize a union and we were able to do it fairly quickly. And I was elected to the committee that negotiated our first office and engineering contract.

INTERVIEWER: Were these women mostly working class or union people from the war? Had they mostly been women who had been on production work and then . . .?

HAENER: A substantial number of them were.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, so they had some union experience.

HAENER: Yes, right. And, you know, a substantial number of them were people who had been members of unions in various capacities during some period of their life.

INTERVIEWER: And they all had the experience of receiving high wages before and having their wages really drop. And knowing that, at the same time the people in production were getting high wages.

HAENER: Yes, it seems to me that we were able to figure out, at that point in time, that it was costing us something like fifty cents an hour not to belong to a union, which was four dollars a day and which was an enormous amount of money in those days.

INTERVIEWER: That is. Do you remember what you were making or do you just remember that?

HAENER: I just remember that because we used that in some of our literature, you know, and it stays with me. I would really have to go back and research it to tell you exactly what I made.

INTERVIEWER: But how many women, was it all women, first of all, that were working in clerical?

HAENER: No, it was really both men and women. And of course, the engineering group was all male, all male.

INTERVIEWER: All male. About how many were, people that were in your first bargaining unit?

HAENER: Well, it was a large plant and I would say that in the vicinity of, we eventually ended up with a unit of roughly I think around eight-hundred people, which was large.

INTERVIEWER: Oh my goodness! Clerical and engineering?

HAENER: Yeah! Because you see the engineering group was large and that took in all the blueprint and everything which was an enormous amount of filing. And they were in the process of drafting and putting together a new car so that it really, they had an enormous clerical and engineering . . .

INTERVIEWER: So that was quite a big job organizing them.

HAENER: Yes, yes it was, it was . . .

INTERVIEWER: Did you play a leading role in that?

HAENER: Well, I took a leading role in terms of being active in my department and contacting people who I knew of from other departments. And because of having worked there during the war years, you did have contacts. Frankly, if I had not been active I don't think I would have got elected to the committee. But all in all, the group of people who were really active was comparatively small because people were afraid, in spite of the fact that the law said you could do it. People were afraid to really get active and the numbers that would come out for the meetings were very small. I attended many meetings during that time.

INTERVIEWER: Was that because the jobs were real tight then, that people were afraid of losing their jobs?

HAENER: Yes, and I was fearful. But I also had some strong feelings that, unless we organized the union, things were never going to get better, we were never going to get a decent wage. So I, you know, I guess that overcome my fears. Even my family expressed fears about, some of them, not all of them, about my activity and that, you know, I might end up getting in trouble for it.

INTERVIEWER: OK, so when you got elected to the committee were there any other women on the committee?

HAENER: There was one other woman. There was, the rest of them were all men.

INTERVIEWER: Just men, I know you were saying you were having difficulty with them and I was wondering . . .

HAENER: Yes, well but that, yes, that committee, that was the committee that negotiated our first contract for the office and engineers. Now once we had succeeded in negotiating the contract, and once we were certified as a union, we voted to become part of Local 142. So we then become a unit. The engineers become one unit, and the office and clerical a unit of 142. I then become active in this total local and it was in that local that I finally got elected to the top negotiating committee of the entire local. And it was only at that point in time that I was able to exercise the kind of clout where I pressure people into, at least I helped to pressure them into recalling the rest of the Local 50 women. Now, at that point in time, at the point that I got elected to the top bargaining committee there, I had also exercised my option. Having got active in organizing, I started to learn a little better how the preferential hiring right functioned. And I really felt that I ought to have been hired back as an inspector because there were jobs on inspection open that they would not give me that job. So I finally, on my lunch hour on a number of days, went out in the plant and had somebody teach me how to run the sewing machine. So then I insisted on getting preferential hiring rights as a sewing machine operator because, in spite of the fact that we organized in the office and we had got a substantial increase, that job still paid less money, much less than a sewing machine operator. And I was working to get money, that was the important thing to me. So I got hired out as a sewing machine operator and I never will forget that some of the people who had been active when I organized the union from the, from Local 142 who helped us to do it, they thought I was absolutely crazy. And they would come around and razz me about, "Well, how do you like working on a production job again," and, "Don't you wish you were back on that . . ."

INTERVIEWER: They thought that that was below you and . . .?

HAENER: Yes, they did. They really felt that it was below me. And then occasionally, if the sewing machine lines would close down or if they really needed production workers downstairs, they would transfer us down on the line. And they just couldn't understand how I could. Well, even on the line, to me, it was better doing that, and making more money, than working where I was. Well, eventually, to make a long story short, I did manage to get back on the final inspection work. And I went back to school and took the necessary training I had in statistical quality control to move. I was working on a technical engineering classification when I left, which I never would have got if I hadn't understood how a union functioned and how, once I had the training, our contract provided that they had to give me the job. And they resisted strongly, giving me that statistical quality control job, because it was really a very high-paying job and it was a technical engineering classification.

INTERVIEWER: Then you stayed over there until you got the job here . . .?

HAENER: On the staff in 1952.

INTERVIEWER: And in the meantime you said that you arranged yourself that all the women from Local 50 were recalled, but not that many actually got back on . . .

HAENER: No, no, and by that time many of them had left the vicinity. But the thing is that they did have to go through the mechanics of at least sending the notices out to all the Local 50 women who had not been called, notifying them that a job was available and letting them come in and try for the job. And a substantial number of them then did get back. Now I'm not saying that I did that all myself. What I'm really saying is that I did initiate the pressure to see that it was done. I couldn't have done it unless I had pressured some other people into helping me do it.

INTERVIEWER: OK, and then, according to that, then those women were to be hired before women and men off the streets. That happened?

HAENER: That happened.

INTERVIEWER: Did those notices also go out to men or had almost all the men received recall . . .?

HAENER: Most of the men had been given the opportunity prior to that time, you see. There was not that resistance on the part of the men that there was to the women. And, of course, meanwhile what had happened is that so many of the GI's who had never worked at that plant at all had been hired. And, of course, since their seniority date started from the date of hire, the women who hired in at the last had lower seniority.

INTERVIEWER: Did their seniority start at the time they went into the service, is that correct?

HAENER: No, for instance, you see there was a time lapse between when the women from Local 50 were called back. Like, really, it must have been maybe even a year and a half or two years. And meanwhile the GI's that were hired, who had no seniority, they would have two years seniority. And any kind of lay-offs you had, they would stay on and work.

INTERVIEWER: And the women took their seniority only when the men . . .?

HAENER: Yes. Eventually that become meaningless because, of course, Kaiser-Fraser folded up completely. But the point is if that had not happened that whole seniority could have been serious. The interesting thing too is that we had, we had a history in that plant of terrible wildcat strikes. And, of course, it was after the Taft-Hartley was passed in 1946, which made it illegal for a union officer to incite a strike. We had terrible problems but part of the problems they had brought on themselves because

HAENER: they used to brag to us that they had hired the cream of the crop of the young GI's who come back from the service. Of course, they come back from the service convinced of having won a war to save democracy, that the country owed them a few things and they were determined to have 'em. So that, you know, I didn't blame them for striking. It was godawful sometimes. [laughter] The strikes, we had strikes over reasons that were not rational at all. Just at the drop of a hat, they were so militant they'd just close the place down.

INTERVIEWER: Now this was only after the war, not during the war.

HAENER: No, that was after the war. It was after the war.

INTERVIEWER: But they were still illegal strikes?

HAENER: Well, they were illegal as soon as the, you see the Taft-Hartley law, when it was enacted in 1943, put very strong restrictions on your ability to strike. And if you have to go through the procedure now in order to have a legal strike which we didn't have to do before that. And if a union official condones an illegal strike the local can be libel so that we . . .

INTERVIEWER: So they all actually had to be wildcats . . .?

HAENER: They had to be. And in many cases they were and there wasn't absolutely anything we could do about it because they would, literally, be willing to almost tear you to pieces they would be so angry. And you'd have to go down and tell them, you know, "you got to go back to work."

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, so it put you in a real bad position.

HAENER: Yes!

INTERVIEWER: And they knew that you were in that position also.

HAENER: They knew that we were in that position.

INTERVIEWER: So you didn't have to necessarily mean it but you had to . . .

HAENER: Yes, except some times we really meant it. [laughter]

INTERVIEWER: OK, one more question. There were black women also hired at Willow Run?

HAENER: Yes, black women were hired at Willow Run, but I would say, but not in the same number, proportionately not in the number white women were hired. And I think that, although I'm not familiar myself with this, it seems to me that they were not hired until pressure was put on to require that they be hired. But I do think that once they were hired in that plant, there was an ability to really operate and get along together with all groups. As a matter of fact, when they had the riots in the city of Detroit,

HAENER: as I recollect, you know, and it was really terrible when they had that riot here during the war, there wasn't any of that at the plant. As a matter of fact, people went out of their way to try to make sure that nothing like that happened. And I really don't know the rationale why that was so but I do recollect it being so because I was, it was during those years that I just become, started to become conscious of the discrimination against blacks. And really my conscience was started because of friends of mine, of course my brothers were trained down South and who had never been exposed to it, and start writing home about it. So what about, have you got any contacts, have you been able to contact any black women who worked down there? I'm trying to think of, there were a couple that I knew that stayed on at Kaiser's but I sort of lost track of them.

INTERVIEWER: But they got recalled, there was no discrimination against them when you finally got the recalls?

HAENER: Yes, the couple that I knew, in particular, that did get recalled, were really recalled comparatively early because they were hired on sewing machines and they really wanted people on the sewing machines. There was so much sewing work. Anyone who had any experience on a power machine almost was hired because there was a much greater need for that than there had when they were producing the airplanes.

INTERVIEWER: So there was no attempt to really get the black women out to other plants. Were they hired beyond the recall?

HAENER: You know, to my recollection there was a real effort and, of course, this didn't always permeate to the bottom. But there really was a great effort within the Kaiser-Fraser Corporation to have affirmative action in terms of blacks. For instance, we had no trouble negotiating with the company, which is unheard of in most shops even today, where we represent the office workers. A clause in the contract that would allow the, for instance, skilled tradesmen to transfer into what was called the engineering classifications lower levels, where the skilled trade job would make them able to move on, they were able to do that. And as a result we did have, we were one of the first plants to have black people doing engineering work and vice versa. So on that score I don't, I don't think we had such a great problem. But I do wish I could find you a couple black women who had worked out there during the war years. You didn't get any response on that article in the . . .?

INTERVIEWER: I don't think I got it from any black woman from Willow Run.

HAENER: I thought was right, even if I was doing it just to promote my own interests. But the point is that I did do it.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I think that that's the most important thing. To realize your ability to do that and you can stand up for yourself and, you know, I think that really gives you a different attitude towards life.

HAENER: Yes. Very few blacks and no black women. And that apparently a real effort and pressure was put on.

INTERVIEWER: So that was a little while after you had been there that black women first started to be hired.

HAENER: Yes, that's my recollection. Now I may not be correct but I really feel that . . .

INTERVIEWER: Oh, well let me ask you another question. When you were first hired there, did they hire all women or did you have to either be single or divorced to get a job, was there any difficulties for married women?

HAENER: I think in that point in time there wasn't because, but I wouldn't want to, having not been either....I was single and so that I don't think that occurred to me. I know that very early on they were making every effort to hire married women. Anyone who would come and work could come and get a job. Age had no, you know, they were hiring very old women. It was very, it was really very interesting, women who never had expected to work in their lifetime, worked.

INTERVIEWER: OK, do you remember a film crew ever coming out to Willow Run and doing some filming?

HAENER: You know, I think I do recollect it but I can't remember what connection I had with it. You know, because it was a big enormous plant and there was so much criticism of whether or not it would ever function that they did, I think, come out and do it. The other thing, of course I remember that, I expect other people may have mentioned this to you, is when Franklin Roosevelt toured the plant. And since I was working as a department clerk at that time, and I was down towards about the middle of the building in the area of the building that wasn't completed, I do recollect how they really covered up everything that wasn't finished to make it look like it was finished. They built walls, you know, where they really didn't need walls, like to cover the fact that that part of the building wasn't done. And none of us knew that he was coming. It was apparent that an important visitor was coming but because of the secrecy, you know, and I guess the need to keep people unaware that he was coming, none of us knew until the day he come. And when he come down I had a very good view of him because we were allowed to quit work and stand along the aisles as he went through.

INTERVIEWER: May 24, 1977. I was wondering if we could just start with getting a list of what jobs were that you did hold right after the war. I know you were working in the toy factory.

HAENER: Yes. You know, some of this, I don't know if I've ever given anyone a copy of my bio, but really much of that information would be available in there and I think it would be much easier in the

HAENER: long run but, I did work in a toy factory and then when jobs opened up again at Kaiser-Fraser after they had purchased it from Ford Motor Company, I couldn't get a job in the shop and I went back to work as a department clerk at a comparatively low rate of pay. I didn't cover that, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: No.

HAENER: You know, the kind of salary you make doing office work is much lower generally than what you would make in a shop, especially if the shop is organized. That's where I really got involved in organizing the office and technical employees. And we did organize them because the shop, at that point in time, was going through the negotiations for the increase in wages. And the big fight went on at the end of World War II for people to catch up. There had been a freeze--you probably don't remember, but there was a freeze. And you know, we were able to do some very simple deductions in our own mind and compare what the shop people were getting because everyone knew about it compared with what we were getting and compare the salary that I was making as a department clerk was what I had made when I did office work for the Ford Motor Company in the shop which was part of the shop union--I was called a shop clerk. And we organized, I was part of the office and technical negotiating committee and I helped negotiate the first contract. And then even though we did get a substantial increase, I still was making less money than I could make working in the shop, and particularly doing inspection work which I wanted to get back into because it was higher paid. So I exercised my options on the preferential hiring right to transfer back into the shop and I worked as a sewing machine operator and when things were slow or if they needed me some of the time, I also did work on the line. But eventually I got transferred back in to do inspection, final inspection with a comparatively high paying classification.

INTERVIEWER: Was this job at the technical engineering classification or . . .?

HAENER: No, no. The statistical quality control was one that had the technical engineering classification. I did go back to school during that period to Cass Tech [High School in Detroit] and I took, you know, those areas that I needed. I was weak on math and I was weak on the whole area of how you do the statistical work. So that, you know, even today I get angry when I think about the fact that men were inspectors and applied for those kinds of jobs would get them without having that kind of background. And as a matter of fact, when I worked on that classification, it became very clear to me that I didn't need to have it. But I really needed to have it in order to get the job because they were not going to consider me unless I had it. You know what I mean? I think you understand what I'm saying. The point is that I did go back to school and I did get the job of stacistical quality control and that was really a first. There was no one else....no other woman working in that classification. And it was really very high paying. You know, so that at the point I was

HAENER: then offered the job here at the UAW, the increase in wages was not all that much for me. It was additional money in terms of some of the expense money involved but quite literally I was really making very good money doing that kind of work. It was a very high paying classification. So those are the jobs I worked on. That's my background in terms of the shop. Meanwhile, in terms of the Local, I had been active on the committee that negotiated our first contract which was the office and engineering contract. I served on the executive board as a trustee and a member of the bargaining committee. And I've held appointed positions such as on the Fair Practices Committee and the Education Committee. Those are typical of what I did. I was appointed to the regional, Ford region women's committee when it was first set up, I think in 1947. I was one of the original members of that committee. But that, basically in terms of what I've done, that's where my background is.

INTERVIEWER: The Ford regional women's committee in 1947, who set that up actually?

HAENER: Well, it was a joint effort by the four regional directors and at that time we didn't have four regions, it was really two regions with co-directors in each region. Breaking that down into four regions took place, I don't know, many years later, at least ten years later, ten to twelve years later that that was broke down.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what the given purpose was then for having a women's committee?

HAENER: Yes. The purpose was really to have women get together to discuss their mutual problems and to plan program activities that would encourage women to be active in the labor movement and encourage them to participate on the total program of the union. You know, both within the union and on the community and national level. It was just broadly, basically the kinds of things that we hope that women's committees would do today at the local union level.

INTERVIEWER: You say that it was proposed by regional directors. Was there any one person who....whose idea it really was? Or did any one incident help make it happen?

HAENER: I, of course, from where I come from at that time, you know, it just happened. I know that the history behind the scenes indicates that it come about because there were people involved in the union that were pushing to have this done and felt that there ought to be this kind of activity. You know, I would have to check the record. I think that the Women's Department already existed as a bureau in the Fair Practices Department at that time and some of the impetus, I'm sure, come from that particular department.

INTERVIEWER: Was there any resistance there?

HAENER: Well, you know, I think the resistance would have come the same places it comes today. Some of the men didn't think it was necessary. Of course, there's always been some of the women who say the same thing. But by and large, it was really brought about because the need was there to do something about the problems of women. I'm sure that you're familiar with the conference that was held at the end of the Second World War which, I think, was the first National Conference of Women that the UAW ever held which come out with some very strong recommendations in terms of women maintaining seniority and not being shoved out of the shops and the need for full employment and equal pay and all that sort of thing. I really think the formation of this kind of committee was partly because of that. You see, it also, I think, was given some impetus by the fact that the Reuther caucus took control of the Executive Board in 1947. He was elected in 1946. In '47 he took control. There was this move on their part, you know, there were many women, I think, involved in supporting him. From out of my plant there was a sizeable group of women who were very active. So I think it kind of come from that combination of desire on the part of people working for the UAW to see it happen and also a movement from the women who were active and the need of the newly elected regional directors, mostly, to give some acknowledgement that they were concerned about this problem. And the committee did, of course, go on to hold conferences and plan activities and do various things working campaigns over the years. I can really especially remember that we were always very active in Ed Connor's campaign when he was on the Council of the city of Detroit.

INTERVIEWER: When you were appointed in 1952, who actually offered you the position and what was the title at the time?

HAENER: I was literally offered the position by Walter Reuther. He interyiewed me and strangely enough, I was offered the position in a kind of round about way because by that time, there had been some in-fighting in my local in terms of caucuses and you know, when caucuses get very strong at that level, they tend to split up, you know, people form other caucuses. So, that I was at odds with some of the people who I had formerly been very close with. It just so happened that at that point in time they were the more powerful group in the local and really pretty much had control of things. So this one evening when I had a call from one of the fellows at home asking me if I was interested in going to work for the International, I really thought he was calling to rub it in a little bit, to pull my leg, that he was just joking and I sort of joked at first with him and he then, you know, become very dead serious. It was John Burton. He said, "Look, Dorothy, I'm not really kidding you. I'm dead serious that this job <u>is</u> available. Before you fluff it off and before you joke this way, you really ought to check it a little bit." I still wasn't really convinced but the next day at work I decided to call my regional director who was at that time Ed Coty. I really didn't even have the nerve to say to him that I understood that the job was going to be offered to me. I called him and he must have known

HAENER: what was on my mind because I said to him, "I understand that the International is getting ready to give a staff job to someone in our local union." You know, without even any conversation he says, "Yes, that's right. And we're planning to offer it to you." You know, I was really flabbergasted to know then who I would be working for. He then told me that I would be working directly under Reuther's staff and that the offer was coming from there and that they wanted someone to work in the--what we called the office and technical department at that time--which is now call the TOP department [Technical, Office and Professional]. So that's how I did get the job. Doug Fraser, who was then Administrative Assistant to Walter, then did get in touch with me about it and said that it was a firm commitment and that we would have to make the plans. This was some time in the summertime. I had stopped going to school, you know, I told you that I was going back to school. And since I had started to go back I really planned to continue so I really had planned to enroll again that fall. So a few weeks passed by and I really didn't hear anymore and I finally decided to call. And I did call Doug and I said, "The reason that I'm calling is that I was planning to keep on going to school but, you know, if I do get this job and do start on it, I expect I'm going to have my hands full with that and I really want to know one way or another." Really, it was just, I think, a question of my saying that to him. Because he said, "Well, you know." He looked back on what he was doing and he said he can't do it right this week but like the following week could I come at such and such a time that Walter would like to talk to me before I go to work. And I came and they almost immediately then put me on the payroll, just like that. And I will say that in terms of working in that department, I think it was probably because it was a fairly new department when I first come to work here. Some of us were assigned in one spot and some of us in others because they didn't have the office space where we could all have our desks together. Eventually then we did have the office space in the basement here in Solidarity House. Then we moved across the street in what is now the Bank of the Commonwealth, that used to be our building over there. And then we did move all over before we....I was up on the fifth floor at the point--that's where we had our office space, on the fifth floor--at the point I transferred to the Women's Department. But, you know, they were told that they had to completely train me to do everything in that department, that there was a lot of technical work involved especially when you go on a hearing before the Board, and whether or not....who's acceptable to be in the unit and how you hold an election and everything. And they were very good on doing that. One area where I was not very happy with them is that they were not really too anxious to have me ever get involved in the whole servicing end of it. Though we didn't do a great deal of servicing anyway, but my credentials I felt were just as good as anyone else's in that department in terms of what I had done in my local union and having served on the negotiating committee. So for them to continue to have the kind of hang-up that it was all right for me to go out and organize but at the point that you really wouldn't be able to service a plant on the

HAENER: problems that it would be better for one of the men to do it. It was one area that I was always aware of and resented.

INTERVIEWER: Did they ever explain why?

HAENER: Well, you know, it really was so accepted in those days, it really was accepted. There wasn't any need for them to explain why. And of course, I understood myself the fight I had to have in my own local union to get to be put on the slate to run for the bargaining committee. I had to have a literal fight within the steering committee of my caucus on which I served, as well as an open fight in caucus. Now if the steering committee had recommended that my name be placed on the slate for the bargaining committee, there would not have been a problem. But there were members of the steering committee that insisted that I had to go to the open caucus. Of course, I won the fight in the open caucus. And this was of course part of the basis of some of our caucus split was that the chairman of our caucus quit at the point that the caucus supported me for the bargaining committee. You see, I had more trouble getting the endorsement of my caucus to run for the top negotiating committee than I did getting elected once I was endorsed, which you know, it gives you an idea of the animosity.... it was just not a spot for a woman. A woman could run as a Trustee, she could run as Recording Secretary, but she just had no right to be sitting in there when you were doing the top negotiating. And their rationale for how they justified this was ridiculous. First, they justified it on the basis that I was young and naive and that I really couldn't stand all that dirty language and so forth that took place. Of course, then when that didn't work, they used the reverse part in the election of really chopping me literally to pieces on the basis of how immoral I was, which was part of what you had to accept. And basically, our society has not changed that much on this kind of an issue.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about it at the time?

HAENER: Well, I was very unhappy. But I had gotten over that kind of a hang-up really before....I had run for Trustee obviously before I had run for Bargaining Committee because you have to sort of build up. When I did that as a member of the committee that negotiated the first office contract, there wasn't that much of it because I think it was a smaller group and the fighting over the position was not as strong as in these elections. But I had got involved in a situation when I was running for Trustee where I become very angry at some of the tactics they were using on them. I was able to get a hold of--it seems to me I've told this before, but if you say it's not in there, I'll take your word for it--I had got a hold of some documents that I felt very seriously I could use in a court of law to prove that, you know, they were illegally, literally chopping my whole record and making me out to be a person that I was not. Well, at that point in time, Nate [Nathan] Kaufman, who is now a judge here in Detroit,

HAENER: he had finished getting his law degree. But he really hadn't quite been able to get to that point where he was willing to quit his job--he was a skilled tradesman--to go to practice law because, you know, things were still pretty shaky, he wasn't sure he could do it. I felt free to go to him and ask him for advice, for free, because, obviously, I couldn't pay for it. And his advice to me when he saw everything I had, was that as far as he was concerned from a legal point of view, that I had had a good case but that before I went that route I ought to really sit down and seriously think what would I want to do in the union. Because if I went the route of trying to fight all those who were slandering me, I would just waste my energy. That if I really wanted to get involved in the union, I had to really make up my mind right now to just ignore that and do my thing. And he went on to say how that he was active....he was a vice-president in our union at the point he finally did quit and started practicing law. But, you know, it's not just the woman they do this to, they do it to the man. And it's not unheard of, you know, his wife was so used to getting calls at home saying that he's out sleeping with someone or that he's not at a meeting, he's out with girls. And he said you just have to figure out some way to deal with that and forget about it because you can't fight it. There's no way you can fight it. I think that was probably some of the best advice that I ever received because a lot of women who get active, even today, unless they understand that ahead of time, they're really not going to get very far because it can be really terrible. Of course, I know some women who wouldn't bother at all, maybe. But at that point in time, I was fairly young and I come from a fairly conservative farming community background where I knew almost everyone in my town and many of those people worked in that shop. So it really was a difficult thing for me to overcome.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get support from others to counter the attack?

HAENER: Yes, within my own organization I did get that kind of support. There was no way you could ever kill it all. It's a strange thing but years after that plant of mine folded up--and this is an interesting kind of thing that just shows how bad it was--I must have been three or four years after my plant folded up, a fellow who went to work and worked doing some government job of some sort, but meanwhile he had got religion. You know, he really got religion where he was convinced that he should go and apologize and make right all the wrongs he did. He came out to see me to tell me how viciously he had chopped me in terms of this kind of thing. Sometimes you would say to yourself as years went by, well, you had a tendency to build those things up, to elaborate, it happened to you once and it becomes a little bigger and bigger. But when a fellow comes back four years later to personally apologize for the way he had chopped you and encouraged other people to chop you, well, you know that it wasn't your imagination. But that's how it was. The point is that I think this point needs to be made and I think the other point that needs to be made, too, is that the kind of fulfillment you got from what you accomplished more than off-sets all that kind of pain and trouble you had as you went through it.

INTERVIEWER: Could you talk a little bit about what you were doing in that first position and why you did decide to move into the women's department?

HAENER: Well, I worked for nine years organizing office and technical workers and servicing them, although, as I pointed out, I didn't do all that much servicing.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you organize?

HAENER: Well, in various parts of the country. The first big drive I worked on was in Bridgeport, Connecticut, where we picked up almost one-thousand office and technical workers. It was considered a large group when you speak about office and technical employees. It was AVCO Corporation. There was an organizer in the East who was handling that drive and I was sent in to help him. I went in one time and flew back out after a couple of days. But the next time I went, I drove in and I stayed until the drive was completed.

INTERVIEWER: How long was that, about?

HAENER: Well, I think probably it was about three weeks. It might have been a little longer, but roughly, I would estimate it was three weeks or better. When I went in the first time, I went in because they thought they were going to have the election tied down and that I would be there for the meeting and then talk about what I could plan to do. But what happened is that the company managed to convince to postpone the date of the election. So when I went back the second time, they made the plans for me that I was just going to stay until it was over with. But it was an interesting drive in the sense that, number one, the workers were so fearful that you couldn't get them out to meetings. We made a few house calls and we did publicity--leafleting--and we put a newspaper together for the final day or so before the election. It was in that newspaper that I started using some of my ideas on the comparison of the income of women who work in an office with that of what are supposedly the lower jobs in the shops and how they still make much less money. And it was too, at this drive, in spite of all the invitations we had, of the difficulty of getting people out to meetings. This was not my strategy. I wasn't handling it. But the guy who put it together still went ahead and planned a big rally the night before the election. And I think he was pressured into sort of doing this by the concept other people in the region had of how it should be done and how the supervision from Detroit felt it should be done. And the director of my department, Bob Shebel, came in the day of that meeting to address the meeting that night. I drove into New York to the airport to pick him up and brought him back. To make a long story short, we set this meeting up with refreshments--liquor and sandwiches and stuff--and literally, out of a thousand people, we didn't have more than fifteen people show up. It was simply horrible! It was just terrible. And no one thought we would win that election. I stayed the following day for the handing out of

HAENER: the last leaflets, I think it must have been nine o'clock. I had packed everything and I had started driving home and I was really very low. It was my first big drive and I was sure we were going to lose. But we won that election by better than 2-1. It's really incredible but it really shows the amount of fear that existed in that group.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think promoted that kind of fear?

HAENER: They knew that they were being watched if they were active. We learned later that someone had been outside even the night of that meeting, casing who was coming in to go to the meeting. They were just that fearful.

INTERVIEWER: Had anyone tried organizing there before?

HAENER: Oh, yeah. They had tried and it had been difficult. And you see, even the maneuver the company pulled to postpone holding the election was to give them time to work on the employees a little longer before they got a chance to vote. That's always the maneuver. That's what makes it so difficult nowadays. If you go to a formal hearing where it has to be sent to Washington, you know you're going to wait between six months and a year for the court-ordered election to come back. And you see, this was a court-ordered election.

INTERVIEWER: These were mostly women?

HAENER: I would say it was about half and half. Because you have the technical and that has a tendency always to be men, the technical unit.

INTERVIEWER: Was that Avco? A-V- . . .?

HAENER: A-V-C-O, Avco Corporation. You know, it's a big national corporation. Well, that's the kind of work I did. For a few drives I worked mostly with somebody else on a drive but eventually after a while they started--each of us--the normal practice was for each of us to take a plant or an office and try to organize. Then, if we needed help--if it was in the metropolitan area, if we needed help with a leaflet or something like that, the whole department would get out and help and that's how we did operate. I think the first one that I did all by myself was with Chrysler Trenton Plant, at least that's the way I can remember it off the top of my head. And the first time around on that, Fred Johnson and I worked on it together and sadly, we lost that election by a very close vote. We were unhappy about it but the next time around, you know, we rehashed what we thought we had done right and what we had done wrong and we met with the committee because we knew we planned to go back again the next year. And the following year, when we started it up, Bob Shebel, who was my direct superior, said he wanted me to handle that by myself. I did and that time around, I didn't do a lot of leafleting. I

HAENER: sat with my committee and met with them and listened to what they had to say. It really has taught me this: on any organizing drive that I go in on, that I handled after that by myself, I really paid very close attention to what that organizing committee told me because they work in that office, they know the problems they have and you really shouldn't go contrary to what they suggest unless you have some absolutely essential reasons why. Anyway, really, the thing is that from my own department I did get flack on the way I was handling this drive because, you know, the whole concept of not handing out a lot of leaflets, not holding a lot of meetings was really contrary to what they had planned to do. But we did go ahead and do it that way and we won the election. I put together a very good newspaper that we handed out the last day before the election. Then we did put some letters together that we sent directly to the homes because, you know, we figured that way not only....the whole family reads it, while this way if you hand it out at the plant gate, number one, some of them are under pressures to throw it in the first waste basket they come to. But that election, I was really pleased that I won that because it was my first one on my own. Then as soon as I was finished with that and I left to go to Birmingham, Alabama because at Hays Aircraft.... We had a big drive going on there at Hays Aircraft that went on for months in which almost all the staff was assigned at one time or another. I think I was down there for two or three months. I know I came home in January, it was the latter part of January, for my father's funeral. He had passed away and I was home for about ten days and then I went back. But that election we just lost. It was a real tragedy because people in that operation were blackballed and you know you will hear that that doesn't happen any more since the early days of organizing. But they were literally blackballed and Birmingham, Alabama is far enough south that when you're blackballed down there you're really in trouble.

INTERVIEWER: What year was that in?

HAENER: It was maybe '55 or '56. Comparatively early. You see, for nine years I worked in that department. What happened in Hays Aircraft was that the shop was negotiating its first....its contract. It had negotiated a contract and was in the process of negotiating a new one. So, at the point that they did finish the negotiations, the company automatically passed on all this increase to the office employees and that really sort of done us in. We really spent a lot of time and effort and money on that drive. It was sad to lose it but we sure lost it.

INTERVIEWER: Did any of the newer ways of organizing that you were using get filtered back to change ideas?

HAENER: Well, yes. I think some of them did. Like you know, for instance, one of the things we picked up there--I was sent down there specifically to make house calls on women and to try to reach the women to do things with the women--one of the things I learned

HAENER: very quickly--if the men learned this, they really weren't making any great effort to get it implemented--was that in that part of the South, which is pretty much true today, you just don't send a Yankee down there to talk to those people. You could send....like I could go down there and hopefully make contact with a couple of people who I could get educated enough to take the message, but the whole question of doing house calls and doing that bit in that area was just a terrible....it was hopeless. You know, it was just not worth even trying to do. It was foolish to spend the money and the time and the effort. And that, I think, we picked up and used wherever we went into southern areas from then on out. This was true: the men had this experience as well as the women with that resistance on the part of the southern people. You know, the one whole concept of union is contrary to what they believe in but our whole method, the way we talk, everything, our whole approach is different and we just turned them off.

INTERVIEWER: So you worked closely with the organizing committee and had some of those people do outside organizing?

HAENER: Yes, which is very much different from the kind of drive that we put on in the Detroit area. We organized the missile plant, but that was an enormous operation because it was such a large office. On that we made house calls all the time. It was an accepted approach that worked. We won that election. At least we won the election having lost it one time around back in one unit. But there again, this whole concept--and I'm probably being a heretic to my race by saying it--but as the years went by, too, we also started to accept the fact that it wasn't necessarily the best thing in the world to always have a woman call on a woman, a man call on a man. Outside of the fact that once in a while, in a family situation, you might have resentment or someone thinking that there's something wrong with this approach that often I could convince a man just as easily as I could a woman. I really think that we sort of started to accept that kind of concept. I think that was a sort of mutual decision that we arrived at. But the one thing that we never changed--and I have not changed even to this day, and I don't do that much organizing--that is if you do try to call a meeting of the workers and organize a drive, that at some point in time you really should make an effort to call a meeting that is going to be just for the women. Because there's a tendency on the part of women, especially the groups that we tend to be dealing with, that they're reluctant to come out to a meeting where there's not going to be anyone they know, where there may be only just men and they're going to feel out of place. And on that score, you know, I do think that the calling of a meeting just for the women in an organizing drive is really important to have a chance to get together and to meet. The other thing is, especially if they're younger women, there's still a tendency in our society for the parents to not be too happy about them going to a meeting where there's only going to be men, especially if they're fairly young. So, I do think it pays to try to have the meeting in that way.

INTERVIEWER: Are there any other places that you were organizing during those years that were particularly interesting or important?

HAENER: Interesting or important....I worked on a drive in Milwaukee--A.L. Smith Company--which was a fairly large group of both office and shop employees that had an independent union and the UAW was trying to get them within our organization. Now they were supposedly, of course, already organized. There were three or four other international unions that had the same thing in mind and [laughs] to make a long story short, that consumed a long period of my time for a while. I supposedly worked only with the office crew, but there was a tendency for all of us to cut across lines as our help was needed. We did eventually win that election. The UAW did win that election and we do represent that plant. It was a long, complicated, drawn out thing. You know, it didn't force us to go to an election; what it did was make us go to an election where the people could decide which union they wanted to represent them, not in the sense of a National Labor Relations Board ordered election, but in the procedure that they had outlined. And the funny thing is we really tried desperately to get one of our big wheels to come in and address that meeting and speak before they got to vote. For one reason or another, we just couldn't do it because they weren't available and that the meeting was set up at a time when other organizations--I forget which ones they were now--but some of them sent in their big wheels to speak to the group on why they should choose their international union. And in spite of all that, we did win the election. We were very pleased about that. You know, it sort of indicated to us that, number one, we had been doing a job of contacting the people personally and number two, that when you made the comparison between what our union negotiated in contracts and what some of the others did, you know, there was no questioning in the minds of the people that we could document it. Really it's what carried the vote for us, because obviously, we didn't have the big wheels there speaking. You know, it's hard for me to remember. The one drive that stands out in my mind that I worked on--well, there are a couple of them--I worked on one in Grand Rapids, which I lost. I shouldn't say, "I lost", because I ended up not handling it all the time. You asked me why I moved out of that department, it's part of one of the reasons why I moved out. You see, we had always been a department by ourselves--the Office and Technical Department--and we did organizing and servicing. And then there was an organizing department that was organizing the shops and sometimes we worked with each other when we needed to but we were not considered one department. But what happened somewhere along the line, about 1960, they decided to put all of organizing together and to take it away from the vice-president who had it at that time--it's part of the story, but not important--and to assign a director of all that, I think working under the president's office, but I'd have to go back and check my notes because I'm not sure. The point is that, the understanding was that the organizer would be assigned in the region where he was based and would work from that region and through that regional director and for purposes of expense statements and so forth and

HAENER: so on. It was essential that you have this kind of a base to work through. Well, what happened with us--with me, for instance I'll use myself as an example--is that you couldn't do it. Sometimes I would be working in this region, but if they happened to have a problem in some other region and they'd want me to come in for a day or two to help then I'd go in that other region, you know, there was no way I could fill out a two-week expense statement or justify my existence under that situation which meant that I ended up working directly for the head of the department, who was at that time Brendan Sexton. Well, you know, that was not a serious problem for me and I managed to work that way except that questions would continue to be raised about it because I was sort of out in limbo. It was not a good way to be functioning and I wasn't very happy about it. It was during that period, for instance, I had this drive up in Grand Rapids that I was handling and was assigned to handle. Although it was a small plant, it was complicated. We had to go to a formal hearing and I was there through the formal hearing and then, you know, you have this period of waiting for a decision. Meanwhile, during that period, I got sent into Milwaukee....I handled that entirely by myself with practically no assistance and under great odds, I won it. As an indication of how difficult it was, that was the largest group of people that we picked up in an office organizing drive during that two year period from that convention until the next. It was held right after that convention. And the next one, when we did the report for the next convention two years later, that group was the biggest group we picked up because things were so terribly rough during those years to organize.

INTERVIEWER: That's a real accomplishment.

HAENER: Yes, it really was. And you see, this brings me to one thing I said earlier. You know, I'm going to have a chance to go over some of this stuff and say whether I want to leave it in or throw it out.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

HAENER: You know, the thing that really bothered me about this--I do know because I had heard it even before my election was over with--that at the convention, John Allard from California, who was organizing in California in one of the big aerospace plants--and there was a large office and technical workers group--had asked to have me to come out there and help on that drive. And I knew that was in the works. So then when I won this election and I come back to Detroit, of course, very shortly, they told me that I should plan to go to California. I was in California, I think, for about five weeks. But the thing is that at the same time, almost, the request had also come in to have someone assigned from our department to negotiate on the contract. And you know, that was the one time when I really felt terribly hurt that I was not sent. Instead I was sent to California. Someone else who had not been involved at all in the drive was sent in to negotiate the contract. You know, it really bothered me. I didn't make a fuss about it. I

HAENER: guess I was just grateful to be working because it was a period when so many people were unemployed. But I didn't think it was fair.

INTERVIEWER: Did you consider fighting it?

HAENER: How would I fight it? You know, I think if maybe I had been working for Walter Reuther, yes, my attitude might have been a little different. But you see, during that period of time, our department had been moved under the jurisdiction of Norman Matthews. No, I don't really think I did think of it. I honestly didn't. But I do remember that I wasn't happy about it.

INTERVIEWER: How did you learn organizing? Is there one person or people in particular that trained you? Was there any model?

HAENER: I don't think so. You know, I think that you have to understand that the whole concept of the department that I was in. With the exception of Bob Shebel, the other two individuals in that department had only been on the staff not quite a year when I come along, so that we sort of learned from each other. And actually, my experience in time in the labor movement had been longer than some of them. Because the one fellow who had worked at the Chrysler-Mopar Plant, he helped in that organizing drive, he become active in it, he was very, very able in terms of putting things together and understanding. But he was put on the staff, I think, within maybe six months of that plant being organized. So on that basis, no one even thought of teaching us how to do it. They assumed that we would come with the skills. They recognized they would have to teach us procedures when you go before the board, and that the information you had to have in order to know that you were complying with the law, like how many cards you needed signed and what you could and couldn't do. But no one ever sat down and really taught us. I think that they expected that having got myself elected in the kind of plant I come from and having worked on campaigns and negotiating contracts that I would just know how to do it. It's my strong feeling that one of the things that we should have done in those days that would have been most helpful to me--although many staff people would feel threatened by it--was to send us to school and really teach us some of the tools we ought to have; like how to really express ourselves in writing without having to work and study over it as I still do to this day; how to really concisely put together reports and that kind of thing which you really had to acquire yourself over a period of time. And it isn't very easy to do it that way. On the other hand, I think I have to point out that at one point in time, they did try to set up a program where over a period of time everyone on the staff would go to school. And there was really strong resistance. The staff felt very threatened by it.

INTERVIEWER: So then you shared different methods of organizing. It was on a more casual basis.

HAENER: Yes. Because in the office we had in this building at first, we all sat together with the exception of Shebel--he had a little partition separating him. Then in the second office we had, we all sat together in the same room, so that we did share experiences. There was no way we could not share experiences. We learned from each other. When we worked together, especially on a big drive, we would get together and compare notes on what we thought was a good approach and what we thought was not. But we would keep a record, for instance, like if I made house calls, I would keep a record of who I called on, what I felt their reactions were--were they for it or against it? Obviously if they signed a card, it usually indicated they would support it. But, when I look back, no, there was no one who really taught us at all; I learned what I learned from the people I worked with. The organizer from the East Coast, Ed Wilms, he was a very able individual. My boss, for instance, felt terribly threatened by him because he obviously was very qualified.

INTERVIEWER: One more question about organizing. Did you use the communities much and the community services when you were in a particular place, churches and Y's? Did you work much with any other outside support in any of the places that you organized?

HAENER: In this area of organizing, very little. When I went in to California on that drive, because there were so many Catholics apparently in that particular plant, John Allard wanted me to try to do that sort of thing. But I wasn't very successful in doing it and I am a Catholic. And you know, I think the thing I learned early on was that the social philosophy of the Catholic Church or any church is one thing to be preached within a congregation, but it's quite another thing to apply it literally and that in most cases, people are absolutely not going to respond on that basis. And there have been cases where individuals who have been assigned organizing part-time who went around trying to do that, got themselves in serious trouble because people resent it. They resent it having their religious convictions really tied into the work place and questioned. And it had a tendency to boomerang. See, I know that there has been success, some success, at least I think there has, for instance in the Farah boycott, making that kind of effort. But you have to do it very carefully and you have to do it not too specifically on an individual-to-individual basis because people can get very angry if you do that.

INTERVIEWER: You said that you were disappointed in not being able to negotiate the contract for the Electric Storage Battery. Do you feel at all as though going to California was sort of a reward for your success with the Electric Storage or that they were trying to present it as sort of a reward?

HAENER: No. I didn't feel that way because, you see, I got the message of the possibility of going to California before I actually won the election. I sort of knew that that was in the works. But I also knew that it could've been postponed, and that there were other people that could've been sent. Although I was the only woman

HAENER: on the staff at that time, and for a long time, organizing this area. As a matter of fact, there's only one woman on the staff to my knowledge, right now in the UAW on the TOP organizing department. So I didn't particularly feel that way, but I did feel resentment and I hardly mentioned to anyone about not being even considered to go in there and try to negotiate the contract.

INTERVIEWER: Have you any idea how or why that hierarchy developed as the large negotiations being male terrain?

HAENER: I've no idea, except that it's a fact of life. I think it's a fact of life until just recently in all the big automobile companies that there's been no woman on either side of the table in top level negotiations. That has started to break down at the lower levels, but it is a matter of record that that situation did exist.

INTERVIEWER: I'd like to ask you if in the organizing work that you did, especially with the women, were there any issues that came out at the time that you were talking with them--issues that you later worked on when you moved to the women's department--any concerns about work, . . .

HAENER: Well, the one issue, of course, that women were concerned about was the whole issue of promotion to higher paying jobs. In the plants where they were organized, they were covered by language that provided that seniority should prevail. If two people were eligible to do a job, then seniority ought to prevail. And also they were able, in later years, to get the automatic progression within the department so that if, say, you were on Grade Three in the department and a Grade Four job opened up, the assumption was that you would automatically move into that job. Say it was the Accounting Department, that the skills you had learned in Grade Three would automatically qualify you for Grade Four and those in Grade Four would qualify you for Grade Five. The one area that I continued to work on after I left the Office and Technical Department and really it was an area that I had to be careful of how I worked on it even when I was in that department. Because here again, if you impressed upon the women in an organizing drive that if they were members of the union, they could move into higher paying jobs, you had to weigh the number of women's votes you were going to get against how many men's votes you were going to lose. You know, you really had to become an individual more concerned about winning the election than convincing people of the principle. Because it's basically what you have to do. We used to be, before the end of a big drive, the one in California we did this that I was out there on, we had Norm Matthews come in and speak to the group. We would ask them ahead of time not to deal with devisive issues but some of them had this typical speech that they would give, that they automatically turned on when they started to speak. And you know the sad thing is that when you're in an organizing drive, most of these people, you don't know whether they're of your political philosophy or not, so you want to stay away from politics. If you're in an office, especially at that

HAENER: point in time, about the mid-1950's, there were practically no black people and so this again was not an issue that would win votes. The point is that we hadn't even educated all our membership yet. How can you try to educate the unorganized? What we were trying to do was win an election. But when you got someone in from a top level in the UAW, you know, you had to over and over again impress this upon them because they could lose an election for you if they didn't understand the concerns of the group. So that is the problem that you're up against. In the office I did use this argument and we carried it in our literature. I, at one time, had wanted to do up a leaflet just addressing myself to that whole issue, but having considered all the pros and cons, I really didn't follow through with it. The one thing that I can remember after I moved in our department was that the women were having difficulty moving into the higher level jobs and they were qualified. Now, it was when we were going through that period in the shop where the companies were using the overtime hours and the weight lifting and so forth to stop women from getting the better jobs. But none of those arguments applied in the office. So they'd say, well, especially if you're talking about a follow-up job, when it's dependent on the one who's doing the follow-up on this particular job--and that was a Grade Eight job and that's a very high paying job in Chrysler--that they really have to call a supplier company, really get very nasty about why the stuff isn't being delivered and they're likely to get chewed out. And you know, a woman couldn't tolerate that. She'd just break down in tears and fold up. All that sort of stuff they had to overcome. They were able finally to get a few women moved into those better paying jobs, but then what happened is the language on promotions and seniority was the same in all contracts--Engineering, Office and Production--it was not very strong language. And the Engineering group decided to take a case to arbitration because the company had maintained from the beginning that that language only applied if they promoted within the unit; it did not stop them from hiring outside--and from time to time they did this, not very often, but enough to make people angry. Well, the Engineering group took that language to arbitration and they lost the case which really literally meant at that point in time that whenever the company didn't want to promote by seniority in the unit, they'd just go outside and bring somebody in. Then what happened is they started this bit of, let's say that there were two men available, they would put the senior man on and the men started saying to the women, "Well, look, if you start raising a fuss, you're just going to jeopardize our chance of getting it and the company will just go outside." Well, the women listened to this for a while but they were kind of getting sick and tired of it. So we had a meeting down here at Solidarity House when Region 1-B still had their office here--they used to have their office in this part and they've now moved out. Ken Morris, who was the Administrative Assistant, met with me and this group of women and there was a representative of the local union there. We talked about all the problems involved. And of course, the one basic problem involved was that that language in the contract should have been cleaned up at negotiations, but enough pressure had not been built up to do it.

HAENER: But after we talked it over for a long time, we finally come to the conclusion that the women were going to start filing grievances, and that if the jobs were not going to be filled by women, then they'd all have to be filled by somebody outside the unit. And at the point that started to happen, they thought there'd be enough of an uproar that something would be changed. And you know, that strategy did work, and the women did start moving into higher paying jobs, and I was pleased about that. The other problem they had was really part of what you still run into with women who work in this situation who have become conditioned to not ever rocking the boat. I think you have to take a look at how you rock the boat. You don't want to spill yourself out if you can avoid it, you know, but sometimes you have to rock the boat. But what happened is that the point where the women really got this action going and they filed their grievances, then women who had been setting there saying, "You shouldn't be doing this to the men, you aren't going to want that job when you get it," all this kind of thing, they suddenly decided, because they had more seniority, that they wanted the job now. What was done--and I'm not sure it would be legal today under the laws--but what was done was that the position was taken that the woman who filed a grievance, who put her name on, who was willing to stick her neck out, was the one that got the job. If another job opened up--and some of these other women now reached a point where they felt that they were entitled to it--they would sign their name to a grievance. And I thought that was legitimate. I really think that was more than fair because some of the women who were in that early part of the fight, they really took an awful lot of guff from both sides as well as some of their own female friends working with them. But that was one incident that I was involved in that, you know, you can look back and see there were a few victories.

INTERVIEWER: If we can move to the point of being involved in the Women's Department, what was your title right at the beginning in '52?

HAENER: I have always been an International Representative.

INTERVIEWER: Could you tell a little bit of what your official duties were in the Women's Department right at the beginning?

HAENER: Yes. I think that I should do a little bit to explain that I always had a relationship with the Women's Department. For instance, Caroline Davis, who was the Director of the Women's Department, was a very good friend of mine and I built up a closer relationship as a member of the Regional Women's Committee until I come on the staff. And from time to time, on some of the conferences or different programs that she was involved in, you know, I would participate in the programs, I would participate in the Women's conference, so that I did continue to keep some contact with what was going on. During the elections in which she would be involved--I'm talking now about the Presidential elections--for instance, the 1960 Presidential election, like maybe a month or five weeks before that election I was very involved in the whole effort to get participation in my district, which was the 16th, in setting up

HAENER: meetings at the home level, you know. That campaign, there was much effort to have speakers available. I was listed as a speaker and I also was doing coordination in the 16th to try to get other women to become involved in the political process and in getting people to be active. So that, since she was working closely on that, too, you know, over the years, I really had some contact with what the Women's Department was doing so I had that kind of relationship.

INTERVIEWER: What did you think of the Women's Department as a whole before you were involved in it, as to how successful they were?

HAENER: Well, you know, the years before I come into it were years in which there were changes made, like for instance, although they had tried to get women's committees set up at the local union level, you know, that was not made a part of a Convention resolution until shortly before I moved into the Department....let's see, I come in in 1962, I think, 1961 or 1962. And you know, it was during those periods that things were done to try to get women more active. Of course, during those years, it was the real problem as we went through the recession of trying to move women out of plants--you know, just arbitrarily get rid of them because they couldn't do the work whether they would justify it or not--and I was aware of what Caroline was doing in terms of trying to stop some of this stuff. And so my opinion of what the Women's Department was doing was that it was really a very needed operation and that it had to be done. The reason, of course, I hadn't moved before is that I really feel strongly then--and I still do today--that the whole unorganized office group in this country is one of the shameful examples of where the labor movement hasn't done its job. It's very sad, but that's the way it is. But I had always had a good opinion of what the Women's Department was trying to do and I don't mind saying that I had the opportunity to move out of that department on several occasions but I stayed where I'm at because I thought that what we were doing needed to be done. I don't mind saying either--and I think that most people would agree with you in the UAW who look at it objectively--that speaking out as I have on women's issues has not helped me in the UAW. It's really made life difficult for me in many cases. But it's been worth it to me. I really feel very strongly that if there had not been a few people like us around doing the kinds of things that we have done, that much of what we have seen happen in the Women's Movement might not well have happened. I was among the ten or eleven people who sat in a hotel room with Betty Friedan and put together the concept of NOW and if you've read her book, you would know that that night when that happened--you know, we had had lunch with her, Caroline and I that day--and that evening when we met, we had pretty well put our concepts together when we were disrupted by the group that felt this was a party where we're just going to have fun and drinks. The Dean from the college in Madison talked to us like we were a bunch of campus students, saying, "Do you think we really need another women's organization?" I think if some of us had not been around, that might have well been the end of it at least for that point in time, but at that point in

HAENER: time, I really had very strong convictions and have had for almost a year that we needed that kind of an organization.

INTERVIEWER: For more than a year....was there something in particular that started you . . .?

HAENER: Well, sure. Because we all look at things differently but just the history of the 1964 Civil Rights Law and the effort to enact that legislation in the past, what went on behind the scenes in terms of what people said they were for and what they were for on the basis of putting sex in that law, you see, it was the whole argument in the beginning that you had to get it for black people first and that if you ask for it for women also, you weaken the effort and would destroy it. It's a part of what the Congressman from the South expected to do when he inserted the word sex was to destroy it. Now, Dollie Lowther Robinson was an attorney from New York, worked for the Women's Bureau during part of this time and we had her in to speak to a conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Region Ten. And after the conference was over, her and the staff of the Women's Department--we were very small--got together, and I know that we had drinks or coffee and food, but we hashed over what was going on. And she was the one that first gave me the concept--and she was a black woman. "What we need," she said, "was a NAACP for women." Because she talked of the Women's Bureau saying one thing and then instructing her to go up on the Hill and talk to the congressmen about doing the other thing. And that's the way it was behind the scenes all the time. And you just knew that nothing was going to happen unless you had a pressure group that was going to be pressuring. You know, it's incredible when I look back on it now, but, the year of the White House Conference on Equal Employment Opportunity--which was sort of commemorating the fact that the 1964 Civil Rights Law had been enacted and was going to be going into effect--they had this big meeting in Washington. They invited Caroline to speak. And you know, Caroline was not terribly well at that time and she knew it was going to require a lot of effort, but she agreed to go ahead and do it and she accepted. She made clear that she is going to address the whole area of the so-called State Protective Laws and the relationship to Title VII. And the last ten days before that conference, there was enormous pressure on her not to show up, literally!

INTERVIEWER: By whom?

HAENER: Mary Keyserly, who was then the head of the Women's Department under a Democratic Administration, you know, that whole hierarchy was absolutely opposed to having the 1964 Civil Rights Law on the basis of sex enforced. Mary Keyserly was just absolutely deaf on anyone who suggested that the State Protective Laws didn't protect, that they did discriminate sometimes. And this was in spite of the fact that the documentation was then being made. You know that I think you really have to understand that, or you don't understand any of this that went on behind the scenes and why it was so difficult to get that kind of an organization off the ground. Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women which I think

HAENER: was the fore-runner of the Women's Movement....we were very unhappy with that report in terms of what it did: number one, it didn't address the whole question of the State Protective laws except to say that a larger study ought to maybe be done in this area, and of course, it refused to take a position of saying that the President should include the word "sex" in his executive order which was the only federal regulation providing equal employment opportunity at that time. And of course, Caroline was the only member of that Commission to issue the minority report which, considering how much we thought of Kennedy, it was not very easy for us to do. But she did it and let's see, I come into the Department in '61, so it was in that period I had worked in the Kennedy election and I knew what was going on. You know, when I look back and you ask me what prompted me, I expect it was because I understood some of these things were going on and I wanted to be part of it. I have told people that I sat in on some of those meetings for Caroline because she was a member of the Committtee on Private Employment of Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women. And when we would argue this whole question on the State Laws and, of course, including the word "sex", what the Women's Bureau wanted was an order that was going to be mandatory and that would be administered by the Women's Bureau and would really have the clout of being able to enforce the corporations to do anything by withdrawing contracts. But it was really a very close kind of thing in terms of the control. And you know, to them, like I would sit in a meeting with maybe eight, ten people and I would be the only one there raising these kinds of issues. And it would be a sort of a fun thing where they would just kind of brush you off. I remember coming back one time when I was literally, physically so ill, really, I was so angry and so ill, that I just absolutely heaved everything. And it wasn't because....you know, I know when I've been out drinking or carousing or something. It wasn't. It was just that I was absolutely so physically ill and angry. But that's how it was. But on that White House conference then on Equal Employment Opportunity, the last thing they did behind the scenes was they wouldn't let Caroline give her entire text, that they were not all going to make speeches, they were going to act as a panel and respond to questions. But you know the interesting thing is that that session, they had to move that session to a larger room because there were so many people who wanted to come. The first meeting--you know, we rotated--she did the same thing over four times in four workshops. And towards the end, Richard Graham, who really was not completely sympathetic but I think he thought all of it should be exposed, he would keep giving her more time to give her pitch--the pitch we had prepared for her on the Protective Laws and on the hours of work, the overtime, and the relationship that the law should have to those laws. You know, basically, the guidelines that the EEOC eventually adopted--the first ones they adopted were very weak--but the ones we eventually adopted, they literally took the language that she almost had put together. I think would not have happened if, number one, our department had not existed, if Walter Reuther had not been around, and if there had not been some other people in there to help her. Because one of the crucial

HAENER: things that happened and that made that decision on whether or not those laws would be overturned by Title VII was the position that the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights takes. Now the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights is the national organization, and no civil rights legislation has passed in this country without their endorsement. And when they take a position on something, it's very difficult to get a federal agency that deals in Equal Employment Opportunity to oppose it. The thing that's very good about it, though, is that the larger groups that belong to it can simply not have a vote come up on something by saying that they're going to be opposed to it because the Leadership Conference doesn't like that kind of record either. So when the Leadership Conference was prepared to go on record urging the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to issue guidelines saying that on no basis could the federal law ever supercede any of the so-called State Protective Laws, we heard that was coming up and we knew who the opposition was, like the National Council of Negro Women, the National Council of Jewish Women, the National Council of Catholic Women, the AFL-CIO. At that point in time, I think we were the only ones that were opposed to taking that position and when Caroline got a hold of our attorney in Washington, who was a member of that Leadership Conference and who would speak for us; to tell him what position [laughs] we wanted him to take he wouldn't believe her. She absolutely had to get Walter Reuther to send a letter to that man--and he was really furious--that this was officially our position. Now, you know, this is in spite of the fact that by that time our convention resolutions had started to indicate that we were questioning all the State Protective Laws and in spite of the fact that we had come out in favor of Equal Employment Opportunity and so forth and so on. She had Irv Bluestone help her in putting that letter together that went to him to say very clearly, "This is our position". And of course, as a result, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights didn't take a position one way or the other. And really, it made a helluva lot of difference. Some of this somebody ought to write sometime because it's all sort of getting lost. It was a very, very crucial time to live through during that period. When the EEOC finally come out with the guidelines saying that the federal....in those cases where it could clearly be demonstrated that the State Laws were discriminating that the Federal law superceded. To us, it seemed like such a reasonable request. All we were doing was asking them, "Please take a position saying that you will let an investigation be made of what the State Laws are doing. And if they really are discriminating, then the Federal law ought to supercede it." Of course, nowadays, it's so accepted. It was just terrible in those days, really. When the hearings were held by the EEOC in '67 or '68--you know, open hearings on this so-called State Protective Law--Steve Slauston testified for us, indicating that our position was that the Federal law should supercede and gave the reasons why; NOW was down there testifying against the so-called Protective Law; Martha Griffiths openly testifying; there was a representative from the Meat Packers Union who took a position of saying that, in some instances, the law should be superceded. But by and large, everybody else either sent in a written testimony which they didn't

HAENER: want to come and give publicly, urging the Commission not to overrule the State Protective Laws, or they openly testified that you should retain the State Protective Laws. And the whole crux of whether those laws got enforced at that point in time was on that issue. But when you think of all the years that women in this country, from the end of the Second World War on, suffered and were forced out of jobs and saw a job paying five bucks an hour taken away from them while they could struggle in a state like Ohio serving hash and lifting one of those great big enormous trays and making very little money doing it.

INTERVIEWER: How did you deal with the fact that some of the unions were against rescinding the protective legislation?

HAENER: Oh! Well, they all were leery, you know, until the AFL-CIO went on record for supporting the Equal Rights Amendment. Basically, by and large, most of them didn't change their position. What happened is, once the EEOC issued the guidelines and once there were some of the cases won in the court, it just became a matter of time before by attrition . . .

INTERVIEWER: Was there any discussion that was going on from people in the UAW to people, women in other unions trying to change their positions, were there any meetings or . . .?

HAENER: Well, you know, we've been out of the AFL-CIO for quite a long time and the only discussions we had was when Libby Koontz was director of the Women's Bureau. She initiated discussions by contacting various international unions and asking people to come to a meeting. She was able to get representatives, some of them not coming officially, but coming on their own and she started having like once a month lunch hour meetings where we could either get something from the cafeteria there or bring a sandwich. We'd have a meeting that would run for a couple of hours at which we would talk about common problems we had in the labor movement. And I really feel that her initiating this kind of exchange had a lot to do with the fact a number of the international unions, quite a number of them, before the AFL-CIO finally changed its position, nationally went on record supporting the Equal Rights Amendment. I think if we had not had that kind of interchange, that would not have happened so soon.

INTERVIEWER: Was there a representative of every international?

HAENER: No. There wasn't. But there was a representative from the IUE, from the Machinists', Teamsters', from the Clothing Workers', and so forth. Obviously, in many of the craft unions, until very recently, there were no women and not much was going to happen there. We had some interaction with the IUE early on because they were very early on involved in this fight to do away with the State Protective Laws. But you know, it was really during a period of time when they were still opposed to Equal Rights Amendment. And those issues become very confused as you got into them because there are a lot of people today who really don't understand that the fight

HAENER: about the Equal Rights Amendment and what it would do to the State Protective Laws is completely nil in view of what Title VII has done. I don't know whether it's because they are so unaware of the score that they don't really know or whether they do it deliberately. But they do continue to act as though the Equal Rights Amendment would erase the so-called State Protective Labor Laws for women.

INTERVIEWER: Did the UAW leadership react in any particular way when Caroline [Davis] raised these issues and was going against the grain of the majority?

HAENER: Well, the leadership has never been terribly happy with having these concepts implemented, especially when it hits them personally. I really think that's basically true of all society. I don't know if there's an answer to that problem, I don't know what it is, I wish someone would tell me. Caroline did have problems because she tried to push some of these things through. When she pushed things in a way where, of course, the UAW got publicity because you're far out in front and so forth and liberal, you know, they liked that, but when this really started hitting close to home, they tended not to be all that happy with it. You know, it's hard to evaluate it because there was really a reluctance, I think, on the part of regions always, to have us come in and get involved in what they called "the women's problem" because they really felt that we tended to incite people to....[laughs]....you know, they really do! And of course, that, I don't think, is completely changed. Still to this day, there is a reluctance. You know, we have a complicated procedure that you go through before you get outside help which makes sense if you're in a local union, but the point is, there is that resistance and I think that there always will be. I think that's one of the reasons why you need an outside agency. And I do think that some of the court cases that were won, that were used later on to put us in a position to be able to say that if you're doing this and that, so you are liable, and one of these days it's going to cost you money and you're going to be very sorry, that this has really helped. One of the first cases of that kind was one that was settled in the Fifth Circuit in Chicago which involved the Loretta Weeks vs Colgate-Palmolive and it's not even a UAW plant. What's so important about that case is the company tried to enjoin the union also so that if there were any costs, the union would also have to pay. And the judge in his final decision took note of the fact that the company had tried to enjoin the union and, of course, that he had not allowed the company to do this. And then he went on to say that part of the reason for not doing this is that the women had never filed a complaint against the union. And it made it very clear that if they had filed a complaint....So our legal department reprinted that decision in great quantities and we sent copies with a covering letter from him to all our local unions and to our staff because this does have an impact. Then there were some cases where locals were enjoined and did have to pay money. So the Steel Workers, for instance, they had to pay a sizeable sum of money. Then, now that, of course, people

HAENER: don't like to hear this, but if for instance, if you go into a summer school--like we have summer schools in every region--and you have a chance to make a general pitch in this area and you can point out to the local union officers that they had better take a look at what's happening in their plants because one of these days, they are likely to be charged.
....skilled trades department and at the representative from the Chrysler Skilled Trades Department and a number of officials from the Chrysler Corporation--one of them who I guess is a pretty high level individual. Before I went to convention, we had a luncheon meeting to discuss how we could recruit women for the apprenticeship trades and the kinds of things we need to do and the reasons why the women are not applying for those jobs. And then after this meeting there was a quite lengthy discussion in which we all aired our views. I have strong feelings that the reason they don't apply, of course, is they've been turned off so completely and so conditioned to believe that they'll never be accepted and that things will be so rough for them if they do try, but they just aren't doing it. So we were given the assignment of meeting and drawing a proposal on how we can implement it. And you know, part of our discussion was to, number one, call a meeting of the representatives from the local unions involved, which is the Greater Metropolitan Area, with a couple of women representatives there either from a women's committee or who were active in a local, and then the apprenticeship coordinator from the local union, the local union president, or chairman of the bargaining committee, and the apprenticeship coordinator from the company as well as the plant manager and someone from personnel. And to talk to them about this recruiting drive for women in the apprenticeship trades is going to start and you know, what needs to be done to make it successful and to convince the women there that, yes, these jobs really are going to open up and that they should go back and carry the message. Then to plan to have a meeting also at each local union level with as many women as we can get together and some of the leadership of the plant from both the union and the company and we're hopeful that this is going to do some results. But you know, it's really a long time. I've lived in this union [laughs] for twenty-five years since September and it's the first time I'm ever participating in this kind of effort. And I really feel that if it does happen, it's happening really because of the pressure of the 1964 Civil Rights Law and the fact that "sex" was included in the Executive Order on government contracts, and that these corporations have been told, "You've got to show us some affirmative action or else you're going to be in trouble!" And you know, if it happens, that's why it happened. So, you know, you can really sit here and say, "Well, sure, I've taken a lot of guff and it's been rough at times and people haven't liked me, but it's bringing results." Right?

INTERVIEWER: Right! It's exciting!

HAENER: <u>If</u> it happens! And you know what's pleasing to me is the woman who I'm working with is one who....you know, she's very dedicated, too, in terms of what she's trying to do and she knows the handicap she's had. (pause in tape)

INTERVIEWER: I'd like to ask some overall questions. If you could think about one part of all of your active labor work in your entire life, what was the most exciting part of it, would you say?

HAENER: You know, it's really very difficult to pick out what the most exciting....this last year for me has been exciting in the number of things I've done that I've never done before. For instance, I've for the first time in my life served on the Democratic Platform Committee and I was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention and I got to go to the Presidential Inauguration and to visit the White House the day after the Inauguration and personally meet the President and Vice-President and governors and their wives. So, there have really been....this has been a really exciting year for me. I got appointed to the International Women's Year Commission. It has been an exciting year for me. I think that as part of the Democratic National Platform Committee and as a part of the group that met at night to plan the strategy of how we would implement what the Carter group wanted in the platform, and in spite of the fact that Carter seemed to repudiate that position later on, I was one of the individuals chosen to speak for the concept of keeping in the platform the whole question of the right of choice, you know, on the question of abortion. And you know, I really feel that as a result of our planning ahead of time, because there was a great effort made to remove that from the platform based on what had been done by the drafting committee and they were trying to delete that, and I was pleased by being able to be a part of that, by being asked by Carter's issue man [Steward Eizenstat] and asked to help to do that. Those were things that I....you know, they don't tie in so much I guess with the labor movement in terms of what I've been talking about, but I think in the broader sense, they sure do tie in.

INTERVIEWER: The child care trip?

HAENER: Yes, this has really been . . .

INTERVIEWER: Could you just describe that . . .

HAENER: Oh, the child care trip was a three-week trip, a week each in Israel, Sweden and France. It was funded by the German Marshall Fund through the Coalition of Labor Union Women and there were nineteen international unions represented by women who were selected by their internationals. We spent the time studying the child care in those countries in order to have a better knowledge of how they supplied child care and to hopefully be able to implement some of those concepts here in this country. Broadly, one of the things that we discovered is that all the countries we visited had a national policy position on child care that ties in directly with the concept of child care and family care and the strengthening of the whole family, which is really very contrary to what we have in this country where we have kind of an anti-concept to that rather than a pro-concept. And the other is that in none of these countries did we find child care that was operated for profit, which again in this country there is a concept that you ought to be able

HAENER: to set up child care centers and make them profitable. The concern in those countries is to care for children and to care for families and for parents. We hope that we will implement that concept in some ways here.

INTERVIEWER: What was the feeling in general among the women who were on the trip? Were they mostly in favor of child care before they began? Were they chosen from their internationals as people who had worked for women's issues, or not necessarily?

HAENER: You know, I don't really know what the position of all those international unions are. I know what the position of my international union is and that before we left France, which was our last country, that we did get together and draw up a kind of concept of what we felt we had learned. What I said earlier about the countries having a policy position in regard to this, was one of the outstanding things and the concern about children and families. We also, of course, agreed that we would go back to our international unions and get them to either issue or reaffirm positions on the child care. Now, my international union has a position on child care. And you know, in that way, we can work to try to implement what we've learned. We were impressed, by and large, with most of what we learned. There were some areas that we were not always in complete agreement, but then I don't expect that we would every reach that point where we were in complete agreement on everything. Overall, we were impressed.

INTERVIEWER: You've worked for a very long time in the labor movement with a lot of energy. Can you isolate the most frustrating part of that work either regarding women's issues or organizing or any of the work that you've done?

HAENER: Well, the most frustrating part I think is, of course, sometimes the inability to reach people in areas that you know are absolutely right. And the other is having to yourself deal with the problem I mentioned to you earlier. You know how things ought to be and what you ought to be dealing with, but you have to force yourself to deal with the reality of the situation the way it is and do the very best you can within that reality. And that can be just terribly frustrating sometimes, very, very discouraging. You know, an example I can give you of that is that I recognize very much the improvement the union made for me at the point I had become a member of the union. I helped to organize the office and engineering group, and at the point where we negotiated the increase in salary and so forth, I understood how much I had benefitted by that. But then, later on when I got really active in the union, and I really believed all these things they said to me about non-discrimination and fair employment and so forth, and when the reality hit me of, yes, this is what we say but, no, we don't really always practice that, even at the local union level. It was very difficult for me to accept that. I think I mentioned in my earlier statements that I made, about the problem of the preferential hiring rights of Local 50 employees and the fact that the men were called back, almost all of them,

HAENER: but they always found some way not to call the women back. And that when I got on the committee, I really made a big issue of doing that. I made people very, very angry at me because I insisted. And I had become a little bit aware of this when I was going through the process of getting to the bargaining committee. But you know, they were really very, very angry that I continued to raise that question long after they thought it had been disposed of and they finally did call them back. But it was really not so meaningful because a few years later the plant folded up. The point is that experience was very, very frustrating to me because the people who should have been helping me were not helping me. I really had to just do very nasty things in order to get them to understand that I really did mean it, which I didn't feel I should be put on the spot. And those are experiences and I've had others like that that to me are very discouraging and depressing but it's basically how society is. I have come to accept that and that you have to work within the realities.

INTERVIEWER: You talked a little bit about being able to steel yourself against the kind of criticism or personal attacks that went on fairly regularly when people were trying to undermine your position. How were you able to keep going in the face of so much frustration, politically or otherwise, to keep fighting when, as you say, people criticize and got angry and a lot of women, a lot of people pull out when things get so hard?

HAENER: Well, you know, I do blow my stack once in a while which I think maybe helps to relieve some of the tension. But the other thing is to recognize and to learn. It's really one of the things you need to teach women. At the point you convince them to get active is that there is difference between becoming angry about something and expressing your anger and becoming so angry that you're angry all the time, which is very sad. I've seen this happen to women who are very qualified and who are very able and have great potential but they reach that point where they've been made angry to the point where they're not reasonable about anything anymore. I'm not sure I've always stopped myself from getting that way, but I think I have often enough so that some of the things I've gotten angry about after a while they were alleviated or they were taken care of in some way. In spite of some of my unhappiness even today, I can still look at what has been accomplished and it's to me a beautiful time to be alive. To me it's really very depressing to be with some women my age who have been so frustrated over the years that they can't do anything but express their hostility and won't look at any of what we've accomplished. And we have accomplished a great deal, although we've got a long way to go. But I want to say that the reason I've been able to keep on going is that I've had some success and when the rough times, I can sort of coast on that. Yeah. I have had success.

INTERVIEWER: Are you hopeful in general about the role of women in the labor movement or in the UAW?

HAENER: I am hopeful about women in the labor movement and the UAW. I do think in the years ahead--it was evident at our last convention--that the number of delegates that were women had increased considerably, and I think the figures show that the number of women who are moving into elected positions in our local unions are also increasing. I'm really hopeful. There has been movement onto staff positions. And I am hopeful that in the years ahead, we're going to see some real increase there. I really firmly believe that's going to happen. I think it's in the very nature of things that it's going to have to happen.

INTERVIEWER: People like you make it possible. Thank you so much.

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