Oral History Interview With Barbara Ingalls

April 8, 2013
Wayne State University Kresge Library
Detroit Newspaper Strike Oral History Project

Barbara Ingalls, Interviewee
Barbara Ingalls was born in Detroit on 7/28/56 and raised in Detroit in old Redford on the northwest side of Detroit. During the Detroit News Paper Strike she was affiliated with the Detroit Typographical Union and the CWA.

Jackie Zimmerman, Interviewer
Jackie Zimmerman holds a masters degree in Library and Information Science from Wayne State University. She is a South East Michigan native and currently resides in Livonia, MI.

Interview Location and Other Notes
This interview was conducted at Wayne State University's Kresge Library around 6pm at night in a Library Science classroom. The heating system in the room appeared to be very loud however it is rarely heard on the recording. For the most part the interview was very private, quiet, and was well recorded.

Zimmerman: Today is April 8, 2013. My name is Jackie Zimmerman and I am conducting and interview today for Dr. Turrini's Oral History class through Wayne State University. I am interviewing Barb Ingalls and we are going to talk about her experience and her journey through the Detroit Newspaper Strike.

So if you can please state your name and your current profession.

Ingalls: My name is Barbara Ingalls and I am a graphic designer.

Zimmerman: And can you tell me a little bit about yourself and like where you grew up and your early life?

Ingalls: I was born in Detroit and raised in Detroit in old Redford on the northwest side of Detroit and I had a variety of—just kind of, job jobs through my life. I have been married since nineteen seventy-nine and I just sort of puddled around with jobs and then in my thirties decided to get serious and I went back to school to become a graphic designer and that's what I, was in. I was in school, I going to OCC, to their design program and about half way through I saw an ad in the Detroit News for a graphic designer at, at the papers and part time and I thought, "oh I'll take that job that sounds fun while I finish my school." And so that's how I ended up there.

Zimmerman: And at that time, um what year was that?

Ingalls: I was hired innineteen ninety-four.

Zimmerman: Okay, that was before the big strike, right?

Ingalls: Correct. I was, it was a year and a week and I had, like a year and 9 days.

Zimmerman: Okay. And at that time would you say there was any kind of like rumblings happening? Like did you go into it knowing that things were kind of—

Ingalls: I had no idea.

Zimmerman: Really?

Ingalls: I had no idea.

Zimmerman: Was it, were things on edge then and you just didn't know it or were they just not really on edge at that point?

Ingalls: It became obvious once I was hired that there was something going on. They hadn't hired in my department in over twenty years. There were probably three hundred people working three full shifts um making up ads and this was during the digital revolution. Everybody was on a computer at that point, they were still doing paste up for the actual pages of the paper where they would put it on a dummy and they would lay the, the things

down on it. But it was becoming more and more automated and I was hired because of my expertise in the computer and what I would call the "old guys" were extremely suspicious of me. And it took a couple months to get anyone to really talk to me about it and then it became obvious that they thought I was hired to steal their jobs.

Zimmerman: So, do you think that in essence you were hired to steal their jobs?

Ingalls: Yup.

Zimmerman: Yea? (laughs)

Ingalls: Yup. Oops.

Zimmerman: So were you the only one hired at this time sort of with computer skills?

Ingalls: No, I was the (whispers to self) I was the fourth person hired and I was hired, and another guy was hired at the same day as me. He like, five minutes after me. We worked part time, and we worked all the off shifts. So I worked, I worked an afternoon shift to midnight shift and then like an early afternoon shift.

Zimmerman: And so because like there like four of you hired, the "old guys" were they, did some of them get let go around that time?

Ingalls: No.

Zimmerman: No?

Ingalls: No. There was a lot of work. There was an awful lot of work, in the years before I was hired, in the years before nineteen ninety-four and in the earlier contracts they were making serious efforts to cut the staffing levels. And, and so there were guys, there was a guy that had like fifty years uh, Sammy, and he didn't really do much but he had, my union was very complicated and they had what was called Guaranteed Jobs. And that everybody that was hired before the Joint Operating Agreement, which I'm not sure if you know—

Zimmerman: Yup.

Ingalls: Okay. So everyone, in the last contact when they got the Joint Operating Agreement they agreed to guarantee jobs. And this came with some uh lessening of the job force, they bought a bunch of guys off, no one had ever been laid off from my department in the history of that place even during the Depression no one ever got laid off. And that was because of the politics and the mechanics of the union and the company at that time. They were definitely thinning out the work force and trying to replace it with younger people.

Zimmerman: Do you think it was problematic that they weren't necessarily letting them go in terms of, you know, the field was changing it was becoming digital in a sense, and they had these great skills but maybe there wasn't a huge need for them?

Ingalls: (Sighs)

Zimmerman: Or do you think it hadn't hit in that time yet?

Ingalls: They knew what they were doing. The company knew exactly what they were doing and they knew what they were planning. So I think they had a great deal of buyer's remorse about the guaranteed jobs because it was practically impossible, you had to do like an act of violence or completely desert the job or you know, really blatant insubordination or stuff like that. It was really a huge, it was gonna be a huge huge deal to get rid of them. But you know again, there were, there were a lot of guys when I started, that were in their mid sixties and older than that. That with just the tiniest amount of incentive would've been happy to go. So it was what I would call a very typical Detroit, at that time it was called the Detroit News Paper and this isn't working so lets just broom this and do this. They could've, I mean they did need to do it but they didn't have to do this. They really didn't have to do this.

Zimmerman: So you were in the Typographer's Union?

Ingalls: Correct.

Zimmerman: And you do think that within the union, there may have been animosity between the old guys and the new guys?

Ingalls: Absolutely. Once everything got underway, you know when the strike started and everything that happened happened, I had probably all of them come up to me and apologize for how shitty they were. It was really kind of funny.

Zimmerman: Wow.

Ingalls: But you know, as it all became clear it was like how can I, you know you can't really blame them. It was just, they were under assault. And all they had ever done was learn new skills and keep up, and I mean they, some of them, and the thing is with this and you'll understand this with graphic design skills is that even if you're not using those skills anymore, they hold you in good stead. You know the last ones that worked in my department were only working as proofreaders because they spent a whole lot of time trying to demoralize people but this guy could read a page and he wouldn't even have to read it he could look at it and tell me if there was something wrong before he even got into reading it because he knew, he knew how much it would weigh. You know, he knew, he knew so much about this stuff and if you called him a graphic designer, he'd laugh at you. You know, he was a printer. There were skills that were translatable and some of these guys got very good at it. It was a new field for everybody you know back in the mid nineties remember. So the ones that were better at ad composition before took to it really well and the guys that were terrible, were terrible. I mean it was, those skills transferred pretty much evenly across the board.

Zimmerman: It's still kind of like that.

Ingalls: Exactly! You know you've got, I have I work with people now who suck.

Zimmerman: And if you're good you're good**.**

(laughing)

Did you ever feel like a sense of guilt when you came in because you knew that your skills were sort of replacing old skills?

Ingalls: No, I got real mad.

Zimmerman: Yeah. Yeah. So you came in, and you got a sense of things were not going very well in terms of the JOA and everything like that. So when the strike happened, can you describe, in your own words what the strike was really about?

Ingalls: Greed. (pause) They wanted a larger and larger um share. And they decided to take it out of us.

Zimmerman: And so when this was happening, you know, on the work floor what were the discussions before the strike?

Ingalls: See no one would talk to us because they thought that we were Scabs. So it was, it was funny and they kept us kind of sequestered um which is a popular word these days. They kept us like we were, we all worked the same shift and we all were together. And they kept us away from them and uh and one point, it was a closed shop when we were hired so the first I ever did was go down and join the union. Which I was happy to do, I had never been in a union before which is so funny. So I was like, "yea, I'll do this", I took my mom with me, we went and signed up. I was all excited. And then—

Zimmerman: Did you have union ties in your family?

Ingalls: Well my husband's a UAW member. But he didn't have, I mean he was very pro union but he had his opinions about that too. It's hard to, um its better now than it was. But it was hard to get into it they kind of discouraged it, which is a whole other conversation. But so we would hear about these union meetings and they wouldn't invite us to the meetings and they wouldn't give us notes and stuff, so it was like "you're taking our money". So I formed like, I got all the part-timers to get together and by then there were more of us. I think there were, I'd have to sit down and figure it out, I think there were like eighteen or twenty by then. And I got as many as I could to come over my house and present a letter to, and we're also called a chapel. Ok so the chapel chairman was this guy and that from the old days when you could have religious services but you couldn't have a union. So that's how old my union is. So we presented a letter to him saying we demand to be recognized, we're part of this and there's something going on and we can smell it to and

you need to involve us. And things were beginning to break that way, as the summer of ninety-five ’95 moved along.

Zimmerman: So you were still fairly new when the strike happened and when it happened, do you remember the day when it was like “we’re not going to work anymore”?

Ingalls: Oh no it didn’t happen like that. We were in the basement of the building. I was in the building that night. It was supposed to be another workday but it was not.

Zimmerman: What happened?

Ingalls: First there was a green thunderstorm and you know. Do you know green thunderstorms?

Zimmerman: No.

Ingalls: It was uh so much, when there is so much ozone in the air as the storm builds up as the air literally turns green.

Zimmerman: Okay.

Ingalls: And you can smell the ozone and you can feel it. And in my building, or in my floor we’re on the fourth floor of the Detroit News building, we had these really super high ceilings and these, and they are not floor to ceiling but they are really really high windows and they look out over the street and it became, and then the storm hit and it was just, like at 7:00 pm it was as black as midnight. And this horrible storm, and they shut off the computers, they completely shut off the computers. So we couldn’t sabotage them.

Zimmerman: So they still really thought that you were, you weren’t

Ingalls: They thought everyone in the building; they shut all the servers down every single thing went down for the entire building and probably in Sterling Heights too. I never asked anybody but I wouldn’t’ be surprised and then at 8:00 pm, um all of these Vance guards, there are all of these little rooms in there, and all these Vance Guards came out with cameras. And they basically, they pushed us out the door. They just sort of herded us out the door. And my one friend and I, its just so funny what you think and what you’re thinking, and we’re leaving and my one supervisors was shaking everybody’s hands and he’s laughing, and he’s like “you guys are going to be back in a week, go to the Anchor and have fun”. We’re like “buh-bye now, buh-bye” just acting really stupid and silly and then we waiting at the elevator for a minute and said this is real stupid. So we ran down the stairs and we go out on to Lafayette and there were thousands of people, I had no idea, I mean we didn’t, I was so dumb. You know when I think about it just sort of unconscious. And there were like a couple thousand people standing in the street and that just, there I was, out on strike.

Zimmerman: Wow, so its really interesting because you knew there was something happening but no one wanted to talk to you because they thought you were like a Scab worker, so there is this underground stuff happening that you're not really privy too and then all of a sudden you're thrown right into it.

Ingalls: Yea.

Zimmerman: Wow. So when did you decide that, to become really active and passionate because, if they didn't necessarily want to involve you at what point did you say "Yea, I want to be apart of this"?

Ingalls: Well at first it was like an adventure. It was like, we'll I've seen Norma Rae this is, and my husband and I had talked about it before I went to work that day, (coughing) excuse me, and you know he said "Well you're not crossing the picket line, so lets just see what happens, you'll get strike pay, you'll get unemployment, and this isn't the income we're counting on so, you know we'll see what happens". And I was like "Alright that sounds fair to me". So you know right away I went tomy union president and said, if you're going to stay out, if you're going to do this, would you work in community services. Yea whatever you want. So I ended up helping set up the first food bank over at the Teamster hall and we got you know how in May everyone gives their canned goods to the post office they have that. So we got a lot of that food. So we had, it was the most disgusting day, we had to like climb in these boxes and we had to sort all the food out and we made a food pantry and then we moved the whole production to the Teamster hall on Trumbell and then when they ended up getting a strike headquarters like a couple years later, it went there. And it was a woman named Karen Burke, who was one of my part-timers that, I tried to get everyone who were part-timers to do good and inside jobs because I thought they won't Scab, you know, if they get to do something a little bit more fun. And something better. So I was getting all my friends in there and she ended up, she had worked with Gleaners before so she was perfect and she ended up working at the food bank for the very first one to the very last week that they gave everything away and closed it down six years later. All six years later. Every two week, every two weeks during that strike we had a food bank and we gave people the necessities and sometimes they go extra stuff, like big cases of Haagen Daas to show up and turkeys and hams.

Zimmerman: At what point was it realized that a food bank would be, like this was serious and we're going to need to supplement?

Ingalls: Right away. That was within the first month we had our first food bank.

Zimmerman: So when you first went outside on that first night, you were kind of like, well alright whatever

Ingalls: Wahoo!

Zimmerman: Um when did you realize this is not stopping.

Ingalls: Pretty quickly because it got very very violent very very quickly.

Zimmerman: Was it violent that first night?

Ingalls: It was violent that first night. It was, yea. Cops and guards um just beating on people. And the strikers, it was a really emotional night, I mean people were not letting the cars in and out vey easily and have you ever been to the news building?

Zimmerman: It's been a while.

Ingalls: Directly across the street is a building that now houses the AFLCIO but at the time it was the Detroit Chamber of Commerce Headquarters and before that it was WDIV and WWJ it was a radio and television station. And the Detroit News, the evening news associate who used to own the Detroit News owned WWJ, they were sister media partners so there's a tunnel that goes underneath that building and that's how they got a lot of the Scabs in. Was they tunneled them in like little rats. (laughing) And some big rats. My boss, the guy that when I went back to work, was my supervisor was one of those rats that starts, he might of sat at my very computer and started working that night when they put the servers back on.

Zimmerman: The guy that shook your hand on the way out?

Ingalls: No a different one. This guy was not, he was brand new. They brought him in to us to Scab.

Zimmerman: So the first night you're out there, its getting violent. Clearly a serious situation, would you say you, were you a bystander at that point, I mean were you throwing things or were you just in shock?

Ingalls: I was in shock and someone handed me a picket sign and I walked around with that a bunch of times and then I saw some wild stuff. And then we would, my friend Karen and I, we went down to the Anchor and I called my husband and he's like "I'm watching TV are you alright?"and I was like, "No I'm in the Anchor, I'm fine!" And we'd go back and forth and the next day I went back and the strike headquarters had already been. The first strike head quarters was on the second floor of the Anchor Bar and I went up there and then I went to my union office and said just tell me, just tell me what you want me to do and we'll see what happens.

Zimmerman: Did you ever think about, did you ever just not go, you know? I mean if you're not going to work and everybody is striking, do you just stay home?

Ingalls: A couple years into it there were some mental health days, there were days I just couldn't get out of bed. There's days I couldn't raise my head up off my pillow. But no, I was in it. I believed in it. I believed in it more and more.

Zimmerman: I read somewhere that a couple people in your union crossed the picket line.

Ingalls: Uh-huh.

Zimmerman: Not very man though. Right?

Ingalls: We had one of the smallest amounts of Scabs.

Zimmerman: What was the feeling? I mean were you friends with those specific people?

Ingalls: Before. Some of them and a couple of the part-timers crossed.

Zimmerman: And it, sorry.

Ingalls: Its ok. We were not friends after that.

Zimmerman: Really?

Ingalls: Uh-huh.

Zimmerman: I have no union ties right, so I understand the crossing but was there, I mean I understand the animosity towards those who crossed. Is there ever a feeling of, those people have families to support, or is there ever an understanding or is it always Its just for the greater good.

Ingalls: There was especially in my union, there was no excuse for scabbing. They took really good care of us. And lots of people had families. You know. One of the girls at that time had no kids, one of the girls had a young son, but she was also part time. These people were part time. So again they were in a position like me. One of the girls had just gotten married and she was married to a Detroit fire fighter who was a union guy and she had no reason. So no I didn't understand the only reason they went back, and what made it more difficult and what made it more complicated were those three women were, and remain, African American. And the company was making a real serious point of saying well now we're diversifying the work force and that's what, they called them up separate. They never called me and asked me to come back. They never asked me. And they never asked a lot of us. But they asked them because they wanted to show that face to the work force. And I found that despicable because there had been, I mean you know, impossible to deny systemic racism and white privilege and all these things and there is no, it was a white work force on my floor and the fact that there had been no hiring in all those years was really no excuse. There was one African American guy and there had been off and on through the years and not very many women either. But we, you know, that was the past and it was just appalling the way they played that, the company did. And the other people that scabbed, the older guys, just shame on them they were just greedy fuckers who had no souls and no morals at all. I have less opinion of those people than I have, they are just disgusting excuses.

Zimmerman: So it never crossed your mind?

Ingalls: Nope.

Zimmerman: Nope. Not even like 5 years in?

Ingalls: I almost went away, I mean just never, and I never thought I was gonna get my job back. I was just doing it by that time, I was just so damn mad at them that I wasn't going to stop until I had to. Until something happened you know, I was just in it. But yeah there were times when, I went on a couple job interviews but I just couldn't.

Zimmerman: So you and your husband, you were working part time so your husband had a full time job, so finances were maybe not necessarily a problem during then?

Ingalls: Right because I was getting strike pay which was very good and then very quickly my union was affiliated with the CWA, the Communications Workers of America and I was adopted by the Western New York CWA. (tearing up) $500 a month for six years. They were great. It will always get to me, the generosity of people. They were great. I'm sorry! I wasn't going to do that.

Zimmerman: That's fine!

Ingalls: That was the thing. There was no excuse. They took care of us we got food we got people were just, people were just amazing. So there was no, I ended up making as much as I did when I was working so, which wasn't that much but I mean, I was replicating what I had been making when I was working so it was like that's all I can ask for.

Zimmerman: Was it not that good in other unions?

Ingalls: No they distributed the money differently in all the other unions and they didn't do, like the Teamsters it was terrible. Sometimes those guys got thirty-five bucks a week. And there were so many people that lost homes and you know every union had the discretion to do what they needed to do. The Guild was pretty good. The CWA was just very very good. But mine was, it was just amazing.

Zimmerman: Was there, so the people who are striking and picketing and out there every day, there was six different unions involved?

Ingalls: Correct, at the time.

Zimmerman: Was there animosity between the unions because of that?

Ingalls: At first. At first there was a lot of suspicion, and there was a lot of, there was a great deal of snobbery and but that's just sort of washed away. And everybody felt the same way about the crummy benefits people were getting. We were all outraged, there not much

we could do you know but hold each other up and help each other. But that kind of feeling didn't last long.

Zimmerman: So you started working for the Sunday Journal, right?

Ingalls: Eventually. First, before the Sunday Journal there was a strike paper that put out three issues called The Detroit Union. It was sponsored by the UAW and most of the writers were Detroit News writers and we did that in my house. That was —

Zimmerman: That's awesome.

Ingalls: That was a riot. And that was the first year. So we put out three issues and then we really were able to prove that a paper was necessary and that it would be a good thing and that we had to do that and I got kind of shitty for a while. So I didn't work at the Sunday Journal at first. I was in community service.

Zimmerman: Okay. And then that community services program lasted through the whole strike, right?

Ingalls: Pretty much. Pretty much. It began to fall apart after the glorious offer to return to work and they dismantled a great deal of that but parts of it still remained.

Zimmerman: Okay, so the strike is sort of coming to an end and some people are going back to work and some people are not and some people are still very angry. When it ends where are you? What do you feel? What do you think?

Ingalls: Start crying again.

Zimmerman: Because it didn't necessarily end the way that, maybe you wanted it to.

Ingalls: Oh no. No it didn't. No. See that's a, I can tell you I was at home, and I had gotten called back to work at that point and I was, I think I was still part time and I went back part time and I was at home and I was just screwing around the house or something and the phone rang and it was a woman who worked in the Detroit News who had been called back and she had just called me in a panic and she said something really bad happened. They are running through the newsroom with cases of champagne. And I was like "Aw, fuck". And I started thinking, phone calls, and that was the day that the courts reversed all of the decisions in our favor. So that was the day we lost the strike. But that was not the day that it was over because they were still negotiating contracts. So that happened in, I want to say September. I should refer to my copy of The Broken Table, its right in there. The last contract was signed in January of two thousand, I think. So there was still death throws that went on for quite a while and I felt ashes.

Zimmerman: Did it feel like it was all for nothing?

Ingalls: (heavy sigh) No. No. We still have unions in that paper. You know and they still have to deal with their workers fairly and they still have to, they can't just come through, the come through the non-bargaining places and they just remove people like crazy and they can't do that that to us. You know.

Zimmerman: Is there still remnants of the strike in the papers?

Ingalls: Uh-huh. Sure.

Zimmerman: People are still angry?

Ingalls: Uh-huh.

Zimmerman: Is it verbalized?

Ingalls: No. That's called hate speech. Its verbalized at the Anchor, its verbalized after, sometimes we talk about it but there were times that people start to reminisce and I have to get up and leave the room and I'm sure they have, if I or if some of us get into a conversation, I've seen people get up and leave.

Zimmerman: Can you tell me about the Road Warrior program?

Ingalls: Sure! That was kind of fun. Um, there is an organizer who works for the Steel Workers named Mike Zielinski. And at the time Mike Zielinski worked for the Teamsters and the Teamsters were being run by Ron Carey who is a progressive Teamster for a Democratic Union President. And he had hired a whole lot of people to change the way unionism was basically done and they hired Mike. And they hired a guy named Bart Naylor who was a Harvard Business School graduate who was born into wealth a privilege and some how got it right. And so he was like their inside guy and a whole bunch of other people and what they did is they began the corporate campaigns. This was the, you know, like the Michael Moore model. And a lot of different unions like that. But Bart and Mike and all these different people were really, they were really committed to this. So Mike was building, he started taking people out right away. And what they would do in those days, is they would go to cities and different union halls and talk about the strike and raising money and stuff like that and they really got to branch out and they started, what they did was identified the board members of Gannette an Knight Ridder, who were the newspaper owners. And found out where they lived and found out where they worked and that was what they did is they visited them. And so my first trip was, I want to say January of ninety-seven. And I went to —

Zimmerman: So like half was through or so? The Strike?

Ingalls: Well two years in, well you know beyond the strike and the lock out and the whole thing, so yea it was two years into it. And we went to Boston and we went to New York, which was like this! And we got in a really horrifying old van and we drove through the

mountains in the middle of the night in this van and just showed up places. We went to Harvard a lot. There was, the first African American tenured business school professor who's name just let my mind. He's in there, was at Harvard Business School and we, James Cash. And so we went and visited Mr. Cash a lot. And we went to – and that was the first time I got arrested in New York. Was that the first time? It might have been the second time. But I got arrested in the Rockefeller Foundation. We went up there because the head of the Rockefeller Foundation was a board member and we went into the offices one day. We had like fifty people, it was different unions and activists groups around the country. Mike would do this advanced stuff.

Zimmerman: So they would all know where to show up?

Ingalls: They would know where to show up and we would rush into the building and we ran around and we got everyone out that first time except for eight of us. And an elevator went down and the next elevator that came up, when the doors opened it was all cops. And this insanely crazy angry building manager, he was that color in his face (pointing to a red folder) and was like "ahhh, get these god damned people into jail", and we all got on the elevator and the elevator got stuck for two hours. And he still pressed charges, and he still made us go and we had to get into a paddy wagon and it was all sorts of fun.

Zimmerman: So were you just charging the building?

Ingalls: Well what we were doing, what we would do, and as I got into this more and I understood what the preliminaries were. We would write these people and say "we are going to to be in town and we want to meet with you. We have a group of strikers and we have representatives from all the unions and we would like to talk to you. We want to talk to you about what this is doing. You are hearing the side of Gannette and you know but we want to tell you what is happening. And we are at your disposal and all you have to do is call and we will meet you, we would like this. We would like a decent conversation with you." And we all knew what to say but they wouldn't. They would not meet with us.

Zimmerman: Would they respond?

Ingalls: If they responded, and usually they didn't, they would say we find this inappropriate. So we showed them what was inappropriate. And we did no violence. And we, it was all pretty much in good fun but we were serious as could be and all they had to do was meet with us. And none of this would have happened.

Zimmerman: Was it like a sit in? Were you quiet?

Ingalls: No we weren't quiet! And we had fliers and we would chant and we would talk to people. And one of my jobs at the times is I would, like whoever was the head receptionist or the person at the desk, I would walk up to them and I would look them in the eye and I would speak in a low tone of voice because a high voice is hysteria, right? And I would say, hi this is who I am and here is what we're doing. It would be very chaotic around me, but I would like, try to calm them down. It was like you're a worker and I'm a worker so please, if

you just get your boss on the line and tell him to come out, you know, then everybody will go away. And I think sometimes about when we left, and these people would be flipping out, and the little rat would come out of his cage and go "Are they gone"? And they'd be like "Thanks, fucker! You know, you let us go through that." You know one time they delivered this guy's lunch, when we were at his office and he had this lovely piece of grilled salmon and steamed green beans and it was like "really, fucker?" and we're out here, and these people, they always put their women out in front of them. Always women in front of them. Because we would go to their houses and their maids would answer, their au pairs would answer, their chefs would answer the door. One time this poor woman and her husband would not get off the phone and just come to the door and say, "I'm callin' the cop" or nothing. They all hid behind their women. I just found that so despicable. Because seriously 5 minutes out in the front with us and all of the wind would have been out of our sails. And we wouldn't have said ok let's go.

Zimmerman: Had they approached you, you guys probably wouldn't have really known what to do with it right?

Ingalls: Well we had people who were spokesmen, you know. If they would've come out we would have just stood been them. You know we were told what to do. It never happened so we never had to practice that. But basically we would have just stood there and listened. You know. That's all they had to do. And then we would go to the board meetings, the shareholder meetings. Which is, if you ever get a chance to go, you should go its something to see. The smoke they blow up you're ass. Its amazing. Amazing.

So that was the Road Warriors and then there was a kind of wildcat groups. They was a group called ACoSS , Action Coalition of Strikers and Supporters. And it was community, but it was like that was the far left in Detroit and they sent some of us out on the road a couple times. I went to the Pacific North West by myself lugging a slide projector and slides and boxes of t-shirts and all this stuff and I would, you know in one trip I raised $5,000. That we gave, and that money went directly to no bureaucracy to strikers. You now so it was kind of a good thing. It paid for the trip but it was, that's what it was for.

Zimmerman: By doing the Road Warrior stuff and other sort of branching out across the US was the, was it two-fold where we're going to approach Gannett and Knight Ridder employees but more so was there publicity involved? Was it, you know, we want to let America know what's happening?

Ingalls: Exactly. And you know, the conventional media pretty much left us alone but the unions knew what we were doing. And we'd go to union halls all over the country. And people would just, again people are just so generous. It was so clearly outrageous what they were trying to do because it was in the early days of the strike, in the first year, when they would have the confrontations in Sterling Heights at the North plant. And it was so violent and they hadn't in the early days they hadn't skewed the news coverage. So you would see, it was guys in cut offs with picket signs on one side of the street because it was in the Summer and on the other side of the street, you had riot cops with huge shield and

billy clubs and they had these massive fans like fans the size of that window blowing the tear gas into the crowds. And they had, on one famous night, they drove a truck right through the crowd of people. They didn't care. You know so that was very high profile and every union member in the United States knew what was going on. And so we would go, they would have monthly meetings and motivation meetings and people would just go crazy. And id' go home at the end of the day and there would be checks stuck in my pocketand cash in my pockets. And you go through a crowd of people are hugging you, you know I'd count it all and I'd be like og my god, you know. And that money also went to direct, when we found out people needed something. So you need $100, here's $100. Just you know, just take the money.

Zimmerman: That's pretty amazing.

Ingalls: It was.

Zimmerman: So it winds down, you stop traveling and sort of you know getting, at what point did you say, "we're not really getting anywhere?"

Ingalls: Never. We were really effective. We were really, see and this is the thing about the strike and The Broken Table did a really good job but the whole story hasn't been told yet about what happened. After they made the offer to return to work and it was February of ninety-seven, which none of the union members wanted them to do by the way. That was done by the council against the vehement loud screaming of the membership. So legally it turned from a strike to a lockout because we made the offer to return to work and the company accepted it but we're not taking you back and so legally that was the difference. So it's a single event in two parts. So you've got before the offer. We call it all sorts of things. The glorious surrender, the day that we all collectively grabbed our ankles. And it happened just like we were afraid it would, they said the strike is over and then they said to the world at large "the strike is over" which was true. But it was not true because it was not over. And then our job became keeping it alive because as they say, the guy makes the news that owns the barrels of ink. Right? So what our jobbed turned into was less physically fighting with the company to physically fighting the publicity and their media onslaught. And we did a really damn good job of it because we kept circulation down until the very very end and in fact the circulation never recovered form it. There are people to this day, that when I say "yea I work at the papers", they will go "oh were you a scab?" and its like, you know, give me a kiss! No I'm not! So what it turned into is we still raised money, we after the board members because it was still going on. The injustices were still continuing at the same rate it was just a different legal status. But what we also did, and this is where the Workers Justice Committee came into play, cause this was something Mike Zielinskiwanted and official group that were dedicated, they didn't have to do any other strike duty. What they did, is they were the Workers Justice Committee and we went out and we did the corporate campaign and we all did the one on one campaign. So what we did, and there were fifty of us, is we were paid. I think we were paid the $500, which I got mine and I didn't take money from them because I was getting the other money. I asked the CWA what they wanted me to do. So we kept doing that so they funded me for that. But everybody else, which was a huge relief for some of these Teamsters, I mean $500 was a lot

of money in nineteen ninty-seven. But so what we did in some cases, we went, I think it was Centerline. We went to every single house in Centerline and knocked on the door and said we see a newspaper out in the front. And they said "well they called us and said the strike was over", and we said well here is the truth and we told them and there were people that said "hang on a minute" and they called the paper and they cancelled their subscriptions. We were really effective. We went on radio shows that would have us and we showed up everywhere. We were everywhere the company went. We were there Letting people know. And they would have these public events trying to schmooze people over and we showed up. That was fun. That was enormously satisfying work. And the best day they hired the Diamond Jack boats, you know those cruise ships that go up and down the river and they had this little event and they were just all excited. We were there at the docks and we were all dressed like pirates and they were so pissed off and people were like "we didn't know, they told us it was over". Like you know, that guy on the boat, that guy is Heath Merriweather, go tell that guy what you just told me. You're gonna cancel you're paper. And just fucked with them like crazy, and then the boat takes off and there standing there like this and giving us the finger and we're standing there because we knew that we had 10 boats in the water. And they chased that boat up and down the Detroit river, it was great. And then they got off the boat and there we were and they were so fucking mad, it was just so fun. That was one of the days that my face hurt from laughing. I just laughing and laughing and didn't get to go in the boat. Its all good. I was just, it was just a great day. So we did stuff like that and the fun part was trying to be inventive about it. Not just standing there and going like this (giving a middle finger)which is enormously satisfying but after a while people just don't even see you. So we brought bunches of suitcases one day and put them out in the front one day sot he scabs could pack their bags and go. And played "Hit the Road Jack" and to this day there are people that work in this building that if they hear they song they kind of go (cringes).

Zimmerman: So would you say that the strike and the strikers and the unions we well supported by surrounding communities and other local media?

Ingalls: The Metro Times was awesome and they hired a lot of our people, the television stations were all having their own labor problems so those guys were usually pretty good. There were a couple reporters who really thought they were above it all. But most of them were great. Were great. They knew that what was happening to us was going to happen to them in different forms and stuff. So they were good about camera angels and stuff like that and they were good in other cities too.

Zimmerman: I've seen that you've done some writing on this, maybe an article here or there, I've seen your name and maybe its just quotes in an interview or something. So you're a designer, so at what point did you say I have some more to say about this?

Ingalls: I started doing, I started when the Workers Justice Committee started I started doing action alerts where I would, they would give us a list of things that we were going to do during the week and I complied and it just seems so clunky now, but I complied this huge email list and at one point you couldn't have more than one hundred people on an

email, so I'd have like twenty sets of email things and I quit that and then I just started to editorialize. And I would just tell stories about what happened and those went on and I did that for three years. I have a buddy that collected them all. He's got 'em all. I have most of them. I've had a lot of computers since then so it's like, in theory I've got them all.

Zimmerman: You need to put those in the Reuther.

Ingalls: I think they've got them. I kind of think they do. Chris got them.

Zimmerman: Do you feel like you're a voice of the strike? Like a face of the strike?

Ingalls: Yeah. That's a heavy picket sign sometimes let me tell you. Yes but that's how it happened. And its because I was able to do it and a lot of people weren't.

Zimmerman: Do you mean financially?

Ingalls: Uh-huh.

Zimmerman: And maybe just charismatically?

Ingalls: Temperamentally it turns out I was suited for this. But I was able to and I had the support at home. My husband is an awesome person and he really go politicized too. We're both completely different people since then. And all of our friends, I meant ninety percent of the people we hang around with, we have not since nineteen nintey-five. And what we do, and what we do in our live is a complete direct result of that. But yea I would, yea, there I was I could do it.

Zimmerman: Did you have reservations about going back to work?

Ingalls: Yea they told me I never was gonna. I was just awful on the picket line, I never held anything back. That one girl that Scabbed, one of our part-timers that went back, I used to follow her down the street barking at her. I was terrible. They told me, "you're never getting back" and I said alright. Just let it go. And uh, oops! (laughter)

Zimmerman: Do you have a fear that it will happen again?

Ingalls: That will never happen again. That whole, that will never happen again. That kind of strike and I don't think they are ever really going to happen in American again. They spent millions and millions and millions of dollars, its sick how much money was spent trying to keep our poor little people down. And you know, they won. They won because the leadership chose to take the strike into the courts instead of winning it on the street. So they won that. But they didn't win the whole thing. A lot of us got back, they have unions in that place. They will never be the same and it was their own fault. They cut their own throats. And they did it they got what they wanted, they got a smaller work force they got a smaller paper. You know but the price was a whole lot higher than they ever thought.

Zimmerman: Do you think that South Eastern Michigan, Metro Detroit area, do you think that they have an opinion or an animosity towards the papers now? As a whole do you think that everyone looks at it differently now, or do you think enough time has passed to where maybe people don't associate the strike with the paper?

Ingalls: Older people remember. I work with young guys who all say," I went out on strike in ninety-five" and they'll say "I was four years old". Its like, shut up! (laughing) And they just look at me like I'm this old war horse, it's so funny. They will go "Tell us stories about the strike, Barb" and I go "Well, it was a dark and stormy night".

Zimmerman: Literally!

Ingalls: I know! That's how the book has to begin!

Zimmerman: So, do you have any regrets about the strike, your involvement, what you said what you did, who you talked to?

Ingalls: I wish I knew as much about solidarity and workers that I do now. I'm not sorry. I'm not a bit sorry. And I think a person that crosses a picket line should be sorry and should really look into their heart and find out why their own greed is more important than what is obviously going on. But I would tell unions and union leaders to rethink the strategy about people who are in the building differently. Because we could do, we could've done a whole lot better as an inside campaign with that. They don't have, when they take people out on strike, and since the strike I have become a very active unionist, and I was very active with Jobs With Justice for along time, and I still do a lot of that kind of solidarity work. And they don't tell people how to be and they don't tell them how to go back. And we went back, and I went back to work and I was so frightened. And I wasn't, again, Its like I looked at people and was like "hey I screamed at you" and "I screamed at you" and "I screamed at you" and um but I wasn't allowed to talk about it at all and if I used the work Scab I would be fired. They weren't under the same kind of restraints but um and I had to work my way up to the top and people left and there was really only a few of all of us left. It skind of funy, its like, they talk about there is one woman that I work with that I've gotten to be really good friends with, but she was a Scab and she tells thess stories and its like "They would bring us steak and lobster every night and they never charged us for food" and I'd say yea and a girl got raped in the showers and she kinda went "how'd you know" and it was like, we know everything that went on. Some of those guards were mercenaries, they were mercenaries. These Vance guards they were bad people and a lot of bad shit went on and I saw a guy beaten so badly we could see his brains. We saw, I saw my own husband clubbed to the ground. I had a guy call me when my husband would go to work in the morning, like his car would turn the corner and the phone would ring and he would be like 'Hey Barb, I know you're there". I had to have my phone tapped by the company I had to have the cops come to the house. I got accused of trying to run a truck off the road which is pretty funny. Because I was driving like a little Probe at the time. It was like "yea, that's what I'm going to do is try to drive a semi off the road". Good thinkin!

Zimmerman: And do you think those things happened because you were so forefront?

Ingalls: The guy that's the head of security in my building, one day he was awful. He used to follow me around going "Baaarb" and I'd be at the building. And that's one of the people to this day, he'll say "Good morning!" and I kinda go and start (unintelligible) I'll never relent on that fucker. That guy should be in prison.

Zimmerman: I want to understand more about why you went back. I mean its scary, you didn't think you'd go back, maybe you didn't plan on going back and you went back kind of going " I'm kind of scared".

Ingalls: I had to. That was the whole idea of going out on strike is to save the job. And I had to go back the union supported me. My union supported me the whole time and when I went back it was under the idea that we were going to win all of these court cases and that we would be getting backpay I would pay back. I would have just given the money to the union, any back pay I got because I was paid through the whole thing so that money wasn't mine. It was a symbol of everything but that was the deal. And that's when they called me and said you got called back to work and I said, "you gotta be outta you're mind if you think I'm going. And they said Barb you gotta go. And it was just like, you're right. And the hardest part and the hard part, it was so hard; I had to leave my Worker's Justice Committee behind. They day I went back to work they had a ceremony for me they had a red carpet for me. So I walked in there, it was the funniest day. I was so scared and my husband followed me down, and I was petrified. And I get to the paper and I park and I come around the corner and they are all there and they are picketing and screaming and they have noise makers and they had a red carpet. And I was crying and so happy. And it was like Where the hell is Bob? You know? And you know how in traffic one person gets through and so he's not there and its 10:00am and they escort me up to the door and there were like two other people going back two other women and we're like holding hand and were sitting in the lobby and they are screaming and yelling And marching around outside. And I look out through the big windows and I see my husbands car pull up and he screeches to a stop right in the middle of Lafayette, stop the car, gets out of the car, walks through the crowd walks into the lobby comes up the stairs grabs me up in his arms, gives me a big kiss, and hugs me and walks back out. And every one was like "yyeeeaaaaaa". It was like fuckin' Bat Man, it was so cool. And then we went in, and they took us into the room and we could still hear the pickets and it was just so fun. It was just so funny. But they did, boy did they give me a lot of shit in the building for a long time. My boss just hated me so much. He just hated me. You know

Zimmerman: But he had to let you work there?

Ingalls: He had to let me work there and I'm real good at my job and I kept up the whole time I was working on the Journal I was working on the Union I was doing all sorts of stuff I was making fliers for the workers Justice Committee and stuff. So I was up on the program I was using Quark Express and um and I was doing Photoshop. I was doing all the stuff in the mean time. So I was able to really sit down and start to work at a high level. And I learned and they did what they could but I just wasn't going anywhere. And there were days I just

went home, and that was the hard part, was going back. And knowing what was going on outside and there were people who had worked there so much longer than me that didn't' get back. That was hard. The injustice will always grind at me.

Zimmerman: In terms of "the old guys" or just other workers?

Ingalls: Oh at that point everyone because we just all spread out and became friends and you know to this day there are people in the press room and people in the guild, people all over the place that I can go anywhere in those buildings and I know that there will be somebody there. And it's the same way. They can come if they are anywhere in the building for anything they can come sit at my desk. That really was a good thing the way it broke down those different – There were people that when they brought them back they really punished them severely. Molly Abraham who writes bout food, she still is a food columnist, god Molly's gotta be eighty by now. But she's still, she's the best. When they brought her back they had her writing little bits at first and then they had her writing business and she did a good job. And she just held her head up and she was a professional And then she went to the Free Press and then she ended up leaving and now she does freelance for everybody and she does what she's supposed to be doing which is food writing. But she was a pro and Carol Tiergarden was another one they put her, they put them places to try to make them fail.

Zimmerman: What would've happened if they would have quit?

Ingalls: When they went back?

Zimmerman: Yea.

Ingalls: Some people did. They didn't stay long. A lot of people did go.

Zimmerman: Was it because of negative treatment?

Ingalls: Yea. You know but what was important was that they walked in and then walked out on their own terms. Everyone gave notice, no one stormed out in a huff it was all, I'm a professional and I'm going to go somewhere else. And some of our best writers just went off all over the country to just never come back. And that's hard because, and institutional knowledge that's lost forever.

Zimmerman: Final thoughts. Anything we missed. Or anything you want to add or just something that you know, anything you just need to say?

Ingalls: You know it was the most preventable thing. And the state of newspapers today, which is dismal and dire and ridiculous. And Gannett and Knight Ridder were not the only ones that were doing this. But they spent the nineties buying other properties and expanding really high and having radio stations and television stations and doing all this stuff and what they weren't doing is they weren't looking at the internet. In any serious

way. They weren't considering the implications of the newspapers being on the internet and the content being free. It never occurred to them that maybe a model like Salon.com or Slade that has two, even in those days, I mean I started subscribing to Salon in ninety-eight I think and there were two levels. You could get it for free or you could get all of it with no ads for more money. And they never thought it was gonna end. They never thought it was going to end. While they are chasing us around and buying up all these properties they were ignoring what was happening to the industry until too late. And now we're in the position that we're in. and its, I get a grim satisfaction out of it. And I mean, I gotta work but you the Sunday paper used to be like that. It was a big huge deal and now the Sunday paper is like that and the daily paper is even less. And I mean, I could tell you how many ads we run and it would just, that's what pays for everything. The advertising pays for everything. And right now they are trying to catch up with the digital and they are trying different products but we could all be selling newspapers. We could be doing our jobs at the way that we should but they were just too greedy. So I don't know if that's a closing statement.

Zimmerman: Well you had such a cool role in all of this. And I mean it wasn't a great thing but you sort of took it to the next level and it has been a pleasure hearing your story.

Ingalls: Oh thank you

Zimmerman: So thank you. And that will close us out for now!