Interview Date: 7/25/01
Subject: Marty Langer: Local Representative and first Vice President, Rockland State Hospital Chapter of CSEA, 1967-1971; President, Rockland State Hospital Chapter of CSEA, 1971-1974; Chairman, Statewide Political Action Committee, 1974-1980; Director of Joint NYS/CSEA Labor Management Committees, 1980-1981; Consultant for CSEA Mental Hygiene Issues, 1983-2005; Executive Assistant to CSEA President, Danny Donohue, 1994-1995.

Marty Langer, a long-time political activist with CSEA, detailed his experiences as well as his role in CSEA's transformation from a social organization to a major labor leader and political action machine. With a background in the Mental Hygiene world, Langer explained the horrible working conditions he and others encountered at the Rockland Psychiatric Center in the early 1960's. He detailed how he became involved with CSEA at a local level, with the help of Tom Brand, a field representative, whom Langer approached when he knew change was needed. Langer discussed the impact of workers finding their voice, which resulted in a transformation from big institutions to community residences, with improved staffing ratios for patients.

Langer specified the emergence of Taylor Law, which he said sparked people's interests in protecting employee rights. He stressed the importance of contract negotiations he was involved with, many of which protect basic employee rights, such as personal days and a 40-hour workweek, which he said, many people take for granted.

Langer described how he was chosen as CSEA's first Statewide Political Action Committee Chairman, became Director of the Statewide CSEA-NYS Labor Management Committee and discussed his role as CSEA's consultant for Mental Hygiene. He also described reasons for CSEA's affiliation with AFSCME and the AFL-CIO.

Langer provided great detail of what he called "dramatic" and "forever-changing events" that occurred at CSEA in 1974. Langer credited the "Palace Theatre Fiasco," as the organization's turning point where new leaders (Bill McGowan) and new counsel (Roemer, Featherstonhaugh, and Martin) emerged to ultimately change the organization. When describing the Palace Theatre Fiasco, which threatened a strike to obtain a decent contract, Langer mentioned how future Statewide President Joe McDermott, a Regional President at the time, emerged as a Statewide leader.

Langer credited Jim Featherstonhaugh with helping him strengthen CSEA as a political force. Langer also detailed the hardships of gaining power at the statewide level

from local/regional levels, particularly with obtaining a dues check-off for political action, in order to ensure that members would be well represented.

In addition, Langer provided insights about the personalities of CSEA President's, Dr. Ted Wenzel, Bill McGowan and Joe McDermott.

Langer added two things he is most proud of from his career with CSEA were improving staffing ratios and saving state jobs at MR facilities and overseeing the process of CSEA becoming a "potent political action machine." Langer also offered advice for the future of CSEA, and stated, "Don't lose sight of your membership and make sure you have a political action machine that can represent their interests."

Key Words

AFL-CIO
AFSCME
Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC)
Collective Bargaining Specialists
Contract negotiations
Director of Labor Management Committee
Foy DeGraff Law Firm
"Landslide Bill"
Last Offer Binding Arbitration (LOBA)
Mental Hygiene
Morgado Memorandum
Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD)
Palace Theatre Fiasco
Rockland Psychiatric Center
Rockland State Hospital School of Nursing
Roemer, Featherstonhaugh, and Martin Law firm
Section 75 Hearing
Taylor Law
Tenure
United Cerebral Palsy (UCP)

Utica State Hospital

Willowbrook Consent Decree

Key People

Thomas Brand

Judy Burgess

Hugh Carey

John Clark

James Featherstonhaugh?

Bob Lattimer

Bruce Martin

Joseph McDermott

William McGowan

Jack Rice

James Roemer

Rebella Ufemio

Dr. Ted Wenzel

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FV: I'd like you to start, just for the record, tell us your name and positions you held in the union, and any remembrances you're ready to tell us about, and then I've got some leading questions here too.

ML: Okay. I'm Marty Langer and I've been involved with CSEA at a local level and then at a statewide level, going back to, I guess, 1967 was when I started my involvement. I started my state career in 1961, and that was an opportunity for me to-I didn't realize it at the time, but to go to school and get one sort of an education and then work on the wards of a psychiatric center, which gave me a whole other education, and gave me a whole other view of the people who I worked with.

I guess when I finished college and graduate school, I was in a golden position to articulate a lot of the concerns that I probably would not have even given a lot of thought to had I not worked on the wards and gone to school. What sort of segued me into my union involvement, because in the years that I worked on the wards, in those days, there were 90,000 patients being served in psychiatric centers and I think back now, I think today, actually, of the staffing levels that people are appropriately concerned about as being inadequate and I compare that with the world that I knew then where-I worked with the adolescents and we only had 34 patients on a ward. The adult services had 77 patients on a ward. The beds were really just lined up one next to the other, and the adult wards and the children's wards had one thing in common, that on the evening shift, there was one person on duty. On the night shift, there was one person on duty, and during the day shift, at best, there were two people on duty. I wound up at some point being the supervisor and I can recall very often where I would be the supervisor and if somebody called in sick, covering one or two wards in addition to becoming the supervisor on an evening or night shift.

It's with that sort of a background that I started to see the world in a very different fashion, and I started to relate very well to the needs of those who work in direct care. So, when I finished school, I guess I got involved; I'm not sure. I am sure, actually.

I became a school teacher after I finished working on the wards, and I worked as an institution teacher, and I realized that, having spent a lot of time making very little money, that it was time for me to try to make a living and I thought it was not inappropriate f or me to advance. I guess my introduction to CSEA came at that point because the state set up some catch-22 scenarios about what it took for me to move from point A to point B, in those days from becoming a teacher to a senior teacher. And I realized that even though I had met all these requirements, that until I actually had some piece of paper from the State Education Department, which could take literally years, that I was not going to be able to advance.

I called up this organization that I knew nothing about other than the fact that it existed, and I spoke to somebody in the research department who said, you know, you're right. This shouldn't take this long and you shouldn't suffer the consequences of it taking as long as it does, so maybe we can help you. In the course of a fairly short time, CSEA helped me. Hardly a gigantic matter in those days, but it was to me. And it made me realize that I was a little guy and that the State of New York was a big operation and that, on my own, I couldn't do really very much to deal with it. It was at that moment that it was sort of an epiphany, I guess. And my own wake-up call was that I said, well, maybe I need to get involved a little bit. Maybe it's time for me to just take a look around and see what this union is all about, because I know what the state is at this point.

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I started to go to some local meetings and I thought, at the local level, that there was nothing really more powerful than the field rep, because that's the only name I would ever see, is that Tom Brand will be at our meeting tonight. So, at the beginning, I said, you know, if I go through my life without meeting Tom Brand, I will have failed. I ultimately got to meet Tom Brand and it turned out to be he was a great guy. But there was a lot more to CSEA and because I took an interest-and not that many people really did-I suddenly was asked to get involved at the local level.

I became a vice-president. I said, “This is fun.” It was about at that point that the Taylor Law started to emerge and that there started to be an interest in, at the local level, really representing employees. And that's something that had not occurred at that point, and the reason, at least at psych centers, that I saw, and I thought this was not uncommon, is that the people who rose in the earliest days to positions where there were chapter officers-there were no locals it those days, but the chapters were, not invariably, but more often than not, headed by people who folks looked up to. In those days, that would be supervising nurses. As it turned out, the supervising nurses were also the folks that people were grieving against. So, when grievances were raised, there were really very few people to turn to because the people you were really upset with were the people you had to turn to with your problems.

So, you really were getting nowhere fast, I mean, unless you had the courage to go higher, and very few people did. And I didn't come from the world of a supervising nurse, so people found it a lot easier to come to me to talk about the supervising nurses, who also, by the way, were members of CSEA, which created sort of an internal and inherent conflicts.

But the Taylor Law started to unfold in those days. Collective bargaining, as a matter of law, started to become the way of the world. And I think I started to surface, because I would raise issues about the way in which I had to represent people and the constraints I felt. And I guess there were people in Albany who were collective bargaining specialists, CBS's they were called in those days, started to say, well, there was this bright guy at Rockland, and I was at Rockland Psych. Then, maybe we should go and talk to him because we're now going to talk about the contracts and maybe we should find out some of the issues that are out there, that we should incorporate into our collective bargaining, because, as we try to represent the workforce, I guess we should know exactly what pitfalls are out there. And they came down and talked to me and I talked to them.

At some point, they said, you know, we could use some of your input on another level. So, I simultaneously started to get involved at the local level, where I very much enjoyed representing a lot of employees in disciplinary proceedings, and I started the work with the CBS' s at the higher level to give input, in terms of the issues that they should be addressing in negotiations.

Ultimately, they wanted me involved in those negotiations. That was a very enjoyable time for me because it gave me the opportunity to say, well, let me tell you how it works down below. You know, it's not just a piece of paper and a contract, but there are actually lives, if you will, that are at stake at the chapter level that you should be aware of in terms of how to protect their best interests. So, I guess I gave-I got involved locally.

I started to rise in the image of the people that I represented because I did a pretty decent job of representing them. That was a reputation that I enjoyed and it was a role I loved playing. And it was really-going back to I first attempt at calling CSEA to get some input as to how I could advance myself as a senior teacher. From that moment on, I started to really, I won't say thrive, but very much enjoy the input I could give to CSEA and what they in turn provided me

with, which was a better ability to represent the people at the local level, which is something I felt the need to do. The local in those days was large. I mean, my local alone had 3400 members, which is, you know, again, state locals in those days were large. It was a golden opportunity for me to really represent people, you know, at the ward level, from the ward level up to the doctor level. The more I got into that, the more I felt the need to get involved in Albany. At the Albany level, at some point, I was asked to introduce myself to Dr. Wenzel, who was then the statewide president. His input about me was that, well, I was a pretty bright guy who knew things at the local level, who had concerns that needed to be addressed at a statewide level, and that it would be not a bad idea to have me sit down and talk to him every once in a while to provide some input. He kind of agreed, and he started to involve me in a variety of little ad hoc committees in terms of, since I did have a good handle on what things had to get done, how could the union generally be improved and so on. And I suddenly found myself as the temporary-the chairman of temporary committees that were to decide the future of the organization.

I don't know if I ever succeeded in coming up with a blueprint for doing that, but at least it gave me an opportunity to provide some input, to start to get to know a lot of the people in Albany, to start to know field staff around the entire state, and to really get a feel for the Albany level of operation that I never had before. And I realize, with each level of operation, that I sort of came across and felt more comfortable with at the Albany level, it really enhanced my ability to operate locally. The more respect you got on a statewide basis, the more respect you got in terms of running your own local. That was always helpful to the people who I really was most concerned about, which were the 3400 people in my own local.

At some point, in the course of time, Dr. Wenzel thought that I had gotten to the point where perhaps I was a good choice to be the statewide political action chairman. I'm not exactly sure how he concluded that since politics was really not my game. I never really was involved; I never ran for any office other than local president, and that was something I was comfortable with and never had a need to go higher then. But he decided that, well, I would be his appointee as the statewide chairman. I had not been the first. I think there was one, a guy named John Clark, before me, who I believe is now-I don't believe, I know he has passed away.

And there was a lobbyist, a gentleman named Jack Rice, who I was asked to work with, who was a brilliant guy, one of the most articulate attorneys I've ever known. That for me, and maybe for this organization, became more of turning point. I'm not going to say for a moment that I was the most instrumental object involved in that, but CSEA had been a couple things, I think, early on.

When I first got involved, it was not notorious, if you will, as a labor organization. At the local level, to be sure, it was much more of a social type of a scenario. As I said before, people didn't come in with real grievances because the people they had to talk to were the people they were grieving against. So it didn't serve a purpose there.

Politically, CSEA had not been known to take political stands. They had gone neutral in virtually every race that ever had been. I guess the feeling was, we need to be friends with everybody, so if we take sides and we're wrong, which is obviously going to be the case half of the time, then we're really taking tremendous risk. The consequence was that CSEA really was not viewed as being a major player in the Albany scene. This was back in, I guess, '71, '72, somewhere in that range, when Dr. Wenzel was still there. I could presume for argument sake that some of that was because Jack Rice and his law firm was pretty much tied in to one party, and it seemed fairly apparent that that was the way it was. And he was a very bright man and he was very helpful. I think,

having watched him negotiate, that he was very skilled at doing many things. But politically, CSEA had yet to emerge as something other than a one-party operation.

Well, there was a war. It really started out with CSEA thinking about actually going on strike. It was a scary time. We had not done well in negotiations-I forget what year; it was the early 701 s, and we had to show the governor of the State of New York, I guess it was Hugh Carey, that we were sincere in our desire to get a decent contract. I know there was a strike motion because I delivered. That much I do remember rather vividly. We had what was known as the Palace Theater fiasco, actually, which really was a gigantic turning point in this organization's history. I delivered the strike motion that day because I had been on the negotiating teams. It was clear that we were going to get next to nothing. We had been offered a bonus of no magnitude. I mean, it was kind of a slap in the face to a number of state employees. Jack Rice saw it as a dangerous role for him to play as an attorney, because he would have to, by law, advise his clients against the strike. He wasn't at the Palace Theater, which gave people a moment of pause as to, where's our counsel. And I think people really were very upset about that.

Secondly, Dr. Wenzel, at the time, did not really conduct the show as well as it needed to be conducted that day. If you're going to do it, then do it right. I guess the feeling was that it wasn't done right that day. I delivered the motion and there was then pandemonium on the floor. Dr. Wenzel did not look good. The entire day turned into a debacle of some magnitude where there actual issues of the Times Union that were put out that said CSEA was, for the first time in its history, actually had voted to go on strike, which was obviously in violation of the Taylor Law. But in reality, there had never been a strike vote, even thought the motion had been delivered. Part of that was because Dr. Wenzel did not successfully carry out his role at that moment. So, basically, I guess it was Joe McDermott who rose. He was a regional president at the time. He came in and essentially walked onto the stage and we wound up taking other motions.

In the end, it wound up being a mail vote to the overall rank and file regarding whether or not we accepted things or not in terms of the contract. But that day was a major moment in time because it certainly was a black eye, not so much to the organization as it was to Dr. Wenzel himself in terms of his own leadership. It also gave people a real moment of pause as to whether or not the lawyer, who was our chief council should have remained our chief counsel when he was not there at a moment when there was a need for him to be there.

That was a major moment in time. I was still at the statewide political action chairman, I had worked with this chief counsel, and I considered him to be a colleague, but I also knew that there were some inherent problems that were fairly clear to me.

Shortly thereafter, there was a desire on at least the part of some to actually change law firms. The created, within the board of directors, a major schism with Dr. Wenzel polarizing himself on one side and a number of other people on the other. At that moment, I won't say all hell broke loose, but to be sure, it was one of the more interesting board meetings ever held. When the smoke cleared, there was no longer a relationship with Foy DeGraf, which had been the law firm, and Jack Rice, who had been the chief counsel from that law firm was no longer the chief counsel. And it put me in kind of a strange scenario. I knew what had to get done, but I watched the world changing before my eyes. I said, my God, I accepted this role under one set of conditions and suddenly, I now see things changing dramatically before my eyes.

At the same time, there was a move away from Foy DeGraf. There was another move inside of the organization. Part of the attorneys working for Foy DeGraf were-

actually a guy named Jim Roemer who had been part of the law firm but working in-house, inside of CSEA. He was very close to a guy who had previously worked for Foy DeGraf named Jim Featherstonehaugh, who was no longer involved. But he thought that the best way to proceed for CSEA was to change counsel and that he and Feathers and a gentleman named Bruce Martin would join up and become a law firm that could be the new counsel to CSEA.

It was a major turning point in the organization because when that board meeting was concluded, then there was a change. Foy DeGraf was no longer the counsel and Roemer and Featherstonehaugh, and Bruce Martin, who later left that organization, suddenly emerged as the new chief counsels to the organization.

It was a turning point mainly because it did two things. One is that it changed the law firms, which gave us an entirely new way of doing business. And it also was the beginning of the end, actually, for the leadership of Ted Wenzel, because at that moment, when McGowan, whose picture I look at with a smile at the moment, suddenly started to emerge as someone who could be a leader, and it became clear.

As the days went by, you could see Dr. Wenzel slowly losing the leadership power that he had amassed over the years, and you could see Bill McGowan, who had been the executive vice president at the time, rising slowly but surely as someone who could overthrow. My conclusion, personally, was that I said the time had come to make a change. Even though Dr. Wenzel had appointed me and I thought at the time he had been the right guy at the right time, I thought that the times had changed and that my allegiance, if you will, was going to be to the organization and to those who could improve it. I then became Bill McGowan's campaign manager, along with a woman named Judy Burgess, actually. We started to work on a lot of different things in terms of moving Bill along, but that's just another side.

From an organizational standpoint, I want to stay with the change of the law firms because the moment the law firm changed, so too did my relationship as the political action chairman for the organization. I stayed on in that role because Dr. Wenzel at the time still wanted me to maintain that. But I was no longer going to work with Jack Carter Rice. There was now a new law firm and, invariably, we would turn to the law firm for leadership as a lobbyist, and whoever I would work with would have to be chosen from that firm. The first person that actually emerged from the new firm of Roemer Featherstonehaugh and Martin was Bruce Martin, who was the third partner. He was the original lobbyist that came along with that group. After about what seemed like minutes, he concluded that he didn't want to be a lobbyist, and Feathers, as he became known, grudgingly said, all right, I'll do it. As it turned out, Feathers was and I think still remains one of the premier lobbyists in the capital.

I started to work closely with Feathers and we started to really, together, with tremendous input from him, of course, make the CSEA world into one that was, for the first time, political. CSEA, as I said before, had always been neutral and had never had the ability or the courage to really become an offensive organization. It was sort of just a passive type of a world.

We started out with no money. We started out, quite literally, with cake sales. We had a political action committee at the Albany level that had its grass roots down below, where the regional presidents really wanted to be very much in charge of the world of politics in their regions. They did not want to relinquish any power, if you will, to the statewide organization. While that was great for them personally, it was not good for the organization organizationally.

That was a major concern that had to be addressed and overcome. The way that occurred actually took place also in the mid- 1970's, where we had to graduate

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from a cake sale operation in terms of a way of amassing political action funds to a much more astute and much more endowed operation. The only way that could become possible was through a dues checkoff. So, for the first time ever-and it took, my recollection is, an endless number of votes at convention until we successfully were able to get, I think it was, a ten-cent-per-pay-period removal of dues strictly to be used for political action purposes. That was done really at odds with a number of the regional presidents at the time. Once the dues checkoff occurred and we actually had established money that could be used for political action purposes, then automatically-I mean there had to be a little more power granted to the statewide organization so that at least things that even occurred locally had to be bounced off the statewide operation before they went forward, so that we were now working at odds with one another. As a practical matter, there were conceivably local-regional people, rather who had the, I won't say deals cut, if you will, but at least relationships established, which may have been good and served their purposes locally, but really were very much at odds with the statewide level. Those things had to be addressed, and that was part of my role, was to go to each region, go to each local at times, and to each political action committee, and sort of work with them to let them know that we had to work for the greater good of this operation. I would say that, in the course of not too many years, we went from being a very apolitical operation, being completely neutral and passive to becoming a force at the Albany level. We had money to be used in political campaigns, which we used, I think, effectively and efficiently. I think we started to have another voice that was raised in a way that had never been done before.

I believe, politically, we were finally able to get the Taylor Law to recognize the fact that unions, by law, had to represent everybody in the bargaining unit and, therefore, it was not inappropriate for people who went into the public sector and were going to be, by law, represented by an organization, to have their dues or the equivalent of dues sent off to that organization, and that all took place with the political action machine that was created. That had not been done before. That also brought us together in a leadership role with other public employee unions in the state who, for the first time ever, looked to CSEA for leadership in that area, something that had never really occurred. CSEA was sort of around but it was invariably referred to as a sleeping tiger. Suddenly, this sleeping tiger was awakened, and we did assume a major role.

Those were pretty good times. CSEA really went through a metamorphosis and the days of Ted Wenzel, where he was very content to keep the organization-I won't say hold it back. That would be inappropriate, but it was also never going to make major waves-to suddenly a brand new leadership. Bill McGowan was not afraid to make change. He was the new kid on the block. Actually, Bill, unlike Ted Wenzel, who had always been a state employee, Bill was a relatively new state employee. He had come from his own little business, and I think, because he came into the world of the public sector with a private sector philosophy, he was not afraid to make some changes and was not wedded to the past. He was wedded more to the future.

I think that that moment, and for those years-certainly, the 70's were a very exciting time for me personally and for this organization-I think the changes that it went through were dramatic and forever changed the scene. To be sure, for a very extended period of time, CSEA was noticed, where, prior to that, it had not been. Hopefully, it continues to be noticed, but I can say with assuredness that the changes that took place from 1973 or 1974 straight forward, at least until the 80's, were tremendous times for CSEA.

It matured into a major operation where I guess other changes took place. This was sort of coincidental. I could never really understand how other bargaining agents came along when CSEA was really at its height. Yet, the Public

Employees Federation, PEF, suddenly became, not a sleeping giant. I mean, it was never that. It was able to succeed in representing-in coming up with a collective bargaining representation fight much to the amazement of most people, because CSEA had really been a major player. I guess the logic from my standpoint was that the professionals, who turned to PEF really were very difficult to represent because there were so many diffuse and diverse titles that having one bargaining agent represent them was not an easy task, particularly since from the local level I guess there was a belief that, well, CSEA spent most of its time seemingly representing the direct care people. And they didn't always want to be affiliated or associated with the direct care people, so they became an easy target. I say this by way of background because what it lead to was CSEA's loss of the professional unit. But in an attempt to retrieve it, because I guess PEF had been part of AFL-.CIO, we thought that an affiliation with AFSCME was one way to proceed. Actually, it was really PEF, the creation of PEF, that caused the ultimate relationship. Because CSEA had been courted by AFSCME for quite a period of time. Even though it was going to be a friendly relationship, there was no affiliation relationship. It was really when PEF emerged that CSEA took the position, well, maybe if we affiliate, we can sort of turn the clock back and make this entire election go away. I'm not sure form a legal standpoint if that made any sense, and ultimately, it didn't.
But it did, in the end, create the relationship that CSEA currently as an AFSCME affiliate and therefore is an AFL-CIO affiliate.
Again, that was also part of the days of the law firm and some of the decisions they made. And it brought me-because CSEA did ultimately lose the bargaining rights for the professionals-into a unique circumstance because it was now suddenly the late 1970's, maybe 1980 already, and CSEA lost the professional unit, and I was in the professional unit. They said, “Well, maybe it was time for me to take on a different role.” Having CSEA along with the law firm through the days of the political action transformation, and having, a year earlier, gotten-Bill McGowan- not gotten him, but certainly assisted in getting Bill McGowan elected, because I was one of the two campaign chairmen, they said, well, maybe it's time for me to change roles entirely.
In the contracts that year, they had come up with the statewide labor management committees, which are still in existence today. I had been asked-because there was going to be two directors of those committees, one representing the governor's office and one representing CSEA-to be CSEA's director of the labor management committees. I guess it was 1979 where I had left my local, I actually left Rockland State Hospital then, which had become Rockland,Psychiatric Center, to take on the role of the director of the statewide labor management committee in Albany.
That was a role that I frankly enjoyed until I realized there were certain domestic consequences to being away for extended periods of time. I suddenly had to go home and heal some problems that I had created as a result of my being away. And I had to leave for a while.
I guess a year or two had gone by where I sort of quietly took care of domestic concerns, where I was approached once again by Bill McGowan to return to the organization that I'd had to leave abruptly in order to address my personal concerns. He asked me to resume a role that I had played in some fashion as the political action person, mainly because my grounding was really in the world of mental hygiene, and he knew that I did have significant knowledge because I had spent a lifetime growing up in that field. He asked me to return as the consultant for CSEA's mental hygiene group, which was still a large operation. It was the world of the mentally ill and the world of the mentally retarded, and those would be all of the developmental centers and all of the psychiatric centers that were around.

They were St-ill the largest part of the state division, which, at the time, was still the larger portion of CSEA's overall membership.
That was a role I played and I guess, to some extent, I continue to play, as the consultant for mental hygiene. In that role, I guess I was one of the people who oversaw the closing of all the MR facilities in a way, which, in the end, was, I believe, productive, because we had the courage as an organization to allow closure to take place for the MR world in a way that transformed I:hem from big institutions to a wealth of community residences, most of which were going to be state operated and still represented by CSEA.
I guess if I was going to say I had one major role that I played in this latter world, as opposed to the world of the 60's and 70's, it was probably the closure process in MR. CSEA's role in that was instrumental because I think it gave CSEA-it created a model, I think, for other states. In fact, I've been contacted over the years quite often by AFSCME because the model that CSEA created in New York State in the world of MR was one that people hope to replicate everywhere else. I don't think it's been done everywhere else, but to this point, the closures that have taken place over a period of ten or twelve years, the process has unfolded rather well.
And if I had one personal achievement, I would say it was the fact that I was heavily involved in that process and carried it through to fruition in a number of places. And that really takes me from the beginning to the end. I'm not sure if I've covered every base, but, in a synopsis fashion, I think I did go at least from a chronology that begins in the 60's to one that ends in the year 2001.

FV: Good overview. You want to take a sip of water or

ML: Yes; thank you.

FV: We're going to go back and delve into-I've got some specific questions.

ML: This has really been a rewarding thing for me, because back, what seems like my adult life almost. I keep thinking that I came to work for the state when I was 18.

FV: And your 37 now? (laughs)

ML: I'm 37, exactly. And it's hard to believe that was 41 years ago. That's wild.

FV: Yeah, I want to go back to the beginning. You said you knew CSEA-I don' t know how you knew about CSEA, but how did you know that there was this thing called CSEA, whatever it was, social club or whatever.

ML: Tom Brand. Tom Brand is gonna be at the meeting. I kept saying, who is and what is Tom Brand. What is this meeting? What is CSEA? At the local level, which is really where it comes down to if you're going to get involved. It's gotta be your starting point. There was a woman, the secretary of CSEA. Her name was Sunshine. Her real name was Rebella Ufemio, and that's why she was Sunshine. It was a lot easier to say Sunshine. She had been the secretary. But as I said earlier, most of the people in high places really rose to the level of being the chapter officers. Sunshine herself was one of the secretaries to a director. So even though she was the local secretary, you were not going to get too much of an audience. In fact, my introduction, because I started out being a-when I got involved ultimately, being a first vice president, which was the grievance

chairman-they said well, your job is to sort of listen and pay them and say everything's okay; you'll be okay. And I said, that's my job? Not really what I had in mind, actually. If that's my job, it's really a shame. But I had no knowledge other than the name Sunshine, the name Tom Brand, and the fact that-I didn't even know, frankly, what CSEA was because to me a union was a union. Why would you call it an association? I said, that doesn't make sense. To this day, I would actually contend that that's probably-you should change the name of this operation from CSEA to something else, only because the name doesn't connote what a union is supposed to be. In any event, it was the only show I had. When I had this problem of trying to get myself moved along from teacher to senior teacher, which for me was going to be a huge move in those days, I went to speak to the then local president-not local, chapter president, a gentleman named George Tano, who was a supervising nurse. Not only was he a supervising nurse, but in those days, he was actually an instructor at the Rockland State Hospital School of Nursing. So, he represented, I guess, to the employee somebody they could look up to, because he was a teacher of sorts, but he was also a supervising nurse. He was also the guy who gave them all their grief. He was one of the people who they would have associated with giving them bad assignments or giving them bad days off or-they called them pass days. The things that you could do in those days. I came to learn this. I mean, there were little black books that supervisors would hold onto, which ultimately were addressed in contract negotiations. Those books were used, you know, whenever you wanted to say goodbye to an employee, they would just take that book out, and say, well, let me give you the list of the days you were, you know, one minute late. Literally, you would see-I would see charges like that. One minute late, three minutes late, and lists, but I always thought it was interesting, because there would be a whole series of three minute late type of things, which are, to me, meaningless, followed by, "'but attitude still the same," which means that this person who came in a minute late, which is nothing, was probably confronted on a daily basis by a supervisor who was not nice. Therefore, "attitude still the same." Those were the kinds of things that went one.
When I got involved, even with George, George at least had the decency to acknowledge the fact that he couldn't really, without an inherent conflict of interest, represent anybody, or grieve against one of his colleagues without really having a personal problem. So he was kind of happy when I first got involved because I didn't come from the nursing ranks. I had grown up as an attendant on the wards, which gave me a grounding, which I was comfortable with, but at least I didn't have to worry about having to talk to a colleague who would say, how could you do this to me? You're my brother or sister in arms, whatever-not my sister-at-arms, of course. But, you can't possibly come to me because you do what I do, therefore, you have no standing here. My approach was, no, I do have standing here and I am representing, you know ... In fact, my approach was, listen, you may be a CSEA member and so is this person, but today, you're management and I hate to tell you but I'm going to represent this person because that's the role, under the law, that I’ve got to play. If you've got a problem after I'm done, I guess you'll come back to me later on.
But doing back to your question, when I first got involved, it wasn't easy finding out what CSEA was other than for me to come to the realization that it was the only vehicle I had available to me to do anything. What I discovered quickly was that whatever I needed to get done, was not going to get done locally. Thank God there was an Albany organization that I could turn to because it was clear that nobody at the local level had either the ability or the means to address the concerns that I raised. But it was that introduction that got me involved at the Albany level and got me interested at all at any level. That was-the days of George ..tano and Rebella

Ufemia that got me involved in this operation and, from that point on, it was a great relationship.

FV: Now, there's another name, but when you say it, it sounds like Pete Seeger should be doing a song about it. Tom Brand.

ML: Tom Brand. Tom Brand was a retired New York State trooper who became the field rep covering Rockland County. Rockland County for him-he was, I guess, the state field rep so he covered Rockland State Hospital at the time, Letchworth Village, probably some of the DOT operations. But he was, to me, he was CSEA because every time I saw a meeting notice, which you'd see however often they went up, in big, bold print "Tom Brand will be there." I said to myself, I gotta meet this guy because, whoever he is, he's the man. In the end, I discovered that he was the field rep and I came to realize that the field rep was the guy who was sort of there to help out. In the end, I should tell you, sort of as a postscript, that Tom Brand, up until this year, ultimately did retire from CSEA as he did from the State Troopers, and I guess Tom is probably now in his late 80's, actually. As it turns out, there is a golf club on the grounds of Rockland State Hospital, now Rockland Psych Center-Tom was a golfer, and I'm a golfer. I got to be the president of that that golf course, and Tom, just to kill some time decided he wanted to work in the pro shop, and up until this last season, I got to see Tom Brand every day because he showed up as the guy behind the desk in the pro shop. He would occasionally go out, less and less, unfortunately, because of his age and his failing health, to play some golf. But Tom Brand was somebody I got to know and has remained a very close friend for the last 41 years. So I got to know Tom Brand.

FV: Tell us a little bit about him.

ML: Well, Tom was married to a woman named Agnes who he lost about a year and a half ago, and they were inseparable. They were decent, decent folks. But Tom's style-I never really thought of his as a State Trooper because I always have this image of the State Troopers as big tough guys, and Tom may have been all those things in his youth, but he was really very mild. His approach was really low key. And he would come in and-I really never emulated anybody's approach other than maybe some of the attorneys that I got to work with over the years, but I enjoyed working with Tom because he added a note of reason, and I watched the way he dealt with the administration of the hospital. In those days, CSEA had no real standing as a union, so your approach to going in and working with management was very different. You couldn't walk in-I can always picture Bill McGowan standing there almost like Kruschev, if you will, pounding his shoe on the table to get his point across, except Bill would do it with his cigar; you know, he'd flick it at you. But Tom's approach, you know, this goes back many years before anybody surfaced as a union and, therefore-as CSEA got stronger in Albany and made itself a much more powerful player, the ability to represent people down below became that much easier. Because you finally had somebody you could fall back on, and that was a good thing, but Tom didn't have that luxury, so Tom's approach was really, not hat in hand, if you will, but he would walk in and say, okay, can we talk about this guy who's got a real problem, where you couldn't talk to the supervising nurse who has been the local officer. At least some people had the ability to say, well, let me go around you to the guy who's the field rep and see if I can get my grievance aired and my concerns addressed. And I learned from Tom that that was one approach, which was fine and worked well for him at the time; it may not have saved every soul in town, but, given the circumstances, he probably saved more than others might

have, given a different approach. That said, as I moved along in Albany, I guess my relationship with field reps wasn't as pronounced, and I had my own way of running the local. I really enjoyed it. I was very much into representing people. It sort of allowed me to surface personally in a way that I had not done. I would find myself speaking up on other people's behalf in a fashion that I wasn't able to do on my own, which I thought was kind of interesting. I guess working in a psychiatric center, becoming schizophrenic was not a bad thing. But it did allow me to surface that way and I found myself not needing field reps, and Tom didn't have to spend a great deal of time at my particular local. He sort of went to those locals that did require a little more service, and that was fine. And we didn't get back together again until years went by. He was there and, I guess, as the years went by, he wound up servicing other locals and we had some other folks along the way. I got to really know Tom again more as a golfer than as a field rep. But, again, that name did surface. I can still picture those very small meetings that took place in the basement of one of the now-closed buildings in a room that was not much larger than the one we're in now. That's how many people showed an interest. I juxtapose that with ten years later, when CSEA got to be a little more noticed, suddenly having those meetings at the Holiday Inn. Now that I'm thinking about it, it's quite a comparison between the world of a room this size versus a gigantic room with quite literally 500 to 600 people in attendance because they had a real interest in what was going on, because they knew it affected them for the first time. Those were major changes in those days. There were contracts that were coming down that were interesting. There were retirements, stem changes that were going to impact them. Their lives were going to be affected by everything that took place, and they finally had an organization in Albany that was powerful enough to represent them and they knew it, they felt it. They felt-they would come to me and say, you know, we feel safer now. That was a very nice thing to hear. In some small way, if I was a part of that, I felt great. It was a wonderful thing. But we went from the days of Tom Brand walking in with a very quiet, mild mannered approach because there was nothing behind him, organizationally-if the director said, get out, he would have had no other- recourse other than to leave. At some point, if you kicked me out, I was going to come back, in a way that would let you know that you shouldn't have kicked me out. And that's because CSEA went through its changes.

FV: Now, later, you and Tom Brand. Did he ever talk about those days later, about how he came up with his approach, did he bring visual aids? What did he do?

ML: Well, no. It was really a matter of watching it unfold. He had been a State Trooper and my guess was that it was his own personality that he brought to this more than any instruction booklet that he had followed. Each field rep had his or her own way of doing business. Invariably, how effective anybody was, whether they were a field rep or a local officer, was directly hinged to the strength of this organization. That's something I discovered. I felt-I never felt omnipotent by any means, but I certainly felt like the more active we were here, the more we became, not just the big kids on the block, organizationally, but looked up to by the other unions in the public sector, it was something we had never done. That got to be known, and you felt it. You felt it at every level of operation. It was amazing for me-I won't say awe-but the amount of respect you suddenly amassed when you walked in to discuss things, even at the local level. People knew for the first time that you're really not alone. I guess, in the days of Tom Brand, in his earliest moments, he was alone. I mean, he may have had an organization up here, which was very mild and, at best, had a casual

relationship, could find out some detail, could find out some sections of law, rule or regulation that might have applied, but wouldn't have the ability to effect those laws, rules or regulations. When CSEA suddenly was able to have a proactive political operation, could actually make some changes, people realized, well, wait a minute, that I can't just walk all over you anymore because you can come back and change my world in a way that you didn't have the ability to do before. Big difference. So, Tom didn't have a book and I think, in the end, the book was written up here.

FV: Well, it seems to me, as I'm going into the history of CSEA, that this power that you're talking about is what a union is about, because each person, you, as you've gotten more involved, as you grew up your strength, the union got more powerful. It wasn't just somebody in Albany; it was you guys, adding your personalities and your strength and your knowledge of the mental health industry, if you want to call it that, that you knew the problems and you knew how to deal with them, and you brought that strength to CSEA.

ML: Well, yes. However, it's a two-way dynamic. Yeah, I imaging I could have walked up here with a lot of knowledge based on whatever I had learned growing up on the wards, which was a great (deal, and I would always kind of laugh to myself as I was taking all these abnormal psych courses, how much more the attendant next to me knew than the teacher, because that person worked his whole life with chronic schizophrenic patients, and this teacher was living in some never-never land, which had no relationship to the real world, so, I learned a great deal from the attendants that I worked with. I also had the luxury of being with a whole different genre of people. These were folks who had fought in World War II. Their lives were in the psych centers. They actually were drafted or went into the army or navy or wherever from the state system. They came back to work. They were a whole different breed of folks, but they were also individuals who were not going to buck the chain of command. That was not their nature. They were there; they were proud to be attendants. In fact, in those days, we work black pants, white shirts, black bow tie, white jackets, and those who had two hash marks were staff attendants. But that was as high as they wanted to go and they were not about to that into anything other than a normal chain of command where you did not go up and tell the general in charge how to run his show. That was interesting for me because I was sort 'of in the middle. I grew up, you know, I was born during World War II, right at the beginning of it and I certainly wasn't old enough to fight in it, but I didn't understand where they were coming from. But, yes, armed with that, I was able to represent those interests. But I would still contend that until the organization amassed its strength, it would have been very difficult for a local leader to really come out and do whatever it is he had to do without feeling defenseless out there. You could sit and pound your fist on the table and you could do many things, but, you know, they're going to look at you at the local level and say, well, what are you going to do about it. And I can remember, from a personal standpoint, I can remember there were some administrators that I had to deal with as a local president, as a chapter president, who had an arrogance about them that I thought was amazing. In fact, if you wanted to trace back some of the psych centers, the developmental centers, if you went to those campuses, you would still see the remnants of their existence because they had mansions, literally mansions. To the extent that their still out there, they've been turned into clubhouses on golf courses. These are huge operations, but their whole way of doing business was, hey, I am almost a god in the way in which I was appointed and I'm going to run my show because it's my fiefdom. Even those who came shortly thereafter, while I was still growing up in the system had a

similar attitude, like don't tell me how to run my business. Don't tell me you have any rights. And I would say, no, I'm afraid that you don't rule by divine right, that, you know, I hate to tell you this, but unless you start to become a little more reasonable, because I know that this person that I'm standing here representing has rights that you're denying, that I'll do something here that will make you famous, and I now have the ability to do that. I have the Public Sector, the Communicator. In those days, we had the Civil Service Leader. All those old documents. I said, I'll make you famous; I promise you. I said I have an ability, I have an organization that will allow me to make you into the most notorious administrator this state has ever seen, and I will embarrass you and the State of New York, and I promise you, I'll do it. It's not as if I'm going to hurt you in some fashion, but you can't hurt these employees. That's something I could not have done. It was maybe in my nature to sort of react in some violent way when somebody was really destroying somebody I was trying to represent, who was right, and they were just simply being arrogant about it-but if I didn't have this operation up here to draw from, I could not have made the series of demands or acted the way I did down below. Now, as it turns out, in those years, certainly in the state division, where I was most familiar, there happened to be a lot of folks, Bob Lattimer, you know, had been a local president, the labor local in Buffalo, and Jimmy More. I currently regional president, was president of the Utica State Hospital. I doubt if folks around today even know that these places even existed. There is no Utica State Hospital anymore, actually, as there is-as there have been many changes. But again, all of us became stronger in direct proportion to how strong this operation became. We came with our own abilities and our own needs, but unless we had some well to drink from and to fall back on, we could not have carried out the role we played.

FV: The issues you talked about, that you were defending people, basic rights now. Hours worked and mistreatment and...

ML: It's funny how we think of what basic rights are, because people assume now that everything that they have in the way of benefits have always been there. I go back to the days of the supervisors and the little black books. We had no right; you had no defense. The only hearing you got, and I put that word hearing in quotes, under the law, was called a section 75 hearing, where you actually would have the chance to air your side of charges and the hearing officer was going to be the director of the next facility. Your ability to appeal was nil, or the time or the money or the energy to even go forward with an appeal. I don't recall anybody who ever did, frankly, ever. The rights that people talk about now are rights that developed as a result of pure and simple contract negotiations that were conducted over the years as the political scene became stronger. In fact, my recollection is-well, I'll reflect on Feathers and Roemer because Jim Roemer was the negotiator and Feathers was the political action end of it. They were so well in concert with one another, because what one couldn't get through negotiations, the other one sort of got through political pressure, but together, they created some power bases that allowed us to negotiate some pretty good contracts. So, yeah, in some ways, just the idea of having a neutral hearing officer, as basic as that right may sound, didn't exist before. So now, when you go into have a hearing or even a normal grievance, forget a discipline, where your life is on the line, your job is an the line, you now have an ability to, well, in some cases, appeal, but at the least, you have the right to a clear hearing before a neutral observer, something that was unheard of way back when, when those people who ruled by divine right were running the show. So, yeah, some of the basic rights, the days off, not everybody had five personal leave

days. I mean, people had less than that. Not everybody had vacation days in the accruals that they have. The list goes on. You could go through the contracts and you could compare that to the world that I remember, and it was ludicrous. Because I think I worked more than a 40-hour week. .Certainly, the amount of money I was making was ludicrous and now I think people are making a relatively decent living. In fact, I'm told, when you go in to negotiate, that in some places in the state, the state actually drives the rest of the private sector, which is quite a demonstration of some ability on the part of this operation to negotiate a decent contract for people.

FV: That's great. I want to talk-why don't you tell us about the personalities, more about the people when you talk about Roemer and Featherstonehaugh and Jack Rice. What was Wenzel like? What are some of the stories that are out there that we should know about?

ML: Dr. Wenzel was a fairly quiet gentleman who was not a dynamic leader in the sense that he was charismatic. He really was not. In fact, my best recollection would be-and this was something I saw more than once at conventions.
The way the conventions would be set up, and I guess, when I first got involved, I would always go to these conventions, saying, boy, this is great, you know, and I would listen to people who I was convinced at some point would practice for months for their few moments before the microphones, because they sounded like great orators. This was really amazing. And there would always be four mikes lined up in the audience so when the delegates met, full business meetings, all four mikes would have people lined up at each one. And I can remember-and this is probably the best illustration of Ted Wenzel-somebody would stand up there at one mike and say, "Back to Wenzel." And they'd be banging their hand. "Is it not true that at the last meeting that we held a year ago in this same location, that you guaranteed this delegate body that under no conditions would you take it upon yourself unilaterally to make a decision that was going to affect everybody here without at least going back to the board of directors or to be sure coming back to this entire operation so that the general delegate body would have the right to rule on this particular thing which was so near and dear to our hearts, is it not true that you committed to yourself to do that for us?" And he would turn to them and say, "Mike 2." And then mike 2 would go on, and that person on mike I would be standing there waiting for that answer, and mike 2 was just waiting, chomping at the bit to go on with his or her moment of glory. I would sit back and say, that's amazing. I've never seen anything like that in my life. Yet, it happened again and again and again. I said, that's a skill that I don't think I ever want, actually. (laughs) But I can tell you, almost verbatim, what I just said, is what occurred. It was like nothing I've ever seen before or since.

FV: How long was he president, how did he ... ?

ML: Well, I mean, he was there. But, again, he was there at the time. He was there at the time when CSEA did not want to emerge as a sleeping tiger. He was the right guy at that moment in time, when it was more of an association, more of a social club in many ways, but certainly not as a bargaining agent under the law. Just as I delivered the strike motion at the Palace Theater. That should have been a motion where I, you know, that-I got up, I delivered the motion.
It was seconded. In fact, I didn't even know if he asked for a second.
I think, when I finished delivering the motion, he said, "All in favor?" Then there was some sort of a voice vote. I don't think he ever asked for a Nay vote. People started to scream, "We're on strike!" and he walked off the stage.

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I'm saying to myself, now wait a minute. Number one, you didn't ask for a second to my motion. Number two, you didn't complete the vote. I said, number three, this is a mess. Unfortunately, as much as I happened to like Ted Wenzel on a personal basis, and I was very pleased over the fact that he thought well enough of me to appoint me as a statewide political action chairman, I did not see him as being the kind of a leader that was called for if the organization was going to ever become a major player in state politics. And that change had to occur. He was a very ethical man. I think he was personally offended over the fact that some of the things that went on, he saw as being morally wrong and ethically wrong, more ethically than morally, I think, and that really bothered him. And he did not ever accept the f act that this organization was not the group of people it was probably in 1940, when he may have started state service, or even in the 30's. As a result of that, he couldn't accept his defeat. When Landslide Bill won by 32 votes or something, he was ready to take over, and he couldn't go into his own office because Ted Wenzel wouldn't leave. Ted Wenzel was literally in his office, and he would not come out. I'm not sure exactly at what point in time that he decided to reemerge, but it was a period of time. It was really a measure of his inability to accept the fact that the organization was not the group that it was way back when and that the time had come to change, and that the change of the guard was here and now. So defeat for him was something he couldn't handle.

FV: Now, it seems to me that day at the Palace, was like-that's really the demarcation line.

ML: Absolutely.

FV: Wenzel's the status quo, leaving the stage, and who was it that came on?

ML: Joe McDermott took over. He was a regional president that sort of took over, and the one that seemed to rise to the occasion most of all, to be honest, was Joe McDermott. And he did. That was also a moment where Joe got to be heard, but Joe came across as too much of an intellectual, I think, to have been elected at that point in time. I think, in the course of time, as people got to know him more, people got to accept him and trust him more, but Joe seemed a bit to erudite for the rank and file to accept at that moment. But in the course of, not a long time, but I think the next eight years, I think people really go to know and like him and trust him, and that's when Joe's time came. But he did surface then more than he had before.

FV: I'm a little surprised because I don't think of him as a great speaker, and jumping in like that to do what had to be done-I mean, it could have been anybody, right?

ML: It was not a matter of oratory. It was really a matter of procedure, and Joe knew it. Joe was almost scholarly in his approach to this. He knew parliamentary procedure. . He knew what had to be done. He knew how to solidly run the meeting. Even if he was never going to be William Jennings Bryant at the mike, he did know how to effectively run a very structured meeting, and that was what was required at that moment because we had pandemonium, and he essentially took it over. In the end, his worcling actually was used in the ballots that went out to decide whether or not we, in fact, went on strike and whether-well, we did ultimately accept the offer of the state. But, again, it was the end of Ted Wenzel at that point, and the end of the law firm, and those, to me, were the major turning points in this operation.

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FV: What was the result of the ballot on the strike issue?

ML: The state workforce actually accepted a bonus that was kind of ludicrous, actually. But people at least understood that, under the Taylor Law, that either they accepted that and did not go on strike, or they didn't accept it and went on strike, and suffered whatever consequences there might be attached to those strikes. And I think people were a little bit antsy about doing that. In those days, the union had much to lose because it could lose its ability to get dues. Similarly, an employee who went on strike would serve a new probationary period and, more than anything else, employees did not want to risk-it's 'like tenured teachers. After three years, I would like to think that teachers continue to do a good job, but at least the pressure of knowing that they could be summarily discharged would be removed. Similarly, state employees never felt terribly comfortable being in that probationary period where they could also be summarily removed. And you take someone who had been around in the system for a long period of time, for the sake of principle, they would say, well, you know what I'm risking here is a great deal. I'm out there; I'm visible; I'm clearly one of the people that the supervisors are now looking, and now I'm making myself vulnerable. Up until this moment, in order for you to say goodbye to me, you've got to bring me up on charges, you've got to give me all the procedural rights that would accrue to my being a tenured employee. Once I break the Taylor Law and I lose that, I'll pay a price that's a lot worse than I ever imagined. And that's what was on the mind of a lot of people.

FV. You know what surprises me. I said this the other day to somebody I was interviewing. You can't strike, so it seems to me, if you can't strike, there should be some kind of binding arbitration, but there's neither, right? There hasn't been a need for it, I guess.

ML: No. Well, one of the first things we tried, actually, in political act:ion never happened. And I've actually seen over the years one attempt to bring it back. We had bumper stickers in 1974 that said LOBA, L-0-B-A, and what that stood for was Last offer Binding Arbitration. It was on one agenda for the year, actually, one item. It was not going to happen, but I think police may actually have something like that. But basically, it was going to be, the definition was Last offer Binding Arbitration, and what it did was, it caused the parties, theoretically, to come together. Because, an 'arbitrator would have been empowered at some point during the negotiating process to simply say, I'm going to accept your last offer or your last offer. He wouldn't have the ability to blend the two offers. He would not have the ability to come up and mediate it. It was simply, I can only take your offer or your offer, and that's it. Because neither one wanted to be so f ar out on a limb that they would not be chosen, it tended to moderate the demands of both sides and bring them together, so that, in the end, if they had to chose last: offer binding arbitration from either side, the other side could live with it. It died.(laughs) But it was our one agenda that year, and it was probably the one time that that approach was even talked about at some length. I believe there was a time, maybe ten years ago, when somebody brought it back, and I think it scare both parties away, because people realize, well, this isn't just talk anymore. This is a possible way of doing business, which is suddenly scary. Because it's, you know, it's like when you have an employee you're representing in a discipline, you're sometimes better off working out your own deal as opposed to leaving it to an arbitrator who you don't know how he's going to decide, or whether or not you're going to have a job when it's all done. Better to work out something that you're in control than something you're not in control of. I think, maybe that attitude is

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what moves the state system at this point in terms of negotiations. People would rather not have somebody come along deciding their fate, so they take this approach.

FV: I want -to get some more detail about the campaign to elect McGowan. What did you call him?

ML: Landslide Bill?

FV: Now you said you had to do some things to get him-to prepare him to run statewide. What kinds of things did you and your other campaign manager do?

ML: Judy. Well, Bill was an interesting contrast. On one side, you have . Ted Wenzel, who's got a doctorate, who worked for the state education department, who, by some definition, was a scholar. He certainly was articulate. Again, not terribly charismatic, and perhaps no longer a leader for the time. What he did bring to the table, a fairly nice resume, if you will. Now you contrast that with Bill McGowan. Bill is-if there was ever a man who could relate to the common it was Bill. Bill was not articulate in any sense in terms of his use of the language; nor was that relevant, because Bill had an instinct that was good. He couldn't articulate as well, but he knew on which side of the issue he had to fall. And he had that ability. He needed to be seen close up and personal, where someone else like a Ted Wenzel who had been around a long time, could have his picture all over the place, and people have always associated Dr. Wenzel with CSEA, people didn't know Bill. Bill McGowan was a TV mechanic in West Seneca who really had no long history in state service, and people had to get to know him. Bill would walk around with a piece of paper folded up in his pocket, and whenever people would come to him in his region- because he had been a regional president-he would say, what' s your problem? and he would take this piece of paper and write it down, and he would actually get back to you. Because in this little piece of-I don't know how he did it; God only knows-but he had-it was like a filing cabinet. But it was complete, and he would never forget. So no matter what you came to him with, he was really on it; quite a skill, actually. But the best way for Bill to relate to somebody was face-to-face. So it was my job and Judy's job to get him face-to-face. So we brought him- he knew Buffalo and we knew Long Island, and we knew everything in between, and we got him around to the point where-and suddenly, we were out in the middle of the night so that at 7 AM the next morning, we were at Tinker's Tavern just south of Watertown, or we were at every psych center and developmental center, at every county office building. We got him up close and personal, and that's really the way to have elected Bill McGowan. Because once you knew him, you knew he could relate to your needs, and he was one of you. That was what it came down to. And the truth is that the more people understood that he was one of them, the more that also knew that Ted Wenzel was really not, that he represented a different time and a different place in the organization. And while he may have been the right guy at some other time and place, he was not the right guy now, because he didn't want change. He resisted change. He was uncomfortable with changing law firms. He was uncomfortable with getting involved in politics. if you could take a step back-and I guess I had that ability-as I took a step back and said, CSEA really could become something. Right now, it's sort of floundering. It's really nowhere it's hovering at sort of a base level when there is a future for it, and its time for that future to emerge. Ted would not have allowed it to emerge because he was comfortable at a certain level. Bill McGowan worked in a fashion which, he said, you know what-you know, with his big cigar-he says, this could be different-you know, chomping away-this

could be really different; this could be good. It was always so much fun to work with him. I can remember over the years, I was always the-I guess in the end, I was the consultant for mental hygiene, and he would refer to me more as Danny does, as technician, as a nuts and bolts kind of a guy. And I would always sit back and I would watch. Bill's explanation of a highly technical issue that's going on, and I'm saying, either they think he's the smartest guy in town or they just don't know what's going on. At some point, Bill would say, if you've got any questions, talk to Marty. I gotta go. And he would do that a lot, but at the same time, when it came to the much more global issues, even at the highest level, and I can remember being with him at the highest levels, he knew where he had to fall. His instincts were better than most other people's ability at pure analysis. He just had the feeling about where he had to be, and more often than not, he was right. I don't know if in the end, as the years went by, if I would have agreed with where he wound up being, frankly, but that said, at the beginning of his tenure and for most of it, if not virtually all of it, he was one of the better leaders this organization has ever seen. Was he the kind of a guy who was micromanaging? No. He left people to do their jobs and do them as well as they could, and he would sit back and get a flavor for whether or not they had been successful or not, but he never attempted, to my recollection, to micromanage. But as I said, going back to the beginning in terms of Bill McGowan and getting him elected, it took little more than getting him to meet people. Once they met him, he was their man.

FV: Was there a campaign promise? Was there a rallying cry?

ML: To be honest, I think, in order to not be insulting, you know, when people tended to be sort of gentleman-like, people kind of understood that Bill represented a degree of change and a shift in the way in which the organization was going to move, and in terms of the people who really would be in charge of it, if you looked at the composition of the membership, there were a lot more blue collar workers than there were folks in the State Education Deroartment. People started to realize that Ted Wenzel represented an ever-shrinking portion of the membership an-d that the Bill McGowan type of guy represented the person who really made up the membership. I think, if, nothing else, people understood that the time had come for their needs to be front and center, and he could address those needs. That was the message he delivered; I'm your guy, and he delivered it well.

FV: But still, it was a close vote.

ML: Well, you're also looking-this was back in '74 I guess, or 1975? I forget. I think it was 1974. You're also looking at state employees who really made up the greater number of members at that point, anyway, who were kind of the transition group. I mentioned earlier the people who fought in World War II. A lot of those folks had been longtime state employees and their attitude about state government was that the state knew what was in our best interest. It took some people a long time to get around to saying, well, maybe they don't. Maybe we know what's in our best interest and if we don't fight for those things, we’ll never going to see them. But yeah, I would say that that was a dividing line in terms of the membership and its mentality and where it wanted to go. There were a lot of folks who worked for Big Brother, the big government, that were very comfortable. A typical illustration is, I worked in a state hospital. On the grounds of that state hospital were large employee houses. There were attendants whose lives were on that campus. They had a room. They would get their three meals a day in hospital- provided dining. Their clothes were laundered in the hospital laundry. Their pants would come out as starched as their shirts. There would be a bowling alley on the campus. There would be a

hospital exchange where they could buy everything they ever needed. There would be a barber shop. There would be a drug store where you could go and get everything you needed. If you were sick, there was, in my case, Building 10, where the hospital would see you and take care of your every need. There was an auditorium where they would show movies twice a week. There was a hospital barber to they didn't care if they got paid at all. It was irrelevant. It meant nothing to them because this was their world, and you're not gonna rock my boat; why do I need to change things. I'm doing just fine, so don't show me a leader who's going to ask for change. I want to keep my world in my status quo. I kind of like it. That was not so atypical. I think what I just described could have been replicated in a variety of different places, and certainly, the mentality was there throughout the State of New York. So, yeah, Ted Wenzel represented a certain level of thinking and a certain conservatism that they wanted to remain in place.

FV: The change would have happened because that world is gone anyway, but it's probably fortunate that it happened

ML: The only thing I can say I can identify a point in time when it did occur, as opposed to a metamorphosis, this occurred. There was a clear demarcation point.

FV: Now I have a good question. What did Bill McGowan do when Wenzel barricaded himself in his office after the election?

ML: I think he simply worked out of his old office. Clearly, it was just going to be a matter of time until the office until he ultimately had to leave. He just physically had to leave for a variety of reasons, and he did. But the message it sent out was, this was a pathetic kind of a situation. A lot of us can't accept defeat. I mean, I've run for high office and I've not won, but I knew there was another world I had to live in, so I had to go on.

FV: I'm going to ask you a couple of general questions, but if there's any other stories or pictures you want to draw about other people, you know, don't hesitate to jump in, but some general stuff here that I wrote down. Actually, Steve asked me to ask. What are you most proud of in your CSEA career?

ML: Two things. In latter years, I've already mentioned the fact that in my role as a consultant for mental hygiene, that I did two things in regard to this. I advocated for the closure process in OMRDD. Internally, very few people in CSEA agreed with me because there was a tremendous amount of distrust and I said, you know what, I hate to tell you, but this is the one opportunity we're probably gonna have. Because I remember in my political action days, we had what was known as the Morgotta memorandum, which sounded terrific, and what the Morgotta memorandum for the world of mental hygiene was it said that in the future, in the world of psychiatric centers, we're going to have staffing ratios raised to a one-to-one level, because they had been far less than that to that point, and that prospectively, all growth that occurs outside of the facilities, half of it will be state operated. Similarly, in the world of OMRDD, the staffing level there would be raised to 1.78 to 1, and half of the growth in the community will be state operated. That sounds like all technical stuff, and I guess it is. On the other hand, very little of that really happened. Psychiatric centers kept dwindling in their populations and there was no identifiable state growth. The mental centers were closing down very quickly in terms of the numbers of people left to be served, but the growth that was

occurring was really occurring in the United Cerebral Palsy, UCP; ARC, which is the adult services for the retarded. The growth did not occur in the state sector. The consequence was that developmental centers were at a point where if they lost any more bodies-they went through what's called reinvestment, where, in order to get to a decent staffing level-and frankly, the only reason the staffing level was reached in the MR world was because of a court order. There was a thing known as the Willowbrook Consent Decree, which actually mandated by court, you know, the state would be in contempt if it didn't do it-that the level would be raised to a 1.78 to 1 staffing ratio inside of developmental centers. They did that, not by increasing the staff, but by decreasing the population. They also got to a point where if they said goodbye to one more client, they were no longer going to reinvest staff they're going to start to lay off staff. And I knew that, so I said, listen, we have an opportunity here with an agreement from the state where we can actually go through a closure process where, for a period of time, 90% of the development that was gonna occur would be state operated. We cold work out arrangements if we go through this one facility at a time where every state employee could wind up with a job.
If we sit back and do nothing, I can guarantee you the consequence will be, they're gone. They'll continue to have closure but not in a way that we're comfortable with because they'll start to just say goodbye to the clients in favor of the voluntary sector and to the state workers. People didn't believe that that was possible, inside the organization, and I took a big gulp and I said, I believe it's possible. From that day forward and for the next number of years, I spent literally weeks at every single MR facility that went through the closure process, and I helped walk them through that process. Certainly to the extent that I was involved and I was really pleased with this, when the closure process was complete, not one state employee was lost. In fact, most people who were changed from job to job, were elevated from a non-direct care job, which paid less money, to a direct care job, which paid more. The entities that were created had staffing ratios that were far better than the 1.78. They were actually 2-1/2 to 1. So when the smoke cleared, we were actually able to close-build up state operated programs, and they have remained in place. The consequence, if I dare say so now, is that if you look at the state workforce, the vast number of state employees that CSEA represents are in the world of OMRDD mainly because that closure process was successful and that the state workforce remained intact. To the extent that I had major involvement in that, that would become one of the two major involvements that I had that I'm most proud of. Because in the end, it really maintained a state workforce. And I think, in the end, it also benefited the clients that were served because I think state workers are actually better at what they do, and I enjoyed working with them. As I went around the state, I realized that these people really cared about their jobs and they cared about the clients that they served.
That was in inverse order.
The second thing was, organizationally, in my role as a statewide political action chairman, being one of the couple people being involved at the higher levels, and to be sure, there were tons of people involved at a variety of other levels. Overseeing the process that took us from cake sales to a very potent political action machine, in the end became one of my proudest achievements as well. Working with Feathers at the time, who I thought of as a brilliant strategist in terms of doing this was something that I was pleased to have done because he was a mentor. I think we complemented each other well, but to be sure, he knew what he was doing a lot more than I did, and he was somebody I could learn from, and we worked well together. I was able to go around the state. We were able to convince regional presidents that it was in the best interest of CSEA and ultimately then at the regional level for CSEA in Albany to

develop a power base that up until that point it didn't have. And it had to go from sort of a decentralized operation to a centralized operation in order for the entire operation to overall benefit. I was, I guess, instrumental in helping develop that mentality. Getting the dues checkoff for political action certainly made us a major player because we had money in our pocket for the first time, and we used it effectively and, I would like to think, potently. If I had to break it down to the two, those would be it.

FV: You just reminded me of something. What happened between Roemer and Featherstonehaugh?

ML: Between them personally?

FV: Yeah. Because I know Steven said, oh, we should get them in here, but definitely separately. What happened?

ML: Well, I don't have first hand knowledge. All I know is that the two of them simply–I guess there were personality clashes between the two of them, two different approaches to the way they did business. I think Jim Roemer–again, I'm friendly with both of these folks, still. It puts me in kind of a unique circumstance at times because I can't refer to one or the other, depending on. who I'm with–but basically, Jim is a very structured guy, very business-like–Jim Roemer, I should read. I'm sorry. A very systematic approach to the way he conducts his life; very disciplined. Feathers, to an extent is sort of disciplined but in a different way; more of a shoot from the hip type of a guy. I think their approaches were dramatically different. At the end, I think they became like oil and water in terms of being partners. One would want to run the show one way and one the other.

FV: It wasn't a CSEA issue...

ML: Oh, no. No, no. The schism that occurred was really ten years after they broke away from CSEA. So, no it was unrelated.

FV: Getting back to CSEA, your career. Looking back over all this,what are you most disappointed by?

ML: I guess I would have to reflect where the public workforce and public employee unions are today generally versus where they were, I guess, at their height. There was a time in the 701 s, the early 701 s, maybe the late 60's even, where you could see the power of public employee unions rising. I remember with Victor Gottbaum, when he was in charge of District Council 37 in New York City. I remember because I live in proximity to the city–where he would literally turn the bridges sideways so that people could not drive across them, just to make his point. And people started to say–or when the subway workers, you know, would stop the subways. I mean you could bring a city the size of New York to its knees if you turn the bridges sideways and turn off the electricity that runs the subways. That was in some ways the beginning of the rise of public employees. I think as well of what changes we were able to be involved with at the statewide level all during the 70's and perhaps even to the early 80's, because we had the ability to make our points in the legislature. And I guess what I see now is, and this is no reflection on anybody's lobbying ability, but it's a reflection more of the fact that maybe the pendulum has moved in another direction, and that people have now concluded that the days of the public employees being in charge of the world is something they're not too much in

favor of anymore. As a result, I think unions generally in the public sector have subsided somewhat in the amount of power that they wield. I guess if I'm disappointed, it's in the fact that that has occurred. Maybe the pendulum should at least stay in the middle instead of being on either end. But right now, to be sure, I don’t think any union anywhere in the State of New York, or maybe in the country, is enjoying the power. Even in Washington, the Pentagon, you know, whether it's Ronald Reagan or George Bush, I think the Pentagon, who's in power at any given time, the public employee unions will either rise or fall, and right now, I would think that-in New York State, we're hold our own, I think, but to be sure, I don't think we're at where we were at our apex. And that's my biggest concern at the moment.

FV: This is the same as what you're most proud of, but let me ask you, what do you see as the most important events during your time of .-involvement with CSEA?

ML: Well, it would be very similar except the event-the specific event? The Palace Theater. The change of law firms. The change of presidency. The change of attitude, all of which occurred in a very compacted fashion back in 1974, I guess. That's when CSEA suddenly took on a whole different life. To be sure, that would be the single most significant event that I can recall. I would dare say you-for those who've been around during my same length of time would say the same things, I would guess.

FV: What lessons does CSEA's history hold for its future?

ML: Listen to your membership. Don't rule from the top. Go down to your grassroots. Remember who you are. Going back to your question earlier, what did I bring to this in the 1960's. They're bringing the same thing today, and we can't e so bold and-even if 'I would like to think that through four decades that I have amassed this wealth of experience, I haven't experienced today what they experience out there today because I'm not at that level anymore. And it's easy for me to lose contact if I forget that, then I lose and therefore, I give no input that's worthwhile at the higher level. So that's the lesson, and that's where I guess that Ted Wenzel would have lost contact. He lost sight of who he really was representing or who this organization was representing. That would be the one lesson. I believe Danny's ears are open. I would hope they are.
I believe they are. And I would hope that whoever succeeds Danny at some point, I grant you that the world of politics internally has to be addressed, but when you achieve the level of leadership, never forget who got you there.
That's when you risk the leadership and that's when you risk the future of the organization. The normal dynamic of politics here is that there's always going to be an outside group looking to become the inside group, and that's the way the world operates, and that's the world of politics at a variety of levels. What keeps you in leadership is your ability to go out and know what those problems are and to be able to have a political machine, I guess, internally, that's capable of addressing those problems once you identify them. That to me would be-you've gotta be strong. Going back to what I said before that my strength at a local level was directly proportional to the strength of this organization at a statewide level. It's something that allowed me to operate, and I would hope that that continues, you know, bat that would meant that there's got to be a viable leadership at the top and something that makes the organization viable as well, however that occurs. You know, if the CSEA organization starts to represent, for the most part, county employees as opposed to state employees, which is pretty much where it is, then I think it's got to develop a whole different way of thinking politically, but under any conditions, it's got to be a political operation in order for it to succeed. And that's the

lesson. Someone once said to me a long time ago, "politics." You know, just like the move, The Graduate, where the guy said XI. plastics," somebody said to me 'politics." And I never understood that it's politics that gets you elected and it's politics that keeps you alive, because that's the way the real world operates, and in this organization, it's politics that will rule the day ultimately at whatever level you're going to be. And that's the lesson. Don't lose sight of who you're representing and make sure you have a political machine that can represent their interests.

FV: Anything else?

ML: I think I've covered a lot of my bases.

FV: A lot of good stuff here. Oh, one thing. What about the recent change, fairly recent change, of representing non- government employees?

ML: I can't say I have tremendous familiarity with that, other than the world I am familiar with, which would be the voluntary sector, which is sort of the quasi-public sector. As CSEA moves out into other venues, it’s gonna present under the different rules of labor organizations in the private versus the public sector, the way in which you do business has to be different. The cost of doing that kind of business is different, because the Taylor Law gives you the ability to be the collective bargaining agent and to collect dues, even before you have a contract. In the private sector, you can't work it that way. So your approach has got to be different. I've yet to see how it's going to work. I'm not personally familiar with it. I've had my whole life in the public sector. This is new and different. I'm in no position to really comment until I see how well it's going to unfold. I would hope and pray that there are people inside of the organization today that have a knowledge of how the private sector operates, and how to proceed with properly representing it under those conditions.To me, it's kind of scary waters. Maybe I'm really Ted Wenzel now; I don't know. (laughs)

FV: Great. Thank you very much. ML: Okay.