

Interview Date: June 22, 2006

Subject: Jackie Scott, Denise Futia, Heidi Pleat and Bernie Rouse: Four CSEA employees with more than 30 years experience.

On June 22, 2006, CSEA conducted a joint interview with four long time CSEA employees, Jackie Scott, Denise Futia, Heidi Pleat and Bernardine “Bernie” Rouse, each of whom has served for over 30 years. The interview details their experiences with CSEA, and their historical reflections of how a small union grew to become a massive presence in New York State. The interview provides candid assessments of several past CSEA Presidents, including, Dr. Ted Wenzel, William (Bill) McGowan, and Joe McDermott. The interview chronicles the progression of change within CSEA, the climate of negotiations and the evolution of the organizational structure that has occurred in the past 35 years. Each shares their sense of camaraderie and love of the organization and how it has kept them devoted and working at CSEA.

Jackie Scott started working for CSEA in 1974 doing data entry. Denise Futia began her career in CSEA in 1975 working for then executive director and first employee of CSEA, Joe Lochner. Heidi Pleat started worked at CSEA in 1972 under Jean O’Hagen in the insurance department. Bernie Rouse came to CSEA in 1972 working in research for then director Bill Blom. Each discusses their initial job assignments of clerical and secretarial duties. Each discusses the manual nature of the positions they held. They discussed the laborious nature of their work and how the advent of computers and other technology changed the hands-on requirement in the tasks they performed. They credit the role that senior staff played in their development in CSEA, and helping to educate them about what a union is and why it was important. Each credits CSEA and senior staff with furthering their careers. Each discusses the pivotal role played by Joe Lochner and his presence, significance and role as a boss at CSEA.

Futia discusses the current relevance of staff salary increases, pension benefits, and health insurance and how they were forged by negotiations with staff unions that took place in mid 1970s. They discuss how staff contracts began to be negotiated in the early 1970s and how they created the foundation on the basis of contract negotiations currently used today for the union’s internal employee relations.

Each describes the institutional change which took place after a new president was elected. The different personalities, organizational structures, and management styles of former CSEA Presidents Ted Wenzel, William (Bill) McGowan and Joe McDermott are discussed.

The interview group recalls the process of organizing CSEA conventions and Herculean task it required of them to put those together. They discussed how intensive their preparation was for delegate meetings and the team work displayed that allowed those events to happen.

Each details their direct interaction with both staff and membership and how performing those professional responsibilities fostered a pride of ownership, a heartfelt desire to raise personal and professional standards, and provided a sense of family within CSEA. They share their insights and reflect on their sense of camaraderie and how it provided the mortar for the brick's of the union's foundation, and how that they believe that it made CSEA a successful and highly desirable place to work.

KEYWORDS:

AFSCME

Benefits

Collective Bargaining Specialists (CBS)

CSEA

Delegate

Dues

Institutional Services Unit (ISU)

Knickerbocker News

Labor Contracts

Labor Education Action Program (LEAP)

Labor Relations Specialists (LRS)

Layoffs

Membership

Negotiations

Organizing

Political Action

KEY PEOPLE:

Arvis Chalmers

Betty Duffy

Bill Blom

Dave Stack

Dr. Ted Wenzel

Ella Louise Wadsworth

Irene Carr

Irving Flamingbaum

Jack Rice

Jean O'Hagen

Genevieve Clark

Joe Abby

Joe Lochner

Karen Disten

Kim Howe

Manny Vitalli

Mary Sullivan

Michelle Agnew

Olive Rourke

Sandy Ellsworth

Spence La Grange

Tom Collins

Tom McDonough

William (Bill) McGowan

CSEA HISTORY PROJECT

FUTIA, PLEATH, SCOTT, ROUSE INTERVIEW

June 22, 2006

INTERVIEWER: It is Wednesday -- no, Thursday, June 22nd, 2006. We're in Albany. We have four lovely veteran CSEA staffers with us: Jackie Scott, Denise Futia, Heidi now Pleath, formerly Heidi -- well, you went through several names.

MS. PLEATH: Once.

(Laughter.)

INTERVIEWER: Yes. And Heidi Pleath and Bernie Rouse, also another one with several names along the way, right?

MS. ROUSE: (Inaudible) last name. First one was the maiden name though, right?

INTERVIEWER: Which one was (inaudible)?

MS. ROUSE: That was my first marriage.

INTERVIEWER: (Inaudible.)

MS. ROUSE: Right. That was McAvoy for four months when I started here.

INTERVIEWER: Well, let me -- let me start with an impolite question for the four lovely ladies and tell me about how many years of service each of you has with CSEA?

MS. FUTIA: Thirty-four this May, I'm into my thirty-fifth right now.

VOICE: And I start my thirty-fifth year in November.

VOICE: Been here 31 years.

And I start my thirty-third year in June.

INTERVIEWER: We've got a lot of years in the service here, without any question. A lot of memories.

Why don't we -- why don't we just first -- Jackie, why don't we start with you and just tell us when you came to CSEA, what you did and what some of your roles have been in the organization over the years.

MS. SCOTT: Well, I came in June of 1974. I worked in data entry. In that time it was archaic. We worked reel-to-reel. There was no such thing as, you know, terminals or computers or PCs. I encoded membership cards, life applications and at that time we would do about a thousand a week and it was like that for like ten years into -- working in data entry.

My roles in CSEA. I have -- like I said, I worked in data entry. I went to records

maintenance which is now central files. I've worked in human resources and now I'm in legislative and political action, but I have worked in several offices throughout my years.

When I first came, when we were slow on work, we were loaned out to other departments helping them. I worked in finance posting, State posting, county posting at that time, which is now local government. I worked in membership. I've done a lot of things throughout CSEA in my years of service.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Denise, how about you?

MS. FUTIA: I started in 1975 and I worked for Joe Lochner who was the executive director at that time and he also happened to be the first employee of CSEA.

During that time, let's see, shortly thereafter I worked in negotiations for the ISU negotiating team in 1976 and that was a wonderful experience. I mean there were a lot of people that had, you know, they were so devoted and loyal to CSEA and so dedicated and names like, you know, Jen Clark and Betty Duffy

and Jack Lees, and a lot of names that everybody here would remember and they really had the personalities to go along with that, so that was a wonderful experience to go through negotiations and sit at a negotiating table at such a young age and really see how it's done and --

What I can say about that is the people who take their salaries and increases in pension and health insurance and all that stuff, that take that for granted, you know, they really do. The State doesn't want to give you anything, and not only that, they want to take what you do have away that you already fought for, so I mean there's very dedicated people and back then, that was in 1977 I believe, '76, and that was fairly new.

Contracts were new at that time so they formed the basis of what we negotiate today. You know, those were the beginning contracts. Not the first contract by any means, but the telelogs before that, five, ten years before that, but -- so when I think of the old times I think of those old names and people that

stood out and they were so passionate about what they did and, you know, they really -- they did a lot. I mean their whole life was CSEA. That's what they did.

So during that time working for Lochner, I would say that Lochner also, as you and I have talked, Steve, he was the start of what is now a very successful basic life plan. He started that back in probably the fifties and maybe even earlier than that but, you know, he was responsible for bringing that to CSEA and it's grown so much since then.

Different insurance companies from that, Ter Bush & Powell to Jardene to Pearlcal (phonetic) today, what was Travelers and now MetLife has taken over.

INTERVIEWER: But that's basically the same company?

MS. FUTIA: Pardon me?

INTERVIEWER: Different incarnations of basically --

MS. FUTIA: Right.

INTERVIEWER: -- the same company.

MS. FUTIA: Very successful program.

I've worked for Tom McDonough, who was the executive vice president. He was like an old-time union leader and, you know, pound his fist on the table and very dramatic and, you know, he was a hell raiser, you know. Very passionate about CSEA.

And Bill McGowan, I worked under his administration and I just thought he was a terrific president. I mean a lot of people maybe made some, you know, disparaging remarks about him because he wasn't as eloquent as, you know, maybe Dr. Wenzel was or, you know, folks that came before or after him but he was a true union person and he really cared about what he called "my people," and I just thought he was a -- he was a -- you know, he brought CSEA into the forefront. It used to be more of a, I would say a social organization into, you know, a union leader.

Into the labor movement and also under his administration was the advent of our affiliation with AFSCME. That was after a lot of things that we went through in the early days with, you know, contract problems. For

instance, that huge demonstration back in I think it was 1975 with massive layoffs and things of that nature and the largest demonstration I've ever seen in all of my years in CSEA and here's a picture of it.

This is -- I've used this on the cover of our annual report in 1976 but it was a huge, huge undertaking, but -- so McGowan brought us forward I think. You know, he did a lot of different things that brought us into the labor movement.

And from there I started working with Dave Stack and he was comptroller at the time, what is now called internal operations.

VOICE: A wonderful man.

MS. FUTIA: Yeah. Good person. Good guy to work for.

Just going back to the early days of CSEA, Arvis Chalmers and all the politicians would frequent the Ambassador Restaurant and the 21 Club next to CSEA and I think CSEA was always in the news.

They even came over -- you were talking about mass mailings earlier and they

would come over and show us doing mass mailings on different problems, contract talks or PS&T challenge and so we were always in the news at that time.

INTERVIEWER: Arvis Chalmers was the Civil Service columnist for The Knickerbocker News --

MS. FUTIA: Yes, he was.

INTERVIEWER: -- at that time, the afternoon Albany paper --

MS. FUTIA: M-m h-m-m.

INTERVIEWER: -- and a lot of the stories that he got came from hobnobbing at the two-martini lunch with CSEA --

(Simultaneous conversations.)

MS. FUTIA: I'm sure a lot of business got conducted at those two establishments.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MS. FUTIA: (Inaudible) a good hangout for politicians as well. I mean they're always there.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MS. FUTIA: Just going forward with negotiations and then in the early eighties we

lost Irving Flamingbaum who was a big-time union leader down on Long Island and Tom McDonough, executive vice president, died. That was the advent -- shortly after that we started up a scholarship program for members and their children in memory of those two guys and we also have the J. J. Kelly scholarship, which I know you've probably talked about, a sister project before --

(Inaudible conversation.)

INTERVIEWER: -- John Kelly's older son.

MS. FUTIA: M-m h-m-m. And as a result, since then, since the early eighties, or maybe before with the J. J. Kelly scholarship because they helped with Mr. Kelly's children putting them through college. I mean we've given away probably almost a half a million dollars helping, you know, members' children, so that's a great program and it has grown since then.

And -- I'm just trying to think of some other things. So many things.

INTERVIEWER: (Inaudible) some of your

early years here and we'll come back to some of those subjects. There's a lot of those individuals you mentioned we'd like to cover in some greater depth but let's move to Heidi and just give us a brief synopsis of the role you've had here over the years.

MS. PLEATH: Well, I started in 1972 with -- you guys will all remember Jean O'Hagen in the Insurance Department.

(Laughter.)

MS. PLEATH: Oh, God bless her. That was really a very interesting experience. I was eighteen years old, just out of school and she had -- the first job I had at CSEA was for -- to answer her correspondence. Now, remember this was 1972. Her correspondence dated back to 1969 (laughter) and I was supposed to go through it and find out which is more important to answer. I was thinkin' probably the 1969, but I don't know.

I started in the Insurance Department. I went there to the Membership Department under Ella Louise Wadsworth, who everybody's worked with and had experiences with, and then kind of

went off on the side to what CSEA created, this new, little unit called RSVP Unit, which was Tom Collins' idea years ago to have just a general place for membership to have complaints and requests made and -- it started out okay but it didn't go over well with the HSU new -- new HSU Union.

INTERVIEWER: The staff union.

MS. PLEATH: Staff union. So that kinda -- my part in that went a little bit by the wayside. But --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. I think that was like a help desk.

MS. PLEATH: It was a help desk and I guess it kind of incorporated into the Membership Department, which is -- it's really like a part of everything now with the Membership Department, which is where I am now and I'm the supervisor of the Membership Department, so I've been there for a few years. I hopefully know a little bit about it but that's my story, where I've been.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

VOICE: And you're stickin' to it.

MS. PLEATH: And I'm stickin' to it.

(Laughter.)

INTERVIEWER: Bernie.

MS. ROUSE: Well, I started in 1972 in Research. Director Bill Blahm (phonetic), as some people might remember --

INTERVIEWER: M-m h-m-m.

MS. ROUSE: Tom Foyle (phonetic) was the assistant director. I was a Grade 5 secretary. I just did basic typing, filing, answering the phone, and I sometimes think about those days because my salary was 50...5,200 and some odd a year and, you know what? It paid the rent, it paid the food, it took -- I mean it was sufficient back then --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MS. ROUSE: -- and I was tickled to death to get a job at such a nice place for over \$5000 a year, and everyone in the department was nice.

One of the funny stories from Research is another name from the past, Joe Abby (phonetic), had come in. He was a research assistant and he had come in for an interview

and apparently interviewed very well and started working a week or two later, and when he came in, all of sudden his hair was like a foot longer than it was the day he came in for an interview.

(Laughter.)

MS. ROUSE: Well, he had come in and he had his suit coat on over his hair because he was worried about not getting hired, and he did fine. He did fine, proving that, you know, hair had nothing to do with it.

After that for a brief time I worked --

INTERVIEWER: I can relate.

(Laughter.)

MS. ROUSE: -- worked for the newly created Comptroller and soon after that went into what was Central Files. Central Files and Office Services, which at that time, stenographic services.

INTERVIEWER: M-m h-m-m.

MS. ROUSE: It was a true steno pool. Way back when not many people in the building had secretaries and even before I came there

were, I guess, 10, 15, maybe more, ladies that were farmed out on a regular basis and there were certain duties that were unique to the department, but over the course of time as people got new secretaries, they actually received a position.

The secretaries in this office would bid out because the rapport -- if the ladies here remember, there would be a rapport, so-and-so needed a secretary. They wanted this one all the time. So-and-so likes this one, and you would see that once the position was created, that person would get the job.

Some of the contained duties were central files, delegate registration, information management with the activists which is another interesting story, and actually I stayed in that department through many evolutions --

INTERVIEWER: M-m h-m-m.

MS. ROUSE: -- up until four and a half years ago when I went upstairs to work for statewide secretary. Even though there's a lot of names, as Denise had mentioned, that come to

the forefront, some of the way we do business just is like -- just a real -- it hits you.

And it might have been things that were done in here wouldn't have necessarily directly affected the members, but it -- it would help them with the way we did business. The activist file which we now know as VIP was on 3x5 cards and label masters, and if you had a mailing, you had to hand-stamp the return address, take the label master, put it on, run 'em off and hand-peel 'em.

(Laughter.)

MS. ROUSE: Now fast forward to today or even a few years ago where it's all computerized and after a few little clicks on the computer it's downstairs in a machine and the whole thing comes through in an envelope. People didn't have that information at their fingertips like they do now in ZIP within staff. You can go in and, oh, these are all the officers, it's just a phone number.

They'd have to call us. Oh, who's so-and-so. Or they might have known it before but the information changed, so you can imagine the

number of phone calls we would receive for information.

Delegate registration, for anybody that's been around, changed tremendously. There was a time that roll call was hand-typed. Local presidents could hand pick delegates and the badge only said "Delegate" and they were at multiple sites. If there were four hotels, there was four separate registration sites.

And for anyone that doesn't know him, the reas...one of the reasons why there is pre-registration is -- I think it was the fall of '81, maybe early '82, registration was an absolute disaster. You could only anticipate how much you needed at each hotel. Well, if people decided to go to another hotel, you'd run out there. You'd -- you know, there'd be too much over here. People might say, well, gee, I like this handout. I'm gonna go register at the next hotel, amongst other things.

So Bill McGowan got a lotta flak about it and that's when he decided to create a committee to study convention registration and he happened to pick some of the people that were

the biggest complainers about it and he put 'em on that committee, and from thence was the pre-registration process which even from then has evolved.

I just -- you know, I probably -- I could go on and on about a lot --

INTERVIEWER: Well --

MS. ROUSE: -- but I think --

INTERVIEWER: -- let's explore this a little bit because, as you know, all of you have kind of referenced some of the -- the way that the work was done, especially in the early days, the magnitude of it, but I think that some of that's inside baseball.

Explain it a little bit in terms of the scale of what you were dealing with with 265,000 members basically with the information on the index cards. What was the -- you know, what was the scale of the files that you had to deal with?

(Simultaneous conversation.)

MS. ROUSE: But we didn't see it that way then. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to -- didn't mean to -- go ahead, Jackie.

MS. SCOTT: No, it's just that everything was manual. I mean we would break up into certain areas and like, okay, you're gonna do this part of it and then somebody over here's doin' another part, somebody over there doin' another part.

I remember especially preparing for the delegates' meeting, everything was manual in putting the packets together. We would all work late at night putting these -- collating ourselves these packets for thousands of members that are coming to the delegates' meeting and literally helping Johnny at the time -- Johnny who was the head of the print shop down in (inaudible) with the glue gun. That was my favorite thing. Let me do the glue. I would slide the booklet. I wanted to do the glue, you know?

I mean the camaraderie was amazing, too, though. It was a small -- back in the early seventies the staff at headquarters, I'd say about 50, if that? We all knew everybody, we all worked together. We were constantly -- constantly pulling together to whatever CSEA was

doing at the time, working to make it a big splash for CSEA. We were very -- it was a big family-like group and then we always worked together in these little groups to prepare for the delegates' meeting or any -- any event that was coming up.

INTERVIEWER: Now, I'm just gonna place some context. This was at 33 Elk.

MS. SCOTT: 33 Elk Street, yeah. I think we all started at 33 Elk Street.

INTERVIEWER: Literally across Academy Park from the State Capitol.

MS. SCOTT: From the State Capitol, yes.

INTERVIEWER: And that was a very -- a very new building. I think they opened in the last --

MS. SCOTT: In '68. '68, I believe, was the dedicated -- dedication of that building. That was a little before my time, but working with a supervisor, Olive Work, we all knew her, that she was just great. She was there for that and explained to us, you know, what it was and she said that, you know, from

8 Elk Street to 33 Elk Street, you know, I mean it was a two-room office, to this big three floors where the print shop was on the top.

That always amazed me, the print shop was on the top floor of CSEA and downstairs was a small conference room. We all fit in there and parking was for ten cars. I'll never forget that but, yeah, that's where we all started. There was an upper echelon parking lot and then there was our little parking lot, but yeah.

VOICE: Howard Dolan must have thrown me out of that parking lot (laughter) a thousand times.

MS. SCOTT: If you got into the upper parking lot, you were not gonna get out --

VOICE: No, no.

MS. SCOTT: -- because people would just -- all the CBSs at that time -- they were called CBSs which is --

INTERVIEWER: Collective bargaining specialists?

MS. SCOTT: Right, would just pull up and park their car, run in, do what they had to do, get their information from their secretaries

and out they'd be, but if you got stuck in there you weren't goin' anywhere any time soon.

INTERVIEWER: Well, let me -- let me ask you this, while we're still on the topic of, you know, the membership rolls on index cards and how manual it was.

What was the process? How did the organization collect that information? I mean what happened out in the field to funnel it to you at headquarters?

MS. SCOTT: I'll tell ya, we had massive books, all on green bar, that had all -- all 265,000 members and we would manually have to go through these books. You'd have 10 and 20 books every week comin' in that the print -- or the computer services at that time was called.

INTERVIEWER: Finser (phonetic).

MS. SCOTT: Yeah, well.

VOICE: Well, that's where they -- that's where the stuff came from.

MS. SCOTT: It was Finser.

VOICE: He would send tapes.

VOICE: Yes.

MS. SCOTT: My job was to send tapes

to Finser for them to --

INTERVIEWER: Which was an outside firm.

MS. SCOTT: Outside, in Schenectady.

INTERVIEWER: Collecting the data for --

MS. SCOTT: Yes, yes. Exactly, and then send it over in green bar. And sometimes when we really got luckier, a little bit luckier in the future, we were able to get microfiche tapes --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MS. SCOTT: -- and so a lot of our information was on there but you still had to go over with a legal-size pad and write down the information from the microfiche or the -- at that time we had what we called cumulative tape, information of people that were going on payroll and coming off payroll, so it wasn't at your fingertips.

If you had somebody on the phone and they needed to know somethin', you had to call them back because you had to go into the books, the manual books. Find them first and then go

into them and then go to the microfiche tapes and then go through your weeks and weeks of papers that you had; whether that person was on last week's tape or this week's tape or -- you know, oh, my God, we had -- everything was really manual.

And the membership applications, we would just code the applications as they came in. We really didn't have anything on computer at that time and hope for the best. We'd send them to data entry.

INTERVIEWER: I mean even today you're still somewhat, you know, at the mercy of the payroll source. You know, obviously the State of New York is one payroll source and they're relatively sophisticated but you're dealing with over a thousand other payroll sources --

MS. SCOTT: Oh, right.

INTERVIEWER: -- and some of them are not -- you know, not as sophisticated as others.

MS. SCOTT: Absolutely. Absolutely. We still have many paper accounts that come in from our local governments and our school districts and you don't always get the

information. They just send you a piece of paper and it has somebody's name on it and what their deduction is and you wing -- you know, you go with it. You do the best you can, but it's by no means as archaic as it was before -- many years ago.

I mean we do have access to a lot of information at our fingertips. The computer system is a wonderful thing and, you know, when you look back in the seventies, you know, now it's a great, great thing. You know, these people don't know how easy they have it. My God, with all the information, you can just get it with a phone call. You couldn't even do that years ago. You know, everything took hours.

VOICE: The posting department was the department that really gave you the information. They would have to post manual payrolls themselves. It would come in from the payroll source --

VOICE: They still do.

MS. SCOTT: -- and they flip pages, you know? And then you had -- and it would be one lump check and you'd have to decipher the

dues from, you know, from these people. You weren't always sure if it was the same people, like Heidi has said, every week, you know?

So -- and then also you had not only dues. Not that we had the insurance, the insurance was lumped into that, so you had to break down the insurance. Many times you had to go to the Insurance Department to get the life insurance card to see how much the life insurance was so you could figure out the dues, and the dues at that time was pretty easy. When I came it was 50 cents.

VOICE: M-m h-m-m.

VOICE: The members were paying 50 cents a pay period to be a member of CSEA (laughter) so --

(Simultaneous conversation.)

VOICE: They didn't have a thousand different deductions.

VOICE: They just had the one deduction.

VOICE: One deduction.

VOICE: That was it.

INTERVIEWER: The one deduction would

be the insurance?

VOICE: For your membership dues.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, just the membership dues.

VOICE: Everybody had 50 cents.

INTERVIEWER: So how was the insurance done? It wasn't a payroll deduction? They paid for the insurance separately?

VOICE: Sometimes it was lumped into the payroll.

VOICE: It depends on the payroll, how the information came in.

VOICE: Exactly.

VOICE: Some -- there weren't as many local government agencies that had the insurances at that time. They hardly -- very, very few, but when they came in it was all lumped in together and like Jackie says, you had to -- you had to figure out what these things were and you had to do it page by page.

It wasn't something that you could just look at somethin' and say, "This is the end result." This was all a one member-by-one member process, person by person, and that's it.

Sometimes it would take you all day to do just one account. You know, you would have to go and pull the checks, go down to Finance and see if there were any checks.

Like Jackie said, go down to the Insurance Department and actually pull their insurance application which sometimes had 20 pieces of paper attached to it with a stapler because of notes that were taken during the conversation with somebody and they would just staple the notes to the card. The card could be this thick (indicating) and it was just an index card, you know? But every information, instead of a note file on a computer, it was attached to this index card.

So you would see a drawer full of index cards, some would have just an index card and others would have like half the row, you know? (Laughter.) There was a lot of information on those index cards.

If somebody got remarried, forget it. You'd have to get another index card.

INTERVIEWER: Attach it to it.

VOICE: Yeah.

VOICE: You know, I gotta make a comment about the index cards insofar as the activists, the local and union officers, before VIP. Local ex-officers on an index card, you know, one for every local and unit, and through the course of the term, before we had liquid Whiteout, if the officers changed, you put that white tape across and you typed in the new people and then somethin' else would change and you would put in another row of that tape.

And honest to God, you can ask some of the ladies that work there, by the end of the term, before you had to do a new card, you could have tape that thick (indicating) (laughter) and also with the label masters you would have multiple (inaudible). State local presidents, county local presidents, et cetera. You'd also have to have a separate one which combined your local presidents and the board, avoiding a duplication.

Well, if something changed and so-and-so who held those seats resigned, so you now had two people -- oops, we don't have space up here. We need to put that other person down here. Or,

oop, somebody else down here, so ultimately, even after a year, you didn't necessarily have your locals in order and it -- right now, looking back, it was cumbersome but, again, back then we just did all of this as routine business. We did not see it as cumbersome. It was the best --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

VOICE: What we had at the time. At the time.

VOICE: Remember the board meetings were held in-house --

VOICE: Down in the basement.

VOICE: -- down in the basement.

VOICE: Across 33 Elk Street.

VOICE: Yeah, 33 Elk Street.

INTERVIEWER: And how many people would come to those meetings?

VOICE: Oh, well, it would be pretty packed. I mean I wasn't involved in that. You know, at that time I was in data entry, but I don't know. How many board members did we have back then? Probably --

VOICE: Forty.

VOICE: -- forty, forty to fifty?

INTERVIEWER: So it was a smaller board --

VOICE: Oh, yeah, very small.

VOICE: Would fit in this room. And everybody was based at headquarters that I can remember, like now we have LRSs, labor relation specialists, and it was said earlier, collective bargaining specialists. They worked out of headquarters and not too many offices in what -- we now have regions.

I just remember Region IV was on Colvin Avenue and some were stationed there, but basically out of headquarters going to what we now call Region VI, but the western part of the state or whatever, so it was basically -- and we didn't have as many as we have now, you know? The entire staff couldn't have been more than 70, at best.

INTERVIEWER: How did you see the staff grow? I mean certainly, obviously what you're describing with some of the labor-intensiveness of the work, you must have had to grow and have more folks to deal with some of

that.

VOICE: It's hard to say. I guess I never really saw it growing. I just -- it happened and bein' part of it, we were still small. I think I saw more when we moved into this building in September of '85 'cause we had so much room. We were never so happy in our life (laughter) as the parking lot was the biggest thing, you know, that we had, because we all had spots then and --

INTERVIEWER: This is 143 Washington Avenue.

VOICE: 143, yes, and we all had a spot and we were all excited that we came up to look at our spot to park, you know. If we didn't have a car then we got one (laughter), you know, just so we could drive and park.

But then it was the biggest building and we had the biggest conference room on the second floor that we were all gonna fit in and they were gonna have the board meetings in there. That lasted probably six months.

INTERVIEWER: Not long.

VOICE: Yeah. And then we brought in

legal --

VOICE: The Legal Department came in.

VOICE: -- and that's when I started to see it, when they started bringing in a real Legal Department, because at that time our -- we didn't have that and then they branched out into State agencies like LEAP, which is now partnership. And we had Labor Education Action Program. That's when I started to see the buildup and then I --

(End of Side A of tape.)

VOICE: (Continuing) -- identifying the regions as an office where they were hiring these labor relations specialists and these collective bargaining -- I remember the old timers like Manny Vitalli (phonetic), Heidi's dad (inaudible). I mean those guys, and they were the ones that went out into the regions, I think, and built it up.

VOICE: M-m h-m-m. M-m h-m-m.

VOICE: I need to mention something about offices, getting back to 33 Elk Street. There was a time where the statewide secretary's position was only part-time and there wasn't a,

quote, physical office for that position and a desk in Stenographic Services was dedicated for Irene Clark to come into and conduct her business when she did and it's just -- you know, to see how the whole organization evolved and, you know, all of the offices to be in one, was interesting.

As Jackie was saying with the growth of CSEA, I think it's almost like your child. You don't notice your child growing up. Everybody else does, and all of a sudden it's like, oh, wow, things have changed. Things have changed. You just kind of just go with it. You just don't even realize it's happening, I don't think, you know? You're in the middle of it, you're there, but it's --

VOICE: Maybe the past ten years brought us member benefits, organizing, Jackie said the partnership, which are in a different building now. It's just grown, you know, little by little. Education is much bigger than it used to be.

INTERVIEWER: Let me take you back. Denise, when you were speaking earlier you spoke

about Joe Lochner being the person (inaudible) of CSEA. I wonder if you would tell us a little bit about him and his role as you saw it in the organization..(Laughter.)

MS. FUTIA: I think Joe started with CSEA in like the thirties and, I mean, he spent over 40 years in CSEA and in the early days, coming from my perspective, because I wasn't back in those earlier days, but I understand he ruled with an iron fist and he was a tough guy, you know?

He wasn't a big man at all, but he was tough as nails and I could just remember the collective bargaining specialists saying, you know, do anything wrong and you'd get your head handed to ya, you know? But I mean he's very passionate about CSEA and, like I said, he was at the start of it. Insurance was a very big part of his life and, you know, he just -- he worked until he was, I think, probably seventy, and he retired.

VOICE: We called him Mr. CSEA. He was Mr. CSEA. The passion he had for the members. It rolled off onto you, you know?

I remember him going through his tirades, you know. Then I've seen him around the holidays; he's always so jolly and very nice, you know. At that time they had, you know, little gatherings in the offices, certain offices during the holidays.

But he was so passionate that when he spoke of a member, I mean if he got a phone call where a member was not happy or dissatisfied, he went to the source that was responsible for that, you know, and let me tell ya, he brought tears to my eyes for him yelling at this -- one of our persons in data entry, Leo Fisher, who was another long-term great guy, sweetheart. Never took a vacation in his life. He worked -- he would deal with the tapes and stuff going to Finser and if a members' dues were lapsed or something like that, oh, and if he didn't get the reports back, Leo would get the brunt of it.

And I've seen those tirades, because he was passionate. I mean, in the next breath he could be fine, you know? It was just at that point he got -- he was very stressful and what he wanted and you were to do that at that --

right then and there and -- but we all respected him.

INTERVIEWER: So, I mean, he was really running the show with the staff.

VOICE: Yes. In my mind.

INTERVIEWER: You had -- probably at that -- in those early years, Dr. Wenzel was the president.

VOICE: Yes, he was the president.

INTERVIEWER: Tom McDonough was the executive vice president and were they the only two officers who were here on a regular basis?

VOICE: That's all I ever saw.

VOICE: Yes. That's all --

VOICE: The president and the executive vice president and even then the executive vice president was not here on a full-time basis. I believe that was part-time at that time.

INTERVIEWER: M-m h-m-m.

VOICE: And Joe did run the show.

VOICE: Joe was here all the time.

VOICE: Now the officers have a presence in the building, you know. The four

statewide officers have offices here and they're here, although they're out on the road quite a bit which is where they should be, but back in those days Joe Lochner ran the show, you know.

Ten Wenzel or McGowan, they were out with the members and he took care of what was goin' on at headquarters and in the regions. You know, he was the guy to go to.

INTERVIEWER: There was a --

VOICE: You answered to him.

VOICE: A catch phrase amongst us back then. Lochner is boss. As the lady said, you did what he said, when he said it.

(Simultaneous conversation.)

VOICE: If not sooner and, you know, people -- yes. A lot of people would -- just his mere presence, ah-h-h, you would shake. Joe's comin'.

(Simultaneous conversation.)

VOICE: But as Jackie said, no member issue was too small for him to get involved in and want to resolve, and he was very cost-conscious, something that I'm sure Denise might remember. Way back then you did not use the

photocopier for CCs. You had onionskin whether you had six, seven, eight, nine, ten (laughter) and how many times did we make a mistake and you had to get that little paper, that white stuff, and stick it in, and the thicker the copies were, the more off you were. And depending on who you were doin' it for, they didn't want that CC correction to look off.

So somewhere along the line, and I don't remember who it was, somebody started using the copier to make these and, oh-h-h boy. It was quite -- it was not pretty, so we all used onionskin for a long time. But, you know, it's -- again it's the way things were back then. You really didn't look at it as any -- as anything cumbersome.

He would come downstairs and work with the people in the Insurance Department or the Membership Department or if there was a mailing and he would say, this is an easier way to do it. You're gonna get outta here quicker. This is more efficient. Let's do it this way and, boy, I tell ya, he would stand right there and do it with ya.

You know, there wasn't a time where he's just say do it. I gotta go. He would stand right there and work with you and you respected him so much for that. I mean, he was just so Mr. CSEA. He really was. He was a great man. He really did a lot for this organization and I think he did a lot for the people's morale even though he was crazy. He really did a lot for people's morale.

He was visible. You could see him. He was there when you needed him and if somebody needed something and wanted to go into his office and say, hey, Joe, you know, I got -- I got somethin' I have to talk to you about. Sit down, knock yourself out, you know? He was a great man.

VOICE: (Inaudible) He was -- you know, I didn't know much about unionism. I knew my grandfathers and stuff were all laborers, you know, but he taught us, you know, what it was like to work for an organization and to have respect for yourself and get respect, you know, in what you do. That, you know, no job is menial. That every job is important, and he

just taught me that, you know, and I was only nineteen when I came here so, you know, it was a big thing.

VOICE: We had a lot to learn.

VOICE: Yeah, we did. And he was a good trainer. He was a good --

VOICE: Taught you to a higher standard.

VOICE: Yeah.

VOICE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I would imagine you also saw the organization change over the years in terms of grasp of your needs as probably a different mind set in those early years.

VOICE: Oh, yeah. I do recall one incident that I -- the girls will remember it -- I believe it was -- and I was new into the CSEA. There was going to be a strike and we were all given ID badges and we're not supposed to answer the door. I remember all the cars, all the collective bargaining specialists were in and the parking lot, the upper parking lot, was loaded with all these cars.

There was a block in the tunnel. We

had a tunnel that went from Spruce Street, okay, up to Elk Street. That was blocked. We were not to answer the door and I remember cots being brought in; that we were not gonna be able to go home because if they did strike, you know, we were stuck there.

And I remember somebody coming to a door and they wanted to arrest somebody and I don't know who --

(Inaudible conversation).

VOICE: Yeah. Well, Ted was never -- he wasn't there.

INTERVIEWER: -- the Governor's Office.

(Laughter.)

VOICE: Yeah, and I believe, you know, one of the collective bargaining specialists was also included to be arrested and I thought, wow. I was excited that I was going to have to stay here all night, sleep on a cot. I had this badge and (laughter). I said I'm important here, and we all -- you know, we had this big meeting, you know, saying that this is what's going on. This is what you cannot do. You may

be staying here, you know, and this is how we're gonna handle it.

But it was -- you know, it didn't happen. You know, I don't know -- I don't remember what took place.

VOICE: I think there was a meeting at the Palace.

VOICE: Was that --

VOICE: Wasn't it the delegates at the Palace and --

VOICE: I think so.

VOICE: -- they were taking a strike vote and --

INTERVIEWER: That was a lot of years ago --

(Simultaneous conversation.)

VOICE: I think if I remember correctly the ISU team wanted to strike and the vote went down not to strike --

VOICE: Right.

VOICE: -- and I think Ted Wenzel was very upset with Jack Rice at the time, who was our General Counsel. I think as a result of that he got fired and so there was no strike,

but we came very close.

VOICE: Very close.

VOICE: And everybody prepared in the regions and --

VOICE: The cots goin' up. That was just --

VOICE: And, you know, as young as we were when those things happened, even though, you know, there was no strike, A, because it was a smaller staff and, B, because we worked closer together, it was -- you know, I know it sounds crazy. Oh, gee, I may have to spend the night here at work. You still felt that you were going to be a part of a small history of the union, right or wrong.

You know, I mean you don't like to see people strike, but if it's gonna happen, and it was just that connection with the whole -- the way things flowed in the union. It -- there were times in the future where, you know, the camaraderie really showed.

For example, shortly after we moved into the building, the in-house union went on strike two weeks before the convention, and the

very first -- when I think of that, the very first mental image is higher-ups, i.e., Bill McGowan, going through at the same time each day with the big garbage barrel and you would have to have your garbage taken out of your can, wrapped up, for Kathy to come down and grab it and give it to Bill and you'd see Bill walkin' down with that stogie in his mouth, "Come on, hurry up, get your garbage here."

(Laughter.)

Some of the upper echelon delivering mail, picking it up. I mean, you know, again you don't like to see people go on strike but you think about how people had to pull together during that time, so --

INTERVIEWER: Good. Another name that was mentioned earlier, and certainly noteworthy, Jean O'Hagen. If I recall correctly she worked for CSEA for 50 years?

VOICE: I wanta say it was like 46, yeah. It was close to 50 but she was really showin' the effects of a forty-six year old employee because, boy, she was losing it. But, yeah, she was here forever. She was, and --

VOICE: Spence LaGrange.

VOICE: Spence LaGrange, yeah.

VOICE: (Inaudible) Baker?

VOICE: Yeah. They all were there.

VOICE: They were all there 40 years.

VOICE: But they -- you talk about somebody that respected Joe Lochner, boy, they had a huge respect for that man, but they also were petrified of him. You know, we came in kind of afterwards. We were, like, well, you know, he's really tough but we kinda like him.

But they were like Joe Lochner is the guy, you know --

VOICE: Sit there. Be quiet.

VOICE: Don't say nothing. Don't move.

VOICE: Don't leave the room, you know.

VOICE: Don't pick up the phone. Don't do anything. He's here. He's in focus, you know, but --

(Simultaneous conversation.)

VOICE: Yeah, I'm pretty sure it's on 46 years, but she was famous for the index cards

with the notes attached. I mean you couldn't even get staples into these index cards any more because she had so much stuff attached to these things.

And by the time you unfolded all this information it was just a bunch of holes, you know, from the staple marks. You'd get like every third word, you know, but -- and she was here for a long time.

VOICE: Everybody liked Jean.

VOICE: But Jean was one of the only people who could ask you a question, converse about it, answer it, before you even opened your mouth. It was -- she was notorious for that.

How's the baby? Yeah, m-m h-m-m, yeah. Oh, he's good. He's gettin', m-m h-m-m. (Laughter.) She was a one-man show.

INTERVIEWER: You also mentioned Tom McDonough, the executive vice president. Tell us about his role and what you remember of him in the organization.

VOICE: Tom was a -- like a gruff character. Loved goin' in, loved bein' involved. He was always out with the members.

He came from Motor Vehicle, the Department of Motor Vehicle, and there's not much to say about Tom. He was in negotiations, he was always there for the people, and during that time he'd go out and get lunch for everybody and bring it back in, but he's just one that always had a good feeling for the membership and he was always there with him.

You know, any time, anywhere, somebody called him up on the telephone. He had a good connection with, you know, a lot of people throughout the state. They could call him up and he would deliver for them, no matter what they wanted, and he would always have to follow up. Call so-and-so on the phone and see if she got what she needed and, you know, he always had those connections and, you know, he always delivered and he always followed up and he really cared about the people. You know, he was a good guy.

INTERVIEWER: Everyone I've talked to has put a smile on their face when I ask about Ted Wenzel. (Laughter.) Certainly sounds like he was -- he was quite a character.

VOICE: He was a character.

INTERVIEWER: I wonder if you could tell me what some of your --

VOICE: I can give you my --

INTERVIEWER: -- memories of him are.

VOICE: -- first experience with Dr. Wenzel. I was just hired recently and the people that worked in his office were Kim Howe, which we loved dearly. We all know Kim. And Jean Charters was the executive secretary and they were both out for some reason that day and they asked me to cover Ted's phones. I said sure.

And he was -- he was always out with the members so he wasn't in the office very often, but that particular day he was in the office. The door was shut and I was sitting right outside his office and the door opens up and he asked me -- he had his suit jacket in his hand and he asked me to put it on backwards.

I said all right. I put his suit jacket on backwards. And now -- his suit jacket, and he wanted me to button it up from the back. Okay, and I buttoned it up from the

back. And then he said, now mess my hair
(laughter), so I messed his hair up. I thought
what is goin' on here.

But apparently he was reacting to a
story that they had in the newspaper referring
to him as the Headless Horseman in The Legend of
Sleepy Hollow, so I don't remember what the
story was about. I was like too shocked to even
(laughter), but he went around the building.

You know, most people knew the story
and he put his coat up and his hair was messed
and he just walked around the building
(laughter), you know, acting out this newspaper
article. That was my first experience, I have
to say, left a big impression.

VOICE: I only had one with him and I
think because he was out so much and there was
an interaction, the first time he even uttered
any words to me was when I was in the steno
pool, which was like two years after I started,
and again the ladies weren't -- that worked for
him were not available and someone had to cover
the phones for a little while.

So I'm sitting out there and he had

two phones in his office, one CSEA and one private, and he called me in. Didn't even know what my name was. Please come in here. He said if that phone there rings, he says you pick it up and say he's not here and hang up. Okay.

Sure enough. He left, that phone rang. That's what I said and I hung up. That's about the only experience I had with him directly.

VOICE: That's off.

VOICE: Yeah, kind of awkward.

MS. PLEATH: I had one experience only myself. I was in the Membership Department and at the time Ted Wenzel was also a retiree member of CSEA and that was part of the Membership Department, to collect the membership dues, and he had not paid his dues. He had not paid his \$9 membership dues and I had to go knock on the door and say, "Mr. Wenzel, we're getting ready to reset our file, our manual file at the time, and do you think you could please pay your retiree membership dues?" (Laughter.) It was terrible. I was mortified, but he gave me the \$9 and off I went but that was my experience

with Mr. Wenzel.

INTERVIEWER: Really.

MS. PLEATH: Yeah. That would -- I don't wanna do this. I'm not goin' up there. No big deal. Just go up there, and I think Jean Charters was at the front desk at the time. Just go in, go on.

INTERVIEWER: Jackie, do you have a story?

MS. SCOTT: Not really a story. It's -- I had been -- it was about my fourth day at CSEA and I got in the elevator and he got in with me. I did not know who he was at that point. I had not yet met him and he turned around and he says to me, "And who are you?" and I told him.

He says, "Where do you work?" and I said I work in data entry. I just started. He goes, "Do you know who I am?" and I said no, no. He says, "Well, I run the place, but don't worry about that. I'm never here," (laughter) so I got off on my floor, he went up onto his floor. That's all.

Then I went in and talked to the girls

in my -- in the office and I said I just met this man, I said, tall, very tall, and they told me, well, that was the president, Ted Wenzel, and I said, oh. But I met him and he spoke to me and I --

VOICE: Did he have his jacket on backwards?

MS. SCOTT: No, no, he didn't, but that's the only time I ever, ever really talked with the man.

INTERVIEWER: Heidi, you mentioned something earlier of -- when you were telling that story about collecting the \$9. Were you all handling cash? Were you handling cash with the membership at that time?

MS. PLEATH: Oh, yeah. Oh, absolutely. People would send in cash all the time. They would just put it in the little envelope and send it in, yeah. And at the time -- I can't remember what year it was, but they had lost dues checkoff privilege for the State employees and it really doesn't have anything to do with the cash aspect, but it was a thought that I had because at the time -- you think

about having to manually bill all these members that we currently have.

Well, we had lost the dues checkoff privilege, I can't remember what the situation was, and we had to bill all these people for a year directly and -- well, they actually -- they did send in a lot of cash payments. We dealt a lot with cash, but Sandy Ellsworth and Karen Disten, who at the time was the cashier back in the seventies, and yeah, they sent in a lot of cash.

Yeah. And there was never any question of, you know, whether anybody stole money. You know what I mean? It was always accounted for. You always put your money in and this is what we got today and that's, you know --

INTERVIEWER: (Inaudible.)

MS. PLEATH: Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I think that changed too at one point.

(Laughter and simultaneous conversation.)

INTERVIEWER: Let me ask this, though,

because I mean with the transition from Wenzel to McGowan, what do you remember about that? How did that affect your staff?

VOICE: McGowan was a different person than Wenzel. He was more outgoing. He was friendly with the staff.

VOICE: Very down to earth.

VOICE: Approachable.

VOICE: Yeah, just plain approachable.

VOICE: He would come in, you know.

If he saw you, hi. You know, how're you doing? He was very concerned. I remember specifically this amazed me. Just before he became president I was HSU member and on strike and it was in the winter, that he brought coffee out to us, you know, because we were cold, walkin' the street, and he brought coffee out.

And you know, when we went back in after the strike and he became president, it was like it didn't -- you know, he understood, you know, but he always was very nice, very -- you know, with the cigar in his mouth, going by, hi, and he always wanted to shake your hand, you know? I thought -- it was a big impression on

me because the previous one was never there.

Not that -- you know, but Bill made -- when he was there he wanted you to know, I mean, that he was, you know, that he was there.

VOICE: It almost went from, you know, an elitist atmosphere to like family because, you know, going back to something that Denise has said earlier, you know, there had been some comments about the fact that Bill could be a bit rough around the edges, but that was all part of his charm. That was part of his interest and his passion and, sure, he could be gruff, but he could be gruff and lovable at the same time, you know. And if he got mad, you knew he got mad, but he would become -- you know, he could be decent at the same time and that's what just made him so great.

I mean in addition to the wonderful things he did for CSEA, so --

INTERVIEWER: All right.

VOICE: Good guy.

INTERVIEWER: Now, we're gonna give Ed just a brief break here and we can switch --

(End of Side B of tape.)

