

Interview with Ramona Gallagher and Bob Lattimer

FV: Any remembrances you want to tell us about and then we'll follow-up from there. So, why don't you start.

RG: My name is Ramona Gallagher. I started in CSEA in approximately, around 1969 or 1970 as I recall. I worked with New York State Department of Labor. I started there in February of 1968. Initially I had not become involved in the union. And at the time I was an employment interviewer in the New York State Department of Labor in Buffalo. But there came a time when I felt that the department was running roughshod over its own rules, actually. And it violated a rule in provisional appointments, promotions. And I got angry and I finally said, "Enough is enough." About the same time Bob Lattimer and Lee Andrews and a few other folks had started getting more involved in CSEA. We were a part of the Buffalo city local, 003 at the time. And I felt that we were probably, or they felt, primarily we were sort of just an amalgam or interest. And we really had more common interest in the Department of Labor, which at the time was approximately 500 employees, much larger than it is now, of course. So at that point as Bob and Lee were becoming more and more involved, we got involved and actually I filed a grievance that an individual had gotten a provisional promotion to a position just out of nowhere. They were supposed to advertise by their own internal rules. They were supposed to advertise, they were supposed to interview and select someone. I didn't really have a particular interest in the promotion but I just thought, "This isn't fair." So, the anger grew and I guess it was a chance to put anger into some sort of positive channel and at the same time, they were working hard to develop a unit within the local which Bob and Lee finally were successful in pursuing although CSEA and certain individuals within CSEA were fighting that all the way. Probably because, I mean, from their perspective they didn't want to see larger locals broken up into smaller units. So, I suppose that's an argument to be made, but we felt differently. Bob and Lee prevailed, eventually going to the charter committee and eventually Buffalo Department of Labor, Local 352 was formed. And I became active in that, I think probably first as Grievance Chair or Secretary, I'm not sure originally, but at one point I did serve as Grievance chair. And then, eventually, when Bob and Lee kind of moved on to bigger and better things, I did serve for a while as the local president.

FV: When was that?

RG: That would have been, oh,, I'm thinking 1973 or 1974 maybe. Probably somewhere around 1974-75, 1973-74. I had served in a number of capacities. I think probably the position I most enjoyed was Grievance chair because I thought that really was dealing with the individual's problems and I knew we needed to develop that. So, I was active in that. I became active in labor management at the Albany level, eventually in the active labor management committee. At that time Bob and Lee were also active on the labor management committee so we went to Albany a number of times. And I remained active in the local, really for a lot of years. But I purposely did not want to serve more than, I think it was one term as president, and I thought it was good that that be rotated. I'm not of the old school that you stay in forever and prevent other people from participating. That was never my style. But I became active and probably, I want to say around 1977, and I think that was about the time that McGowan was close to being elected, it might have been president or was, I think it was elected president, I became active in the political action committee on the statewide level. And about that same time we started feeling that political action was really the place to be for the public employees union. I think that would be about right, 1977 to 1979. And I was appointed to the statewide

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political action committee along with Marty at the time who had come out of Monroe County. He was president of Monroe County. And Bob was elected then about that time, was it 1977?

BL: Right around there, I'm not sure.

RG: To at the time of the conference as the conference president, soon to become a region. And Bill McGowan went to Albany. That's really basically the timing as I recall. The dates may be a little fuzzy if memory serves me correctly. Marty Langer at the time was appointed the chair of the political action committee. Just a fantastic individual. Just had everything right. I mean, his heart was in the right spot. Intelligent. Just intelligent. Able to work with lots of diverse people. And Marty wanted to do good things with the political action committee. And that's when we first got started. It wasn't a lot of teeth at the time. And I'd have to say that probably for my own part, one of the really things that I was proudest of was participating in the political action program. The time Hugh Carey was elected governor was a really tough time. Came in and really had to clean up a lot of mess, financially. And that was a very tough call. I mean, we were active at the time that Hugh was interviewed and internally there was a big battle between Perry Duryea who was a very fine Republican from Long Island and Hugh Carey and that's really where the race came down. And I remember internally the interviews. Great committee. Diverse committee. I'm trying to remember some of the names who were probably on that. I'll probably forget some, so. But in any event, we had an active political action committee. We had some really good, intense interviews and it came down to the wire and Hugh Carey got endorsement from a political action committee which we made a recommendation to the convention at that time and all hell broke loose. There was such a division. It was such a division because Long Island and because of the Republicans on Long Island really wanted Perry Duryea and as I said he was a very find candidate but it came down to one question and it had to do with putting a cap on the budget as I recall. Some sort of cap on spending and Hugh Carey was the one that said no, he would not be in favor of it because there might be an emergency situation. So it shows how some things can just come down to one issue, internally. But it was a big battle and that is probably one of the first major real endorsements **AUDIO STOPS.**

RG: ... active and effective in campaigns all across New York state. All the special interests. But, who isn't a special interest, I ask you? I mean it that's, it's so galling. American Medical Association is a special interest. Lawyers are a special interest. Banking is a special interest. Why shouldn't unions who really, I think, do purport to have the best interest of working men and women, have the right to have their voice heard too? If that's what it takes, so be it.. I'm talking too much, probably.

FV: No, that' s good you gave me an outline for the whole interview now. So, let's go back now to your first grievance and you said there was opposition, but you didn't mention anybody that was opposed to the idea to fighting the Department of Labor. That was your first major grievance. You said there was opposition from some people. Who were those people? What ... I want to get the stories about who you had to...

RG: Oh, in terms of becoming a local? Or...

FV: Whatever. Whatever opposition you had. I think you started talking about the grievance at the Department of Labor.

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RG: Oh, with the grievance, I don't know that that was ... I guess actually, what happened with that was I ... **AUDIO STOPS.**

RG: Oh, that's a good question. I suppose each individual will answer separately.

FV: What do you think, Bob?

BL: Well, all I can really respond is personally Lee Andrews was very active at that time and for a number of years kind of got me into it just by talking on a friendly basis and selling his point about unions and about how we needed some help and I guess he knew where to go because I probably was the one with the temperament or the temper or a combination of all of the above that found out that I kind of liked that stuff and I like to be able to go in and I couldn't physically hit somebody but I could get a Piece of them just by talking to them. So, that's really how I got started. I think a lot of other people probably had a variation on the same. But it became, it became a cause for me and then other people like Ramona and some other people like Elaine Todd and, I could go on forever I guess, came in too ... got involved locally here and all of the sudden we realized that: we had something. We had the people to form a structure that was already there and we went to Albany. Talk about being real novices. We went to Albany and kind of expected we were walking into a very sophisticated setup and we got there and found out it really wasn't that sophisticated and it was just begging for somebody with a deep voice and a chip on the shoulder maybe, or somebody with interest. So, a lot of us, you know, we got involved there and I think that's ... It just happened. There wasn't any plan. It just happened.

RG: You know that's a good question and that caused me to think about it for a little bit. I guess it wasn't something at the time that I thought was going to go much further. I think as much as anything, it was the sense that you could have some control. You could have some voice, maybe that's the better way, over what happened at your work site. I mean, you' re spending eight hours a day along doing something and it was a chance to have a voice where things weren't just dictated to you all the time. **AUDIO STOPS**

BL: I remember today I can see them. There were two guys running the Department of Labor. One was named Winacur and the other was Goldwater. And they were just little variations of Hitler and they thought that they were better than anybody else and they didn't mind putting you down. And they didn't mind telling you that you didn't have a prayer in hell, in so many words. I think that got me as much as anything. But I had those two guys, both of them were like 5'11", but I had them right up at the top of my head and so you need motivation, sometimes you have to go to the worst possible place to get it. But that was a large part of my motivation to be able to walk into their offices and tell them point blank what I had on my mind and what I thought they should have on their mind, which I chose once in a while. But things like that that got you going and people like Ramona and Lee Andrews and other people who gave support, which you have to have. You can be as tough as you think you are but without support, you wouldn't be anywhere and all of a sudden this amorphous body in the Department of Labor in Buffalo became a factor, somebody to be reckoned with and it happened fairly quickly. There was a great need for it. So, we were in the right place at the right time and it was a lot of help.

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FV: Because when they say, it also takes people with conviction. Because a lot of people don't do anything. They just swallow it. But if you have conviction and the strength, I mean, you can be Joan of Arc but you've got to have the French army.

BL: You're absolutely correct.

RG: You're right.

FV: And that's the common thread, I think, or the uncommon thread, with the people I've been talking to is they have conviction and they use that strength behind them to make their point.

BL: You had to. You're right, that's a good point. You really, I think, had to believe in what you were doing, which was very easy to do, for me anyway. I can't speak for anybody else, but as you go in day after day and you just observe what was going on, people didn't even know what you were observing but you could see what was going on and it was a, there was a fiefdom. It wasn't a democratic process. And talents were being wasted and if you walked a certain way, you got the gravy, so to speak. And if you didn't, you didn't get it. So, all these things that added up for all of us, my counterpart, Lee Andrews, soft-spoken, very directly the opposite of me. Very pleasant, very well, you know, handled himself very well. He probably didn't, it was difficult for him to get angry. Well, I furnished the anger, he furnished the common sense and he had a real vested interest in his own fashion. Two different types of people and we worked together for years...We're still good friends.

FV: Now, you both mentioned going to Albany and finding out it wasn't, you said it wasn't what you expected. Paint us a picture in words of what you found when you got there. Both of you can take turns, talk together, I don't know. Let's hear about it. What were your expectations and what did you see?

RG: Talking about within the Department of Labor, is that what you're talking about, or...?

FV: No, when you went to Albany CSEA.

RG: Oh, with CSEA. Oh, initially. Well, I think when we initially were involved Ted Wenzl was the president and, well he had a great deal of respect, I mean for the union. My impression was it was pretty much still a social organization.

AUDIO STOPS.

BL: Yeah, that's right on the mark. There were decent people involved with the union but they didn't really have any labor mentality and for one that didn't take me too long to get to a point where I disliked Ted Wenzl. I really disliked him because he had no more labor involvement than the kitty cats at home had. In fact, they probably had more. But he had a nice cushy job and he drove around the state and he got to meet a lot of people and get a lot of free meals such as they are. But you just knew, just knew that there wasn't any substance there and that nothing of significance was going to happen. And he caught on fairly quickly to me and he didn't mind advertising that he really didn't care for me and that he thought I was in the wrong place at the wrong time and all that stuff. And I thought that, that ... then it became a crusade because he had to go. There had to be somebody better. Somebody with a purpose. Somebody with some, I shouldn't use the term backbone, but somebody that...a little more

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willing to mix it up and to go to the mat on issues that were important to the members. And, you know, Ted was not that guy. So, and I found out that I wasn't the only one that thought that way as you started to mix with other people from around the state. But it was the old American syndrome of, oh, he's there and he's not a bad guy, so let's just let him go, leave him alone and we'll be okay and he won't get hurt and all that stuff. Well, things changed. It was, it wasn't a pleasant thing. I don't want to make that it was pleasant doing that, but it was something that had to be done. And a lot of the impetus and change from CSEA came from this area. And, of course, it was about that time that Bill McGowan was coming into the forefront, so to speak, and he furnished other qualities that weren't available with the president at that time so a metamorphosis took place and I think it was mostly positive. I would, naturally. But there were people from all over the state that then got... from different areas that came and got involved and were going through the same thing that we were going. But nobody had ever talked about it. All of the sudden, we found out that the people on Long Island had the same problems. The names were different but they had the same problems. And nobody in Albany, nobody in the government in Albany took the union very seriously at that time. They kind of treated you like, that's okay, little guy, you know, you're okay...you're no harm, you're just here. And some of us didn't go to long or too well with that philosophy. So, I think that there was a lot of people out here like Ramona and Lee and other people who, they were the main people. But who took the thing by the ears and said, "Look, we're going to be a union, we're going to be a union." And one of the first things that had to happen was the clubhouse in Albany down on Elk Street needed some modifications.

RG: Probably just realized you had to change it at the top. It was time and that happens in organizations. It was just, we believed he was in there long enough and as Bob said, at the same time, timing is everything sometimes. You're just in the right place at the right time or the wrong place at the wrong time. But at the same time, we would be coming after them at the time that **AUDIO STOPS**.

RG: Actually, when I think about it I guess there was a lot fulminating at the same time, and if you will on all different fronts.

BL: Yeah. They would tell us that we couldn't go to these region meetings. Like they had one, remember, in Canada, which we didn't like at the time. And they told us we couldn't come. Well, when the hell can we come? And then they started to get that stuff everywhere and the blood started to boil and thank God there was people like, with common sense and abilities, like Ramona and Lee Andrews and Elaine Todd and some other people who put their talents on the table and, you know, all of the sudden people started listening to each other and saying, hey, look, we kind of want the same thing. And then by the time we really went to Albany and started to get involved on a statewide level we weren't surprised at what we found up there. We found a lot of good people. But we found some other people who were in it strictly for whatever they could get out of it. And that's America. That's life. But it... it was pretty disconcerting to us at that time, because we were the saviors we were on the white horses, we were the knights and all of a sudden we are finding out that our side doesn't all have white horses and knight status and all of that.

RG: There were a lot of those people who were involved.

BL: Oh yeah.

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RG: There was, well, Joe McDermott was involved at the time, Wolfe was involved, Jim Currier out of Syracuse. And there were a series of meetings just to kind of get ourselves organized and try to move something forward.

BL: We came in touch with a group out of New York City who, and a number of people who wanted to change things and they were very helpful and very instrumental in changing the organization and of course at this time I'm really talking more about just people from the Department of Labor. But at the same time we were finding out, you know, that Mental Health and Mental Retardation had a tremendous nucleus of people and local government, untapped resources. So we had, there was a tremendous amount of talent in this organization and there always has been. It's just a matter of being able to help them, work with them to get to the front, get to the fore and be willing to put it on the line some of it. And they came forth. We were extremely fortunate.

FV: Exciting times.

BL: Yes, they were.

RG: Yeah, it was. There was a lot of controversy and a lot of knock down, drag out battles and there certainly were lines drawn and it's us against them or you against this person or that person. It seemed to be. But at the same time there did seem to be realization that it was a good cause, I mean, that it was for a good cause.

FV: It's a big turning point.

RG: And everybody did serve a purpose.

BL: Yes.

RG: You know, at the time you don't think that they do, but when you do replay out, when you do reflect, it was good, it was probably good to have those battles. They were healthy. They were that. I mean they were out in the open. I'm sure there's a lot of stuff in the background too.

BL: My first big battle that probably was public I remember was down in Olean. It was a region meeting. I don't know what ... Dr. Wenzl was there and I really don't remember the issue but he said whatever he had so say and I waited until it was finished and it was all prearranged of course. And I got up and walked out and I felt like... I felt like God because there were x number of people and half of the meeting went with me. You know, like that was me. No it wasn't me it was just, I happened to have people who spread the gospel at that time and they were putting something on the line and defining the president of the organization in front of a lot of other people. That's why walking out of the meeting and delivering a message that we're, we are fed up with things that are happening. And I don't mean to say that it was all bad because it wasn't. It couldn't have been. If it had been it wouldn't be in existence today. There was bad, there was good. It's America. It was America. But, it was interesting.

RG: At least that was our perspective, that it was time for a change and we were willing to work for it and see it though and we think that it was a good thing at the time and that it took a turn, of course. And then Bill became president of the organization. And then, of course, another whole scenario took place eventually but so I'm trying to think...

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FV: You could talk about that.

RG: Well, I mean, there was that. There was first the affiliation with AFSCME which I would say initially, and of course I being a naive as I was at the time, was not aware there had been I guess a lot of quiet, private, behind-the-scenes discussions. Lots of other people who I don't even remember who they were at this point; Bob may. About affiliations with other organizations and with other unions because the sense was there was a lot of rating, of course, and CSEA was independent. At the time, I thought that was a very good thing. I was a proponent of trying to maintain, if you will, the independence because I thought CSEA was a valid organization and could do it. Of course, the writing was on the wall. You couldn't continue to have the raids because you didn't have the protection of the AFL-CIO and I think it was Article 20 or Section 20 or whatever it was ...

BL: Article 20.

RG: And so then it became, I think, pretty obvious that you're not just going to survive this financially and if you don't, you know, who knows. They might take you over. So there were some discussions, I know. Or at least we were told there had been private discussions and eventually the most viable one came to be AFSCME, which even initially, I mean I remember when they first came, Linda Tarr-Whalen, I think was one of the folks who initially came into Buffalo. She had been a nurse and was active or involved. I forget exactly where she came from, but she came here. Very positive. She was very good. Trying to organize or promote, if you will, affiliation. And I was resistant. The first couple years I definitely was resistant. There's no two ways about it. I just felt we can maintain our strength and whatever. And I just felt like, boy, that's an awful amount of money for affiliation, you know, to take. So, I think the first go-round we kind of passed on it. I did anyway. Then a few years later I think it became very obvious that, look if you're going to survive you really need the strength of the AFL-CIO protection...

FV: When did this first start?

RG: When was that? 1977, maybe?

BL: Probably 1977-78, somewhere along there. I'm not really sure.

RG: When was the affiliation? 1979? Anybody recall? 1980? I'm trying to think.

BL: Around that time.

RG: Yeah. I want to say about 1977 or so for the initial discussion. And they had meetings, you know. Informational meetings. You could come and ask all the questions you wanted. Which was very good. In fact, Linda Tarr-Whalen eventually became one of the mucky-mucks in the Department of Labor where she was the commissioner or something, deputy commissioner, where she eventually sat on the other side and was a labor management meetings. She now works, I think, some big job in Washington, D.C. Skip might know, actually. But I see her name every so often. She's involved in something down there. But, to make a long story short, initially, I think at least I was certainly reluctant. As were others because I think we passed on the idea. Then for whatever reason, and Bob would know more about this than I, the idea of affiliating with AFSCME, which was headed at the time by Jerry Worth, became a certainly more viable alternative. There was a

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common interest as a public employee union. They had vast experience across the nation. it seemed to be a strong possibility. And I would defer to Bob in terms of the background. Somehow he, he got asked to, as I always used to say, carry the water for the union again as he did in many tough situations. But he obviously wouldn't have taken off. He wouldn't think maybe it was the right thing to do or wanted to be a part of seeing that things were done correctly, let's put it that way. So he got elected or anointed or appointed to chair of the affiliation committee as I recall and, again, I don't know a lot of that. BL: Well, Bill McGowan was a big mover on the affiliation ... **AUDIO STOPS.**
STARTS AGAIN ON SECOND SIDE OF TAPE.

BL: Well, Bill McGowan was a big mover on the affiliation, it really came out of almost coming out of nowhere and I can remember he and I talking and he told me that this was going to hold a meeting in Albany on the possibility, or on the affiliation, really with AFSCME. And Bill wasn't usually a hard-nosed guy but that day he really took the bull by the horns and he got everybody into Albany and he says, "Okay, you're in the room. Now the doors are closed. You're not going to walk out to get this or get that. We're going to set here and we're going to make a decision." And, lo and behold, that worked. We sat there that day and by the end of the day we had, the delegates had made a decision to affiliate with AFSCME, which at that time was a major, major affiliation, obviously. And that process was put in gear and a few months later we were joined. That was probably one of the top three or four things that ever happened in this organization because you were no longer out there by yourself. You were a part of organized labor. You had resources you had never thought of having. And also at that time, around that time, CSEA started to, I won't say re-form, but they started to hire some people and attorneys like Roemer and Featherstonhaugh who became very important to the organization. All came onboard and all of the sudden you had a group working, for the most part, together with a lot of internal battles happening in rooms that nobody, well, somebody probably heard about but most of us just kept our mouths shut and we left the room. Because you had to go through that process. It was a major change in style, lifestyle. A major change in how we operated. A major change in what we were doing and where we were going and all the various vehicles to get there. So, they were... it was exciting, frustrating, as it was life. But the people that were there led by McGowan who was a stalwart at that time and did not back away from the fact that we are going to become a part of the labor movement. We're going to become a viable part. And we did.

RG: At the same time, one of the other big issues, personal issues, Bob and I both were members of the Professional Scientific and Technical Unit, the PS&T unit in CSEA, which had had a couple of representation elections. At least one or two, the first one was successful PS&T, but at the same time this was happening the next representation election, CSEA lost PS&T. It was about 40,000 professional, scientific and technical I would have been one of them. And that was probably, and Bob was too region president...

BL: Region president.

RG: So, in fact, my career with the union ended with the loss of PS&T and that was the combination of the teachers and... Which I was very bitter about it. For whatever reason, just because I felt sad. That was the end of my career with CSEA. At the same time all the rest was happening in the affiliation. And the ironic thing, of course, was the affiliation happened two years in a row. That would not have occurred. That's my belief.

BL: At the same time, I was, it affected me differently because CSEA found the means to transfer my item and I didn't have to go to the other group. I stayed with CSEA and went from there.

RG: Because he had been appointed and was in the office and so forth. And then, of course, after that my interest, I had intended to be very strong in political action. I didn't become involved and the new union was not active. And then eventually I came to be hired by AFSCME-CSEA in the new developing political action department. I was the first political organizer, if you will, for political action. I traveled the state of New York and with the affiliation and I was able, I was employed sort of jointly by AFSCME and CSEA. I worked in the political action office and I think it was the convention in Canada, I believe. In any event, I was hired to work for CSEA after about 1980. I worked there until 1984 when I was then appointed Assistant Labor Commissioner in Buffalo. The Department of Labor in Buffalo. The ironies of life.

FV: Yeah, it's funny. You were against the affiliation and then you were working for it. I didn't know that. Now that you look at the affiliation you see...

RG: Well, I think it's very positive. I mean, the only thing I had said at the time because I have been away from it now for a few years, I felt that CSEA didn't participate as much as they should have initially in AFSCME. And whether that's just because they felt, maybe they were the new kids on the block. I just always thought that there probably should have been a stronger force within AFSCME which probably has happened now. I mean, I'm looking at it as an outside observer, but at the time I felt there should have been more participation. I think we just still felt like okay, they're the new kids on the block and they need to feel their way, which, you know is ...

BL: Can we take a break for a few minutes?

FV: Oh yeah, that's fine.

FV:: I'm rolling the tape. We're on our way. Yeah, who would you like to talk about?

RG: The people who I think were instrumental and very helpful to us. Paul Birch, initially, was a good friend when we first got started. He worked with the Department of Labor. Eventually, became I think probably persona non grata with CESEA, but that happens...

FV: Why is that?

RG: Oh, I don't know, he wound up on another tangent and I have no idea.

FV: Oh, okay.

RG: Paul Birch, certainly, initially. Bernie Ryan was involved in negotiations, I think when you were on the negotiating team.

BL: Mm-hmm.

RG: Pete Blaber. He was an individual on local 3 here. And there were quite the ... Elaine Mootry was certainly a strong force. Elaine was...

FV: We're going to talk to her later. Yeah, she's coming in today.

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BL: Oh, good. Good person.

RG: Wonderful person.

FV: What should I ask her about?

RG: Oh. just, well ...

BL: Anything in Mental Health. And not only Mental Health, but she's been involved in the union in a long time and she is one of the most honest, nicest people. Great.

FV: Good. I'm looking forward to talking with her.

BL: Jack Carey. Jack Carey was a big factor in the union for a number of, many years in this issue.

RG: Yeah. He and Bob were very close.

FV: Any stories that you can tell about any of these people and your involvement with them? There must be something.

BL: They were just people. They were their own people. We were very fortunate as an organization to get people, and I say fortunate because I don't think there was anybody who ever had a plan, but ended up with a lot of people like some of the ones that we just mentioned who had an emergence of labor, loved working in the labor field, had talents of especially communication and being able to deliver their messages, the union messages to a variety of individuals and especially members which can be one of the most difficult things in the world to do as I'm sure you're aware. Because so many people that you deal with have no, they're not at fault. They have no knowledge of labor, what it really means or what it really does and these people were able to at awkward times and sometimes without the support of, shall we say, leaders of the organization. They had to work like everybody else does many times, work around the leaders to deliver the message of labor and poor labor and what is needed and most of them, I would say, really did a heck of a job with it. CSEA has been, I think, overall very fortunate over the years, has hired most of the staff that they have had and a lot of it has just been, a lot of it has been pre-planned, but most of it has just been luck, I think. People came to the front door and they were interested in labor or they had been in labor and they wanted to come to work for CSEA and then they would start working with mostly volunteers, which can be very difficult to do. I mean, I'm not putting down the volunteers but they have to go through a process too and CSEA has been very fortunate in giving a high, I think, number of volunteers over the years that I have been around of people that worked on very difficult work. And all areas, from Mental Hygiene to Mental Retardation to whatever other agency is available in the state of New York. And they have been able to continue to make the organization thrive and go forward. Probably some people would disagree with that but, sure there's been the eight balls or oddballs and I probably have been one of those over the years. But we just had a tremendous amount of volunteer support. And the volunteers have blended, for the most part, blended very well with, or the staff has blended very well with the volunteers. Play a tremendous role in this organization.

FV: Yeah. And it says a lot about the organization.

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BL: Yes.

FV: Good.

RG: I think the interesting thing, of course, in any organization you remember characters. There are always characters. And they have slight and CSEA has no end of characters. And all people who I've enjoyed for different reasons or not, whether I've agreed with them or disagreed with them. They've all been... Jimmy Moore in Syracuse. I mean these are all people we knew probably in different roles in different times.

FV: Give me some sketches of these people so we know...

RG: Oh, well Irving let's make a deal on Long Island and I can say that I generally, I like them. And when I went to work for CSEA all of the region presidents really were very open to having me come and talk about political action and they were very grateful. Whether I was in Westchester or Syracuse, or Long Island, or New York City even. And I think that says something about them too. I mean, it's you play a different role when say working as a volunteer than perhaps a colleague. But I enjoyed that. And I very much enjoyed meeting the wives of a group of people in CSEA. And I'd travel all over New York State and I Believe me, I was in a lot of smaller wonderful state but you meet a lot of people in every different region. I mean, some people you want to throttle at different times, you know, when you're on different sides of an issue. But again, that's good. Makes you do your homework. And usually, you try to think that hopefully the end result is something everybody can join together on and sometimes it's not. But many times it is. And because you do have the diverse you end up with something better and stronger and maybe even and I think that it's probably pretty boring. But there were some characters. Jason McGraw, another staff person in...

FV: ???

RG: Oh, he was just a character. Fun-loving but serious when it came to work. But loved to have a good time. Loved to check out what everybody was eating if you went to a restaurant or... But came time to work he was serious ---was a character. Just a... Doing things. Tickling the political arena. I mean, he was a good schmoozer but he knew his stuff and knew the characters and how to react with them and how to handle people and delightful to work with. Again, the issues that happened were ... Bob Guile. He's another name...

BL: Yeah.

RG: He always had a deal. But overall Bob's right. There was always the Siena connection. A lot of these guys were graduates of Siena College...

FV: Oh really?

BL: Yeah.

RG: And that was always interesting because of the basketball and interest in sports.

FV: Yeah, I went two years ...

RG: Did you? Yeah. Yeah.

FV: I majored in pool and the finer arts. But it was close to home.

RG: A lot of dedicated staff. David Stack over the years. Could just start naming the people that we worked with. Bruce Weingard...and is it?

BL: Mm-hmm.

RG: Yeah. And some really talented people and some unfortunately...But they were dedicated to what they did and I think that's what's the spice of life. And you grow through or you like to think you do sometimes. But anyway, so then there came the big interest in having Bill McGowan continue in our continuum. That's another whole issue.

FV: Yes. Bob talked about it last time. Why don't you give us your take on it?

RG: Well, I was really somewhat removed from it because at that point I really was working for CSEA. But seeing how it really was and a big battle with the law firm, of course. It was unfortunate.

FV: ???

RG: Pretty much. Pretty much. I think it was a situation again that everybody thought McGowan had overstepped his bounds, if you will. And had forgotten, really, why... And that happened to people. That's not the case. I mean, I never disliked him. I liked him. It became very important in the time he came in and there was a lot of growth there. There really was a lot of growth. And then again, I got to and then in 1984, of course, I...I was really not involved from that point forward. Other than...

FV: Right. Now let me... I'll ask you the questions I asked Bob last time. I think you've already covered what you're most proud of in your career and your life.

RG: Being involved with political action. Being involved in helping develop a viable local with Department of Labor. Just getting interested. Labor management issues. The political action...

FV: What are you most disappointed in?

RG: That I probably wasn't able to continue my career in???. No control over that.

FV: Now, this is a very general question, but what lessons do you think CSEA's history holds for the future?

RG: I think they keep their eye on the prize. And to remember what you've learned. It's that simple. To ensure the rights and the opportunities for working men and women. I think that's just the basic reason to be. And I think and emotional...

FV: Anything else you want to say, we're still rolling.

RG: No that's fine. No. Not at all because I guess ...

FV: That's what I'm talking about, conviction. You know.

RG: I guess you don't think about it. But you see what's happening today. I mean, I still think it's a concern. Very much a concern is what real people can in what they want. I think that's probably the most...

FV: Well?

BL: Oh, I don't know. It's such a mixed bag and one of the fortunate things that CSEA has had and I guess probably every other union has them, but CSEA may be more so because we are in so many areas and so many different work disciplines and everything that we get a lot of different skills and different forms of expertise. And I, I probably didn't agree with this all the time that it was happening, but I think overall as an organization we have matured to a point where we're able to take advantage of a good share of this expertise that's available to US. I don't think that we're where we should be, but it's been worked on. Maybe people didn't realize they were working on it, but seeing different types of people get involved in the union and different backgrounds. And it's a very interesting process and it's an ongoing process. But at the same time, I think we're, well, maybe I can't speak for it because of the last couple of years but I think I can. I don't think it's changed that much that we have a message that should get through to a lot more people. There's a tremendous amount of the membership out there who don't have a clue, to coin the phrase. Things just happen and they don't know how they happen and they don't realize they happen and if they're good they don't care and if they're bad, well, we know who to blame. And it's never the employer. It's always the guy or the lady who we can see every day. There's a tremendous job to do and the organization can be very proud of the fact that after having said that that they've been able to recruit the volunteers over the years and keep them coming. And I think that's something that nobody should ever lose sight of. You've got to keep them coming because a lot of people just come in, they work for two or three years or something like that and then they move on. They get burned out. They get enough. They have other things to do or whatever. But there seems like a never-ending source of individuals out there but I don't think there is. Not unless you're going to nurture them somewhat. And it's getting tougher and tougher to maintain a union presence. It seems like everybody and their brother wants to get you for some reason. Whether it's some person in Albany or Washington or whatever their motivation or the reason, the media, they feel that they can sell more newspapers. I think they feel that way, they can sell more newspapers or radio time by bashing the union than by saying positive things about the union. And sometimes unions, like everybody else, they need to be bashed. But it should be. . you should be able to do it and have it happen in a positive manner. Should gain from it. And I don't think that's going to be an easy thing to accomplish as the years go on. Everybody thinks that we've got everything there is to get. "You know, that last contract that you got, what else can you get? What else do you want?" Well, at the same time you've got people out there who do nothing except look at those contracts and see what they can get back, or what you shouldn't have or whatever. I think those are hard things for people to grasp.

RG: Anything else?

FV: I'm out of questions.

BL: There probably will be when I get out of here.

FV: We'll just keep coming back, that's all. Thank you both.

Notes on this tape:

There were a lot of audio problems. In some places, the audio disappeared entirely. In others, it was so faint that we couldn't hear it. Toward the end of the interview, Ramona apparently was too far away from the microphone. She sounded as though she was way off in the distance and we lost a lot of what she was saying. Consequently there are many blank lines where we just could not make out what was being said.