

Jim Cox & Gary Ahlstrom

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Interviewer: Winston Gereluk Camera: Ron Patterson

JC: My involvement with the union is I held a number of positions on the executive of CSU 52, both when it was part of CUPE, as well as when it was separated from CUPE. I also was a business agent for someplace around 10 years for Civic Service Union 52.

GA: I'm Gary Ahlstrom. I started with the union as a shop steward. I had a couple of positions on the executive and again was hired as a business agent for approximately 10 or 11 years.

Q: What sort of background do you come from?

JC: I guess I'm the son of a farmer who became a truck driver. He had a little bit of union involvement but wasn't nearly as involved as I was. In fact, at times he thought I was crazy to get so involved. Like I said, I grew up on a farm. We moved to the city when I was 12 years old, and Edmonton has been my home since.

GA: I was born in Edmonton, raised in Camrose. My dad was a federal government employee with the veteran's land act. We moved to Edmonton when I was 15 and I went to high school in Edmonton. Graduated from high school, went to work with the city. I was only going to be there one year, because I needed some money for university. Then 30 years later I retired. I started with the city as a surveyor, chainman, worked my way up to a rod man, and then as an instrument man ran our own survey crew for five or six years. Then, lo and behold, got involved with the union. In about 1980 we were hired as business agents, both Jim and I were hired as business agents for union 52.

Q: How did you come to work for the city?

JC: Like Gary, I was looking for a summer job. I had a neighbor who was also a baseball coach and he wanted me to stay in town for the summer and play baseball for him. He convinced me and my parents that he could find me a job at the city surveying. Oddly enough, Gary and I signed on at the same time, one payroll number difference. We signed on at the same time with the union. Both were only going to spend a short time working there for the cash, and ended up there over 30 years.

Q: What did you think when you found out you were going to be a member of the union and that it was going to cost you money, especially since you were just going to be there for a short time?

GA: We weren't really that impressed, especially when you're making under \$1 an hour. Jesus. With the city in those days, you started off temporary and then if you worked a year you'd automatically become permanent. In our case, we started off and then a

number of positions came open for permanent employees. We all signed on, about six or seven of us that got on permanent. All those guys retired with us. We all stayed there for 30 years; you can figure out that we're all that stupid. We got on permanent and I can remember the first time we got our cheque after we were permanent employees. We all took a look at our cheque and went, what the hell, we're making less money now than what we were when we were working temporary. For guys that are just there for the cash, even though it was only a couple of bucks at the time, that was a big thing.

One of the things was pensions. I can remember us all walking into the boss's office, Bob Drysdale, the whole works of us, and we're just ranting about, Jesus Christ, and what is this PEN thing, what's that deduction of \$2? He says, that's your pension. Pension? We don't need any pension, we're only here for another year. What the hell are we doing pension for? He says, now boys, you're going to thank me for this someday. We said, well what are you talking about? He says, well when you retire. Retire? For god's sakes, we're not going to retire here. But thank god we paid into that pension plan for 30 years.

Q: What years are you talking about, and what impressions did you have?

JC: It was the mid to late '60s. I can remember saying, well what do I need a second pension for? CPP is coming in, so we don't have to worry about that. What's two pensions going to do me? I need the money now. At that time we were at home and wanting to get away from home and live on your own and things like that. All these benefits, I'm a young guy, I don't have to worry about them. Initially you thought it was just a rip off. We were supposed to be living in a free country.

GA: In those days \$2 was 20 beers.

Q: Describe some of the surveying you did in those early years. What parts of Edmonton were you working on?

JC: The first job I worked on was the Victoria Golf Course hill and the Groat Road was still a ravine. We literally manually went through there marking out the extents of roads, marking out and taking what we called preliminary work, whereby you chained everything. You took a distance from a particular point to everything, whether it be a creek bed or big trees or what have you. The hill at that time was sliding and we had to reinforce it. That was the first job that I was on, and the bridge was under construction at that time, the Groat Road bridge.

GA: In those days our survey crew laid out all the sewer lines, all the new sewer construction in various areas of the city. Those were in the days when they were using draglines. It was manpower and drag lines and shovels, none of the big fancy equipment. They just 'veed' out big trenches and then guys would lower four foot lengths of concrete pipe down and put it in. Our job was just to lay out the sewer line from block to block. Those guys would go through it and fill her in. There was no fancy damn stuff in those days, it was just all manual.

Q: Your job was to make sure it went downhill?

JC: It always goes downhill. Back then the extent of the city was probably, well the train tracks at the north end went through Calder, the south side Argyll was about to be built, and the west end we're talking about, well JP, one of the first years I worked there, JP became part of the city. Beverly was shortly thereafter. So those weren't parts of the city at that time. So it was pretty small compared to what it is today.

GA: There was no Mill Woods. I remember going across those fields in snowshoes putting in sites for test holes. You would leave your truck first thing in the morning on snowshoes and you'd be gone until 4 o'clock in the afternoon when you got back. It was just a big open field at that time.

Q: Did the City treat you okay back then?

GA: We were on a survey crew. You'd report to work at 7 o'clock in the morning and do whatever your crew chief expected you to do for the day. You'd pick up your cheque every second Tuesday and cash it. We didn't have a whole lot of interaction. We had our survey group that always hung out together and that's basically all we worried about.

JC: We seldom had the interface that people have now. Back then you were almost a little group or clique and that's all you stuck to. Most of didn't see each other except at the beginning and ending of the day, because you were always in different quadrants and had assigned work that seldom overlapped. You were out there, a threesome or foursome out doing a specific type of work.

Q: What changes did you see happening in the city and the kind of work you were doing?

GA: We started getting involved right after the strike. We were all on strike. We were surveying at the time and we went on strike in '74. So we all went on strike in '74. Actually the first two or three days of the strike was nothing but a big party. This was the greatest thing. We had a camper, we had strike pay. The surveyors were responsible for picketing the 105th street yards. The York Hotel was just down the road, so some guys went over and the next thing you know beer is arriving. We're in a camper, and at one point there must've been 20 or 30 of us in this camper. The strike marshal came and there's no picketers. Well all the picketers were in the camper and were pretty much liquored up. We had hired two Indian kids to carry the pickets back and forth in front of the gate. We thought this was okay. It probably wasn't the best idea at the time but it was a good idea at the time, because it freed us up. But he was some disappointed in his people. That was Mikie, Mikie Diduck.

JC: We were on strike but there was never anybody to give you an idea of what they wanted of you. You're on the picket line and you're supposed to picket, but how long? Some of the guys just bunkered down, took their campers, and were there for 24 hours at

a time. Nobody was giving much in the way of direction. Mind you, we didn't have a whole lot of strikes back then either.

GA: That was the only strike for 52 ever.

Q: Do you remember some of the old timers who were in the union?

GA: Alex Sczechina was the leader. He was the business manager at the time. Lloyd was president, Lloyd Egan. Zonia was involved. Bob Butcher was vice president. Steve Sumka, Sr. and Jr., they were all involved. Gloria Van Helbert.

JC: Mary Anderson Bennett, she was grandma.

Q: In the period of time when the union was thinking of going on strike, were those people you named in leadership?

GA: Most of them were on the executive. Leo Derkach.

JC: I don't think Leo was on the executive at that time; I think he was a trustee but not considered part of the executive at that time.

Q: What sort of guy was Lloyd Egan?

JC: Mr. Social Worker, that's what we used to call him. Lloyd had a way of always helping, is probably his biggest attribute. He never turned anybody away from trying to help them, whether it was technically and contractually difficult or impossible, he'd find another way to help the person out. He was always just that type of an individual.

Q: Was he a social worker, in fact?

GA: He worked in that field but I don't think he was. He was a clerk. He started off as a clerk with the city, I think.

JC: I think his capacity was a Clerk IV, that's what they called them. I think he was involved with a number of the different areas. Back then we had social workers, it wasn't a provincial unit, it was a local unit that housed everything from the wayward children, the unwed mothers, right up to what we called social planners. Lloyd worked out of that group for a fair amount of time, as well as he worked in the financial end of things at one time too.

GA: We met him when he was president, that's how we got to know him.

Q: There was quite a variety of people in the union at that time. How did these people get together? Do certain occupational groups take the leadership?

JC: I guess they do, but at the same time, I think our group was kind of split two ways. We were a technical and clerical union. We had a component that was clerical in nature, and technology was just coming on the board with all of your NAITs and SAITs and those types of things. Survey was split, like when they did the, I can't even remember, there was always a battle with the physically outside people and the inside people. But the way the city split them and even the labor relations board and its predecessor, they laid down one or two of the decisions.

They put the surveyors in because of the technical end of their type of work, no different than they moved the inspection, they're carpenter types, but they came into the union as well because they were more the technical application of the quotes. They were really, who better to know that than the people who were actually carpenters and that type of background. So that's where we were kind of split. Even to this day there's a question as to how do you split those classifications. Clerical is fairly straightforward, they're inside a building. But then should a janitor, because it's a physical thing, should they be inside or outside, because they're doing both? That's always been a question that union 52 has had to defend or live with, depending on decisions made. ... On the other end of it, the same thing with the classifications. You had the upper end, there's always a fight, is it a management or professional exclusion? We were lucky enough to find a solution to that end of it at one time.

Q: Why did you become involved in the union?

GA: Well we had the strike of '76 and at the end of that strike, after you've been on a picket line for seven days and you've got these promises, and you're told we're going on strike for this and that, anyway the arbitration decision came down. In actual fact it seemed like we lost money. So at that point in time there was no shop steward with the survey group and we were a pretty vocal group at the time. We were a little upset about losing this money, so we had a shop steward election and Jim and I were elected as shop stewards. Off we go to the first shop stewards meeting. For a while you're just there trying to learn the ropes and find out who's who and what's going on and how come. Then after a while we became a little more vocal and we couldn't keep our mouths shut. The next thing you know you're elected to an executive position or something, and then you're on the road to union purgatory.

Q: What executive positions did you get elected to?

GA: Vice president, trustees. I was a trustee at first and then a vice president.

JC: I was assistant chief shop steward and vice president, and I think that's it.

Q: Who was running the shop steward meetings when you first got involved?

JC: Gloria Vanhelbert was when I was the assistant. But she was interim because people had moved on. I can't remember.

Q: Do you remember anything about the events leading up to the strike?

GA: The first that we knew we were going on strike was when our boss said we had to take all the survey vehicles, they were locking up all of the survey vehicles in one of the yards. The old Jasper Place yards on 170th Street, they locked up all of the survey vehicles then gave us all rides back to our vehicle. Then the next day we were on strike. We had a strike captain, I think it was Mike Diduck. He said, we're looking after the main yards; nothing moves or goes in or out of the main yards. Nothing's going to move out of those yards.

JC: Back then, unless you phoned in at a particular time, you didn't get the information. With us being in the field the way we were, the union office was generally difficult. Both of us at that time weren't shop stewards. If we had one, they weren't making the effort to make a call. So we got it through the management. But at the same time, it was odd that, as much as we were very easy going and complacent about the idea of a strike and being involved in it as it materialized, the guys, once the decision was made and they found that it was made, were quite adamant about it. We did have some people that were looking at and did do some work. I'm not sure was out and about in the neighborhoods, but some of the guys had their homes egged and some had flat tires and things of that nature. We later got labeled one of the culprits, but on camera I'm saying I didn't do it.

GA: We were tame. We were tame union boys.

Q: What do you remember about your union breaking away from CUPE?

JC: I think the strike was the biggest single contributing factor. We were on strike and shortly thereafter when we were back at work the union was served with notice that we were in arrears and we dollars and cents to make up. Contrary to what the union was expecting, some kind of financial help out of the national and provincial portion of CUPE, we were being told that we were in arrears and money was owing. That was probably the kingpin. And a lot of the people who had been around for a while were saying, look, it was something that was mutually agreeable to us, but nobody really signed and sealed a document stating that we would be locked into CUPE's constitution. We've always maintained our constitution as being independent from CUPE. I think that really held up through the whole process that we went through. That was the initial bit. We were at the union hall when CUPE representatives attempted to take over the office, which then just alienated the group a lot more. They even went to the extent that the meeting that we had to look at the status of CUPE at City Hall, they tried to intervene. That just raised the ire of people that much more. I guess we were enough red neck to say, it's our union and we're not going to let them in. Because then they didn't get in.

GA: That's pretty much it. It was that per capita tax. Then we started taking a look at, just think what we can do instead of sending \$15,000 or \$20,000 down to CUPE every six months or whatever it was – and those numbers are probably not right – but just think what we can do with that money for our own membership. The tactics that CUPE utilized

at the time was strong arm or attempted strong arm tactics at the time, threatening things and that kind of stuff. So we just decided no, we don't like being threatened all that much.

Q: CUPE didn't give you much assistance, either in negotiations or in the strike.

GA: I don't think so, at least that was the story that we got from our representatives that were in charge of our union. CUPE was supposed to be doing this and this, and they didn't do anything as far as giving us support for the strike and whatnot. So that's what started the whole ball rolling in the near future after the strike, was well why should we be giving them this per capita tax when they don't do anything for us?

JC: They didn't live up to our expectations during the strike.

Q: So there was a vote to get out of CUPE.

GA: On the executive, I believe the executive voted yes.

JC: And we took it to the general membership and I think that was the meeting that CUPE...it was a full house, because I can remember we used to meet in the cafeteria of the old City Hall. It would hold 600 people and it was packed. At that time I don't think we were much larger than about 4,000 people. So we got 10% of the people out to that particular meeting because they'd heard what had transpired and what was being dealt with. That's all we dealt with at that meeting.

Q: What did you achieve or not achieve as a result of the strike?

GA: It was just plain money for us. We were offered so much by the city and if we didn't take it we would have this strike. This goes back a long ways, but I think we were told that we were going to get 6% or 7% was the final city offer. Then it came in through the arbitrator's report that we only got 3% or 4%. Those numbers aren't correct, but that was the extent of it. When you're young fellows and the beer is only 10 cents a beer, and you've got girlfriends and this kind of stuff, well that few bucks made a big difference. It was strictly a money thing for me. How the heck am I getting less, what did the union do for me? I didn't know anything about CUPE.

JC: And on the outside something was starting to fester, what we called the eight hour proposition. Everybody that worked out of doors or in conjunction with somebody else, interfacing, police department, fire, that type of thing, were working eight hours. But all the people that worked in City Hall in the clerical end of things were working 6 ¾ hours. When they started to do the classifications, and that's what was materializing in the '60s and '70s, was trying to bring in all of this technological thing and all the interfaces with the clericals, and mechanization was starting to come around. Those types of things was creating the technical end of things, but somebody with a, for example, the field we came out of was initially called civil engineering at NAIT. You could be a draftsman, you could be a surveyor, you could be an inspector, you could be somebody that applies codes. Somebody who works in City Hall works 6 ¾ hours. Their biweekly period pay

was the same as mine working 8 hours outside. We were in the same engineering category. It was starting to raise its ugly head. Initially on the table there was some compensation to do away with that differential that was there. When the arbitrator came down and the strike was over, there was no differential payment there. So that was another thing that started to fester that really became something through the next 10 years.

Q: Was the arbitrator's name Edwards?

JC: No, Edwards was the fellow that did the AIB review. I'm not sure who, it might've been Morris Sichuk, but I can't remember. We were on the outside looking in.

Q: How did you become business agents?

JC: I guess there's two or three factors from my standpoint. One was my activity on the executive. Two was we ended up in a situation that was, we had an individual in the union office that was what we called the business manager, that looked after our affairs and was the chief negotiator. We ran into some disagreements. When I say we, the executive in general and in particular the negotiating committee that he was the spokesperson for. They ran into some disagreements and consequently he was removed from that particular capacity. In doing so, we were labeled as, well you guys helped create this, now you're going to have to help make it work in a better fashion that what it was before. From my standpoint, that's what led me into the position.

Q: You created some vacancies by doing so.

JC: We created one vacancy, the interface with that particular individual and one of the other business agents created that business agent quitting. So there was two vacancies, or was there three, I can't remember. No, because Paul quit shortly after. The whole situation created two or three vacancies.

GA: Lloyd came down to the survey office and said, you two are coming with me. We said, where are we going? He said, we're going to the union office. We said, well we gotta go out surveying this afternoon. No, that's all taken care of. Mr. Burrows, who was the chief commissioner at the time, will be phoning your boss, so don't worry about it, just get in the car and we're gone. Well we kind of got seconded. The whole idea was they needed somebody to carry out the business.

Q: What did you think when you were being seconded?

GA: We Lloyd took us back to the office and he said, well this is the way it's got to be right now. He said, you two are it, you're going to be temporarily doing the grievance work and the classification work. Things needed to run at the union office and people needed representation. He said, Gary you can look after grievances and Jim you can look after classifications. Well Jesus, I'd never been to a grievance hearing in my life, and I'm supposed to be representing somebody. We had a quick education course and some

appointments were set up, and I went to my first grievance hearing. All I knew was here was the grievance, we had a chart of what the grievance was about. So quickly I went to a book, Brown and Beatty, and I looked under there about the topic and I'm trying to read up about what this is and what does the collective agreement say. Lloyd was trying to help us out as best he could and what he knew. Geez, off we went to the first grievance hearing. I remember it was over at Edmonton Telephones and it was with Ken Foster. He was the general manager. Their personnel person was Bob Hoy. Bob said, this is your first grievance hearing Gary, just relax, we're not going to have a big fight here or anything like that. Just lay out for Mr. Foster what the problem is. I think they were being nice to me.

Q: Do you recall what the topic was and if you won it?

GA: I think it was an employee performance issue. All I could keep asking was, was the employee ever warned about this lack of activity and that this was going to cause this kind of stuff? We kind of muddled through it and waited for a decision. By god, we got something done anyways. In the first little while that's basically what was going on. I think to a certain extent the city administration took it easy on us.

JC: I think that they seen that our style was more Lloyd's style, which was sit back and analyze what's best for the group and the individuals that are involved in the specific topic that day. We were lucky enough in that we'd had two or three rounds of negotiations involvement as party to the actual contracts themselves prior to us coming in. So we had a little bit of the theoretical; we had no practical when we went there. In fact, Lloyd had a limited amount of practical, because the people that had left were the agents that had been doing and performing most of the practical things.

Q: You really were a bunch of amateurs dealing with people who were professionals.

JC: Yes. And I think that they found that, like Lloyd, we were fairly down to earth, and that was more what the city was looking for than the confrontations and the yelling and screaming and threats and things of that nature. That was read from the CUPE end of things as well as the prior administration that we had in the office. What Gary's saying about them being a little more tolerant of us is true.

Q: Did you achieve more that way?

GA: I think we did. I think we achieved a lot. We had an excellent, one of the things, as I became more knowledgeable about grievances, was I just wouldn't take grievances that didn't have legitimacy. I would rather tell that to the employee in the privacy of an office that, you know what, you're not going to win this thing and you know what, you're lucky you didn't get fired. I think we eventually got a reputation that if there was a grievance there was probably something to it. But we never went in yelling or screaming at people. These are the facts and this is what I'm presenting to you. You can make your decision from that. If I don't like your decision then we've got another step to go. And if I don't

like that decision and still think it's legitimate, then I'll advance it to the next step. I don't have to threaten anybody, because I wouldn't like to be threatened.

Q: Do you recall cases going to arbitration?

GA: Oh sure. We had some posting grievances, job grievances that went to arbitration. We had some discipline that went to arbitration.

JC: Contractual, hours of work.

GA: Ya, hours of work stuff that went to arbitration. But we won our share. We lost some.

JC: We had a pretty good record. We were pretty fortunate, 80 plus on most of the arbitrations.

GA: One of the things that did happen in that era too was, for grievances we set up a grievance review board.

Q: Describe what that is and why it's important.

GA: At a particular level, prior to it going to arbitration, we would have to make a decision in the office whether we thought it was an arbitrable situation. A lot of employees get wrapped up in their own arbitration. It's very difficult for me to tell an employee that this is as far as we're going, you don't have a case, we're not going any further. We had some struggles with that so we set up a grievance review board, which would be a group of employees that were elected to this grievance review board. They would sit down and the employee that was affected would be there, I would be there, we would explain the whole situation. I would explain why or why not, why we wouldn't or why we would want to go to arbitration on this. Then the employee that was affected would be able to give their side of the story. Then the grievance review board would make a recommendation to me and to the president, yes you're going to take it to arbitration, or this is as far as we're going to go. That worked pretty darned good.

JC: The committee was designed to have some negotiators or people with negotiation experience and some people, usually shop stewards, that were involved in the day to day operation. They were somewhat involved and also had a good feel for the collective agreement. We had some very good arguments that went contrary to our presentation, too, coming out of that group. It was a healthy thing.

Q: How did you deal with dissatisfied members? Were you accused of being sellouts?

GA: I guess, on occasion. You're not going to please 100% of the people 100% of the time. We never considered ourselves sellouts. We tried to base our decisions on the facts of the case and legal opinion. If I didn't think there was a case, I would get a legal opinion

and present that to the grievance review board and say, this is what he's saying. As much as I sympathize with Mrs. Boop here, it just isn't going to work.

JC: But even with the general membership. There were some general meetings that we went to that, when you gave a report, because you used to try and highlight certain things that were happening, whether they're becoming problematic, types of clauses, things like that. People that knew part of the history because they were directly involved would get fairly adamant about them. But a lot of those debates and discussions you had in public. A lot of the guys that were there supporting that individual's position, when they seen that we had a rationale and had been approached and reviewed through different processes, most people were happy with it. I still talk to people today that say that was the best thing that we could've done, the approach that we took in the style that we took.

Q: How long did you last as a business agent?

JC: 10-1/2 years, until '90 or '91.

Q: And you, too?

GA: Yes, about six months shorter.

Q: What else, besides grievances, does a business agent do?

JC: There's always a social aspect to it. Our workload was divided into categories or portions of the collective agreement as well as each one of us was a spokesperson for a particular bargaining unit. Back then we had the Edmonton Board of Health, the Edmonton Public Library, the main agreement, Space Sciences Centre. So each one of the business agents had one of the smaller ones and were jointly involved with the main. All of us were involved in the main collective agreement. I had classifications out of the collective agreement and compensation and those types of things to do. Gary had grievances. The others that we had in the office were all involved in the scope end of things for various reasons. Then the main agreement, everybody was involved.

GA: So we would do negotiating and we would do ... Lloyd was always the spokesperson for the main agreement. Then for the side agreements like the library and the Space Sciences and those other ones, one of us would be the spokesperson at their negotiating sessions as well and look after everything in that particular little unit. Besides the grievances, there was always that stuff to do. You were always going out to meetings with different employees to find out about different issues, or they had complaints. You'd be attending meetings with personnel department, with different managers, trying to work out problem situations, whether it be how do I hire staff or what should we do here? If we decide to do this, would the union take an affront? Am I looking at a grievance if I do this?

JC: In the early days, maybe because the city was looking for a different approach and were a good ally in developing that, but initially we started out union management. It just

ballooned and blossomed. In and around that '78 to '82 area the city developed the union management program where all of us came together as unions and associations. The police and fire were there even though they weren't back then considered unions. So there was that end of things too. Everywhere where we had people in that department had a union management as well, meant that it was co-chaired by one of us as a business agent and the general manager or his designate from each of the departments. We had blind responsibilities, as we called them, and departmental responsibilities as well.

Q: Did the union management programs work?

JC: I think so. I think that probably 80% of what we accomplished in negotiations, the seed was planted and fertilized through the departments. It wasn't surprising that we were looking for a classification challenge and appeal process when we got it. We had certain grievances. Gary was successful with posting grievances and selection grievances in particular, that we were winning them and they were put into the positions instead of just having an arbitrator repost it. That used to be the norm and the best we could hope for. Andre van Schaik was one of those recipients of one of those first positions. Those are the types of things the department felt they were willing to do.

Q: What do you know about the association of civic unions and how you got out of that association?

JC: My first involvement with it was after the strike the administration of CSU 52 decided to withdraw from and negotiate the benefits package. The association prior to that would jointly negotiate with the city benefits. It was felt because of our changing dynamics and more permanency types of positions that we represented, that we should be looking at something different in benefits and benefit packages. The former business agent spearheaded us leaving it, and in 1977 or '78 one of those contracts was the first one we negotiated where what we called part 2 of the collective agreement was a benefits package with both sick provisions as well as the various plans that we've developed.

Q: What unions were in the association?

JC: Prior to us leaving was CSU 52, local 30, the 1007 electrical workers, the atomic workers who ran the power plants. Sema, which was the management group, had a group there. The firefighters, the police, and they had a small group called the police officers. And then the bus drivers, 569. I'm missing one but I can't remember what it is.

Q: What was the whole idea of this association?

JC: It was basically to negotiate benefits. What I remember why we were getting out of it was because we were finding that more and more 52 people were permanent, whereas most of the other unions were seasonal. Most of the employees in the city, other than 52 people, weren't able to become permanent. They weren't getting past that one year mark. Therefore we thought we should be looking at better benefits for our people. I'm led to believe that that's when the maternities things were starting to come up. I know that we

did through the years look at the maternity things, because our group was probably 70% of the female population of the city of Edmonton.

Q: Do you recall anything about that association?

GA: Not a whole lot, no.

Q: Later on the unions got together under something called a coalition with Edmonton civic unions. Were you around when that happened?

JC: They were starting to talk about it when we were leaving the office in the late '80s. We always had a working relationship. After we left CUPE, most of the formal unions were not looking to associate with us all that much. But we always had a good working relationship with both the people from other parts of the province as well as in Edmonton. Nobody liked to have us, if we were at an AFL presentation or something of that nature, we generally were put in the back row so that we weren't seen. We were always made welcome but we weren't there to be seen up front.

Q: Do you agree with that?

GA: Well that's true. But the reason for it is because Alec pissed everybody off. That's the plain truth of it. He made enemies in every union with the city over this whole federation thing and the withdrawal from CUPE. We withdraw from the AFL and he called people a bunch of names. So for a number of years we were pretty much blackballed. We did have, after a period of time when we were in the union office, we did develop a better relationship with local 30 and 1007 and the police.

JC: We always were able to communicate and be involved with them. I can remember going to all kinds of things with the federation for different types of benefit packages and improvements. Also on the compensation end of things, AUPE and Calgary, they were always open to us talking to them and doing presentations, and them doing presentations for us. I think we complimented everybody we talked to, so they were always willing to have us around, whether it was on official basis or not. I think the CUPE thing, when it sat over our head for the whole time we were in the union office, I think that put a damper on people wanting to be too open.

. . . Two or three things stood out. One was my involvement with the pension residue, a surplus of money that was left over from people prior to CPP coming into effect. When the actuarial work was done, the city had a number of dollars that weren't devoted to pensions of the current and past participants. 52 participated with two or three others in the city to reclaim those dollars for the employees that had contributed. We took it to court, we were waiting for a decision of the judge. There were three other cases going on in other parts of Canada. I remember that we came down to a deal, signed the deal, and the next day the first of those three or four cases were announced as going the employer's way and able to claim the money.

It was one of those, whew, we made it under the deadline, we got our money, about 90% of what we were claiming was ours. Our people all ended up receiving the money, whereas the other two or three court cases that went through the courts were all ruled just opposite of what our agreement was. So we were lucky that way. I think it was largely due to Norman Cosh's knowledge of the pension systems and also being in tune with what was happening in those other court cases. When the opportunity came along, he seized it. We were just riding along a very experienced negotiator's shirt tails in that particular case.

Q: What year was that?

GA: It was early in the '80s.

JC: I would say it came down '82 roughly.

Q: There was a court case launched, but there never was a decision because you people settled?

JC: I can remember the guys, it was Bill Palma and the other financial officer that cut the deal with us.

Q: Do you think I'd find papers on that anywhere?

JC: Well you should, because we all had to become notaries or whatever.

GA: If anybody knows where that stuff is, Zonia would know. There would be records on file somewhere.

JC: All the actuarial stuff was done, the discoveries were done, and some of the court action or all of it was done.

Q: Describe the economic climate in the early '80s and how your people dodged the bullet.

JC: We signed the collective agreement for three years, I think a total of 36 to 37%. That was right around 1980, maybe the fall of '80. By Christmas time of '80 they were laying off people. Most of the unions were approached from the city to roll back. For some reason we not only ended up with the largest amount given to us, but we also ended up not being approached to roll back. To this day I'm not sure if it was just good looks or blind luck that we got away with it, but we did.

Q: Was that an agreement you negotiated?

JC: We were both involved in negotiating that particular agreement. It was a City of Edmonton agreement.

Q: What do you remember as a highlight?

GA: That was a highlight. One of the negotiating things we did that's still highly prized today is compressed work week.

Q: Describe that.

GA: In the early '80s people were either working 6-3/4 hours or 8 hours with the city. We negotiated with the city what we called a compressed work-week. Instead of working 6-3/4 hours a day for five days a week and ten days in a two week period, you would work 7-1/2 hours a day and then every second Friday you would get off. Or a Monday or whatever you decided. It really meant that every second week you got a long weekend. If there was a long weekend included in that, then you would have four days off. Initially we thought it was a great idea. But even coming from our own survey guys, some of them were a little disappointed in it because that would mean they'd miss out on some overtime. Then you would have some 6-3/4 hour people that were saying, geez, why the hell would I work 7-1/2 hours a day, how am I ever going to work that? It's hard enough to work 6-3/4 hours a day, how am I going to work 7-1/2?

Then we had a whole group of people who said, hey this is really good. The managers were even patting us on the back because it sounded pretty darned good to them too, that they could get this. If the employees got it then they could get it. We negotiated that clause with Kim Krekowitz and Harold. They were in charge of human resources at that time, or labor relations. To this day I would say if the city ever tried to take away compressed work week, that would be a strike issue. After a while even the people that had all the complaints, and they could see somebody taking off for a long weekend every second weekend, it didn't take long before that was pretty standard.

JC: It was negotiated and I think the union management end of it really helped it out. Every single area that applied, you had to work out those logistics. The union office was involved with the scheduling and things of that nature. It spun off. The computer resources areas and things of that nature that always had trouble because keeping the 24 hour thing, it spun off and people were working four tens and getting off. Then we got the police department and fire department, communication people. It survived and is still surviving now because it was worked out between the administration and the employees. Of course the administration ended up with it too, so it was a benefit for everybody and everybody made it work.

Q: Do you recall any other gains?

GA: Maternity leave was increased from six months to a year at one point in time.

Q: How did that work?

GA: You just got a number of proposals in and then you checked around to see what everyone else was getting in their bargaining throughout the province and throughout

Canada. You kind of leap-frog on some other things. All of a sudden a year-long maternity leave seemed to be a norm coming up. I use the term "we" negotiated, but there are two parties to this. The city agreed to it.

JC: It's not much different than what you see now with the paternity things. We had paternity. We were the first ones and only ones for a while as well. Another one is the classification challenge and appeal. We started out going through the technical changes. Not only with that, then you started with positions with technologies becoming more common and sophisticated coming out of the NAITs and SAITs of the world, that a person with a university degree didn't necessarily be the cure all. Somebody coming out of NAIT with an engineering type or a computer type of background was just as efficient in the workplace in some cases as a lot of the engineers that were excluded.

So we ended up, and I remember piggybacking on something that came out of Alberta Housing, where they had architectural types that were excluded in engineering that could be in or out of the union, depending what capacity they were working on. We had all kinds of horrendous problems in the top end. We saw them creep up and down, up and down. Lloyd being the social worker that he was, in talking to Beryls, who was the chief commissioner, they set up a situation whereby we went through all of what we identified as creep with a couple of individuals from the personnel, compensation and classification group. We developed what we called challenge and appeal. I don't know how many are around of that nature, but literally we developed a grievance process for should or shouldn't it be in or out of the union. We used both the labor relations criteria and the practices that they have with the union. We weren't too popular for about six months because the other unions seen it as a potential for us to then start looking at the border lines between them. It wasn't until Lloyd continually guaranteed them that we weren't looking at that, that we were only interested in the administration interface. But that challenge and appeal, we literally took back 200 to 300 positions outright, whether they were vacant or occupied. We set up a system whereby they had the option to either stay in or out of the union, depending on their preference. Oddly enough, a lot of the people that were opting out, we were getting three times that saying, we want to opt in. But we couldn't claim those positions. We had two tiers, one that was indefensible and we were taking them, and one that was going to be further reviewed because they interfaced with other unions. Once that second process started, the other unions realized that if we thought it should go to them we were saying, this should be a 30 foreman 3 or foreman 4, not a technical position. So it alleviated that but it took about six months before they seen that coming. But classification challenge and appeal was probably the first one. CUPE 01 in Toronto had one just at the tail end in the early '90s that was the second one we seen. We literally had regular meetings every two months or something, and we presented positions and had a group that went through them. It worked. ... It was challenge and appeal article 23.

GA: We had some neat things happen in our time. We went from typists to word processors. ... You got all these typists and all of a sudden they're throwing out typewriters and bringing in computers. It's the same as me today trying to learn how to

use some of the new technologies. A lot of these ladies, they don't know anything about computers. There was education courses and training courses and fear.

Q: Would they come to the union?

JC: All the time. With complaints, with concerns; how do we interface? I think our style was, what I've seen since we've left, I feel that maybe our style, if it was adopted, the conciliatory, here's the problem and we both have to deal with it so let's get at it, that if that was dealt with more now instead of this finite technical little nitpicking, I think they'd be better off. I worked up until four years ago so I was under the collective agreement until that time. The 15 to 20 years since I left the union office has really got back into splitting hairs versus making things flow. That's a sign of the times, but it's going to come around that labor in general is going to have to start doing the accommodations that we went through. Like I said, it was continual. You didn't think about it, you just reacted to it.

GA: That was fun, because during negotiations when you have set up whole new classifications, the city and what they were trying to do was, well let's see if we can save some money here. Of course the union on the other hand, well how much can we get out of this? Our position was, this is more technical, this is more difficult. The city took the position that, oh this is going to make their job easier. ... We had lots of fun.

JC: Like I said, we were fairly lucky that once that first six month stint was over and they seen that we were genuine in approach, and we had others that came in and worked alongside us and in capacities similar to ours in the union. I think there was always that approach, whether it would be Judy Jacobs or Glen Marcus or Paul when he was leaving at the tail end. They all were looking to make things work because they seen that it just made it healthier.

Q: Do you remember any losses from that time?

JC: We lost members because of reorganizations. The Board of Health ended up going at the tail end. The Board of Health became part of regional health.

GA: Whatever happened to Joanie Strand?

JC: We lost a large contingent of what we used to call correctional people, places like on 124th and Yellowhead - the Yellowhead Youth Centre there. They were involved with us along with social working and a bunch of that. The unwed mothers that was up there in Belmont, those types of things all disappeared.

Q: Were you in that position when they lost the janitors?

JC: No, that's shortly after. The janitors were always in ours until that particular...

Q: I was working for AUPE at that time and we took some big hits.

JC: I had a real good working relationship with two fellows over there, Frank Morgan and what was the other fellow's name, just trying to counter. They knew where our stuff was coming and we knew what was happening there, and it really helped. The cooperation, there was no surprises in the industry. Particularly with us and them, our interfaces were very similar.

GA: We had some hard times though, during the layoff period, when they first started to lay off people in the '80s. But our collective agreement, a lot of people got sent back to their previous position. There were a lot of families affected money-wise because they were taking a hit. The person at the end of the line ended up getting laid off. In a lot of cases, when you followed it, they were very new people. So we didn't lose a whole lot of members but we had a lot of members that ended up being bumped out of positions and moved around.

JC: We were fortunate enough that we could do it. Secondly, we weren't limited by boundaries. A lot of the city of Edmonton were departmentally limited. If you were in the department you started with and stayed there, you could always revert back. So much of where our people came and went to was as a result of reorganization, so we were always open to the suggestion of moving them across those invisible lines. It's just a cooperation thing. We had 360 people that were given notice between the 15th of November and Christmas. By the first of January there was 60 left, and most of them didn't want to revert to their former position. We'd moved enough that those 300 were in a job to start the new year. It's always going to be less money when you revert to former capacity, but at least they were working. I'll never forget, we had brought in a couple of our vice presidents to help us. We'd set up an interview and announce it with the departments that every time they announced and called people in to tell them that this or that was being shut down, we always had a union rep there. Some of the vice presidents came in. One of the fellows, John, it was about noon and he said, if I gotta go to another one of those meetings I'm never coming back to this office. He'd been to two in the morning and all of us had gone to four that morning, because there were so many announcements and each little group was being told.

Q: How did the general membership regard their union?

GA: I think that the majority of union members liked what was going on. We were getting decent increases, we were doing a decent job, we were representing people. If they needed something, we were there. Lloyd insisted that we do the best job we could for the members, and the executive did too. It wasn't just us. Yes, the business agents handle a lot of the technical aspects, but we had a whole lot of really good executive members that were taking care of their areas. Gary Iskiw and Zonia and Derkach and John Eastwood, we had a lot of really good executive members that weren't afraid to come to us either. If they were hearing some stuff that they didn't think was right, they knew they could come to us and say, we're having a problem over here, what the heck is happening there, what are you guys doing? Everything wasn't smooth sailing all the time. We had some really good arguments with executive members. But overall, I think they

wanted us there. We were fortunate to be dealing with some sane people with the city, too. They didn't want huge problems.

JC: They didn't want that militant Gainers type situation. They didn't flex the muscle. At the same time, I think we were progressive. Gary mentioned it a couple times and I have too, is that when you want to deal with a problem, not just the individual aspect of it but the universal aspect of it was always thought of. Yes, it works over here with the surveyors in this department, but what about all the other surveyors in the city, is it going to work? If it's not going to work then you've got to think twice about how far you're going to take that.

Q: Being surveyors, did you find it difficult to deal with other occupations?

JC: Like Gary said, I think we were very fortunate to have people that were willing to come forward and lend us their expertise. If we were creating a new classification, a lot of those meetings we had one or two of those individuals that were directly involved in it there. They were always going, no it doesn't work that way, don't let them bullshit you, because it works this way and it would never happen that way. That was maybe Lloyd's doing, because he was so much grassroots that he could go and have a coffee, phone the mayor and have a coffee with him and then phone Les Young when he was the labor minister and go have a coffee with him. He had contacts and that's the way the whole union was running at that time. Everybody had contacts. If Gary didn't have it and he needed something and I knew somebody, they would come forward.

Q: You've said that the City practiced good human resource management principles.

JC: I think so. But I think we had an ace in the hole. I think labor in general through that decade had an ace in the hole, and that was Harold Hill. I think Harold, the fellow that was in charge of the labor relations, the negotiating end for the city of Edmonton, he was one of our prior presidents. He also was an individual that would rationalize any and all situations. If he came to you and said, look, you guys pack up on X, Y and Z because the commission board has said no or the chief commissioner has said no or the city manager has said no and there's nothing I can do, you knew. You got to know that if there was something like that, you played the game a certain length but once you got to know him he was pretty genuine and reasonable.

Q: Was Lloyd Egan the only president you worked for?

GA: No, we worked for Frank Zaprawa. That would've been shortly before I left.

JC: He came in October and I was gone in January, and Gary and Judy were gone shortly thereafter.

Q: What was it about his style that you found you couldn't work with?

GA: He was a troublemaker. He was looking to be everything that I wasn't. He was looking to be, like he didn't think twice about lying. General managers would phone up and he would lie to them. I had spent 10 years building a reputation that said that if you need something you come to me and we can discuss it like gentlemen. I won't lie to you and you don't lie to me. But Frank, within weeks, had every general manager not wanting to talk to him, and we're going to go right back to a situation that we were in 10 years prior. Life is too short. I don't need to be going to work and arguing with people every day. So I said, I'm going to move along; thank you and have a nice life.

JC: Basically, Frank's approach reverted back to where things were when we first got involved with the ousting of the last group. He didn't last very long and I think we digressed for a few presidents until things started to level out again.

Q: How do you respond to people who say that if you leave the union and go to management, you've moved over to the dark side?

GA: When I went over to work with the water and san department as a personnel officer, they hired me because of what I had done with the union, because of my attitude and style. They needed somebody to deal with the outside workers at that time. ...

GA: I went to work for transportation in the bus area. In the bus area, I spent a year there involved with the transit and the reorganization and hiring of people. The approach that we had in the union was not different than the approach that I had when I went over to the administration end of it. The reason that I went back to the tools and the surveying area was just simply because the administration and transit was starting to adopt something similar to the mistress of ?? approach, and it was very militant. The 569 transit people were doing the same type of thing. They had an administrative change as well. Phil Highland and ... Bill Mack. Bill was just going out when we were coming in. But Phil was after Bill Mack. Then Bill Chahall. He wasn't bad but his executive really started going out there in left field.

[END]