Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI)

Oral History Interview

Interviewee: Anne Ozipko

Interviewer: Winston Gereluk

Date: April 4, 2003

Location: Edmonton

Index: Garment worker – Ukrainian immigrant – early community life – Great West Garments/Levi Strauss – assembly line work – time & motion engineers – piece rates - United Garment Workers Union – working mother – employment benefits - Edmonton & District Labour Council – unemployment insurance

I started out in this world in the old country, in Ukraine, where I was born. My parents came to Canada in 1930, when I was just 3 years old, the only girl, the baby of the family. I grew up and went to Monticello School in Boyle, Alberta where my parents settled on a homestead.

My dad was in the Russian army during the 1st world war. At the time, when we were living in Ukraine, which was under Poland for some reason. The Polish started a conscription for the army, and my oldest brother was 15 years old at the time, so they wanted to come to Canada, so he wouldn't be put in the army. So they came here, even though they were better off in the Ukraine, because they had land was all done. But because of us kids, they came and got a homestead for $10 that was nothing but bush - no house or anything. We lived at a neighbour's place in an old house on their yard while my parents cleared a place and started a house. That's where I grew up.

My parents were farmers, and lived in a community where everybody was Ukrainian, so they never learned to speak English. They understood when us kids tried to talk about things that we didn't want them to know. But they never learned to speak because they never had to - everybody there spoke Ukrainian.

There was no cultural centre there in those days but my parents were active. Everybody visited everybody and everybody knew everybody. Everybody went to church and to Xmas concerts at the school and things like that. There was no church in Boyle at the time, but they held church services at the school.

First employment

I babysat for some farmers during the summer when they were out working in the field and they needed somebody to look after their children. Other than that, there was no place to work. We were poor, and I needed certain things, so I wanted to go to the city to work. That's why I came to Edmonton in '43, I got my first job there. I couldn't afford a coat at home, so I came in a suit in December, and went to work at the Royal Alexandra

Hospital. A neighbour's daughter who worked there lent me some money, when I got my first paycheque and I bought myself a winter coat.

I worked in the kitchen, setting up trays and serving them to the patients, sweeping the floors, and mopping the floors on maternity ward. The Royal Alec at that time was located where the Glenrose is today. I was getting $40 a month, and room and board was included. So that was better than at the GWG later. They had residences in the nurses' area. It was common that they had people living there and working. There that was vacant residence because they built a new one, and kept people like me there. I don't know if there was a union because I never heard of one - probably not; there wasn't a union at that time that I know of.

Edmonton was small with a number of restaurants in different places. Other than that, there wasn't very much going on. You didn't see many tall buildings. There were some hotels, like a hotel on 97th St, the Ritz Hotel where Canada Trust is now. The Puritan Café was across from the Ritz, and that's where I met my husband. There's no comparison to what Edmonton is like today. It was kind of nice in a way, because you could walk from store to store along 101st St where Edmonton Centre is. Woodwards used to be there too and Eatons was across the street..

The economy of Edmonton was pretty good. It was during the war, and there were a lot of soldiers around. There were Americans were working at Namao in those days too. You didn't see many people unemployed. There were a few on 97th St., those rubbydubs, but not much more.

Working for GWG/Levi Strauss

I quit the Royal Alex when I got an infection in my finger, and the doctor told me that I was susceptible to infection and shouldn't be working in a place where it was prevalent. So I quit and started looking for another job. In those days it was easy to get a job in Great Western Garment Company, GWG, so I got a job there. They were sewing overalls, and at that time as well as army stuff. Not traditional uniforms, but things for the army, such as Iron Man pants. They were producing overalls, jackets, shirts, and jeans. It was different than now, because they had a lot more variety than they do now. For example, they were sewing for kids- like size 6 and so on, from 6 up - little overalls.

GWG in those days was where the old Army and Navy store is now on 97th St. & 104 Ave. They had 3 floors of workers there. I don't know the total, but there was quite a lot of people on the 3 floors. There was a department that made jeans, another one that made overalls, and another one that just made iron man pants, etc. During the War, some of it changed to army stuff and some of it was still doing the same thing they were doing before.

I didn't know anything when I first got the job. They gave me a rag and a sewing machine and tell me to sew. I never sewed in my life before. Those power machines are a little different than sewing at home. They go like crazy so you have to control it so that you don't sew your fingers. You finally learn to sew a straight line, then they show you how to sew the other stuff. Everything was piece work, so your pay depended how many pieces you made; you got paid per bundle. At the time when I started, however, I was getting straight wage for 6 weeks, at $12 a week. I had to pay my room, my board, and

live on that, $12 a week for 6 weeks. Then they put you on whatever you made, and if you didn't make the minimum wage, that was just too bad.

I lived a block from there, where the Empire Hotel is. Just a couple houses from there, there was a little apartment building where I had a 2-room suite which I shared with a girlfriend. I could walk to work, because it was just a block. I earned about $20 a month at a time when a piece of pie and a cup of coffee were probably about 50 cents.

Working conditions on the Assembly Line

When I was working at GWG, we sewed bundles of 15 pieces. The ‘bundle girl’ would bring you a bundle, put it on your bench beside you, and you would sew it. On the other side, you had another bench where you disposed of it. Behind the machine there was a bin where you could, if you were sewing a whole bundle, you could break them apart and put them on the bin. The machines were run different in those days than now. Today, each machine has its own motor, but in those days, every machine was on a shaft. So when they turned on the switch, all the machines came on at the same time. But they could close the machine by itself, it they had to.

For a time, I would sew the seam inside of jeans. Then we changed and did different things, such as sewing the outside seams at different times. When there wasn't any work on one, you'd go to the other, and sew something different, but usually on the same machine which was a serger and a sewer. Once the garments were made up, there was an examiner who checked them out, and if you didn't sew it right, you'd get it back and you had to fix it on your own time. They didn't pay for repairs; you fixed them on your own time. You got paid for it once, and you were supposed to do it right, and if you didn't, you got to do it, especially if you were a sloppy sewer.

When you're doing jackets you have to have a whole department that's doing that type of work, because you can't do anything else, as one doesn't go with the other. It's totally different. So you take a department - and they only want say 1000 jackets. You make those and then you got no jackets for a while. So they have to change everything again. So they contracted that out to a plant in B.C.

I never heard of a union during those early years. I didn’t know that much at that time, because I wasn't active in the union or anything. I remember belonging to the union, the United Garment Workers, which was organized in 1911, right after GWG came into Edmonton. In those days, we had to pay our own dues, because the union was not collecting dues from employees. At lunch time you'd go to the Treasurer and pay your dues, or they'd get after you, come to your machine and ask you to pay.

People were sewing their fingers and things like that, but as far as injuries, I really didn't know of many at that time. I was a new kid on the block, and not active anywhere, and I minded my own business. I had to make money.

Ironically, we had the same manager that I saw again when I started at GWG later on. She was around for an awfully long time, and was pretty strict. You had to put your nose to the grindstone and sew. You couldn't get time off if you wanted to. I was never ill, so I didn't know what the illness leave provisions were in those early days.

I left GWG in 1947, after started there in May of '44. We were planning to get married, in July in '45. We had made our plans and everything, but during the war they had a quick

order that had to be out, and they postponed the holidays. They always had a 2 week shutdown, even in those days, and that was when I was planning to get married, during those holidays, on the 21st of July. When it happened that they cancelled the order, I went to this manager and told her that I was supposed to get married, that everything was ready and that I had to have time off. At first, she didn't want to give it to me. Then she commented that you get married once, so we'll let you have a week. So I got a week off to get married in 1945, and then I went back to work. I worked until 1947 when my son was born, after which I stayed home for a number of years.

I didn't go back to work at GWG until 1963. I had 3 children and I stayed home with them. When I came back, I worked on nightshift. My husband wasn't in favour of my working, but I insisted on it, so I worked from 4:30 to 11:30 every night. I needed the money. Our son was very good in school and he was very young, but he was almost ready for university, and we couldn't afford the tuition. The girls wanted piano, and I couldn't afford a piano. So I went to work so I could make some money for these reasons.

Working conditions at GWG varied. It wasn't too cold in winter, but it was sure hot in the summer - very hot! Even the factory they had when I started on the night shift was wicked. They have air conditioning now, but they didn't have it in those days. They had an oven for processing the never-press pants, and of course, the pressers werepressing. So it could get up to 100 degrees. In the early days, they talked about giving workers an extra break. There were complaints for sure, but in the days when I was working at the plant, there was no such thing as taking a break.

The plant has changed. It's now on 106 Ave. & 85 St. and it is called Levi Strauss In th days when I started, it was still GWG. My husband didn't approve of me working during the day and leaving the kids, so I went to work nightshift. They had nightshift in those days and they had it for quite a few years. We worked from 4:30 to 11:30, then we went home. The minimum wage in those days was 60 cents an hour. 1963. But I was paid 45 cents an hour, because they were teaching us. They apparently had an agreement with the Labour Board that they were teaching the people how to sew so they didn't have to pay the minimum wage. They could get away with 15 cents below the minimum. That was in the collective agreement. It was there for quite a few years. Then of course when you started making more money, like I didn't stay on the minimum wage for a long time because I worked before and had some experience. I was able to earn my money, but it wasn't very much. A lot of years later, when Anne Baranyk was involved in Labour Council, the Labour Council and our union and other unions put in a submission to the Labour Board. That's when they rescinded that 15 minutes before. In the agreement they got 15 minutes above, 15 cents above the minimum wage rather than below. That way at least they had some reflection.

Ethnic diversity at GWG

There were a lot of Ukrainians working in GWG in those days, but also a lot of Germans and Italians as well. A lot of them were Canadians, but I didn't see any oriental people in those days. A lot of the workers were born here, from immigrant parents. Even a neighbour of mine worked there. They owned a farm and she used to come for the winter to work in GWG and then in the summer, go back to the farm. The Italians mostly came

by the time I went to work there the 2nd time. There were a few Germans there who migh have come before the war. In fact the 2 supervisors were German.

I didn't notice any discrimination. Everybody minded their own business, worked and did their own thing. There were a lot of Ukrainians, which nowadays you don't see. But they didn't suffer any discrimination. I never had problems that way. However, when we were in Boyle as kids, we were called 'bohunks' by the Swedish people and others – but that doesn't happen now in Edmonton. We spoke English; in fact, a lot of those Ukrainian people didn't even know Ukrainian that well. Just like now. My kids grew up, and went to school and whereas they spoke Ukrainian before that, they don't speak it now.

We went to the Ukrainian halls on different functions. When my husband was playing in a band, there were mostly Ukrainian crowds at the dance. They liked the same type of music, and everybody was mixing. They had Ukrainian concerts we used to go to, and you could get Ukrainian food almost anywhere in a restaurant, perogies, cabbage rolls. Nowadays you don't see as much of it.

It was still predominantly white force in '63, but there were a lot of Italians in those days already. I remember now, going through the ledgers, that some of those people had left before I took over the office. Three quarters of them were Italian, and a lot of Germans. There was the a few Chinese, but very few. Other than that, there were quite a few Ukrainians, because that was around the time when a lot of the people from Ukraine were coming after the war. Later, it started changing, so that more oriental people came. East Indian didn't start until the late '70s, and even then only few. Now between the East Indian and Oriental, you would have to look hard to find somebody white.

The Ukrainian people worked hard. Some of the Italian people worked hard, others not quite so hard. The Germans worked hard. I don't want to discriminate and say Italians didn't work, they did. Everybody worked hard, because you have to if you wanted to make money. It was piece work. You'd get one person sometimes get a little faster than the others, and those complained because they thought the rate was too low, so they didn't make enough. But that's typical. These rates were set when Anne Baranyk was still there. She used to have to fight quite often. They'd see a girl was making a lot of money, so they'd start looking at that rate because it was too loose. So they had to make it tighter so she'd have to work a little harder if she wanted to make the same thing. Of course they'd always chose the girl that was the fastest to set the rate, instead of taking the average one. There was a lot of complaints about that, because not everybody is a 'crackerjack' as we called them. Some of them worked really fast, others didn't. So it was always a matter of fighting for those rates.

Her husband's work

As I said, I met my husband at the Puritan Café. I went dancing with another girl, and after the dance, we went to Puritan Café for coffee before we walked to the Royal Alec. In walked a fellow that we knew used to come to Boyle, so we started talking to him. That's how I met him. He had finished playing at the dance there and then came for coffee. That was a meeting place for everybody, because the hall was on 96 St. & 106 Ave. and the Puritan Café was 104th Ave. & 97 St. So, everybody was hanging out there.

He was working at Palm Dairies; it was called Woodland Dairies in those days. At night he was playing in bands. It was old time music, polkas, waltzes, square dances, and fox trots. But the old fashioned square dances were not like the square dances are now. My husband played the violin, and he played drums. Two of his brothers played as well in the band; one played banjo and the other guitar.

He was working on a machine where bottled milk. In those days, you had to take the bottles and feed them into the machine, and then they would go on a conveyor. He didn't have a terribly good job, because there was no union there, and he had no benefits of any kind. Quite a few years later a union came about, but it was optional - you could join or not. He didn't want to join, because he said he couldn't afford it, but he finally did because I told him to. When he joined the union, there were no benefits of any kind. It was a lot later, when we had children, that they started to negotiate a pension. Workers had to contribute so much, and then the company would contribute. Once again, he didn't want to join at first, because he said we needed the money. I told him that I don't care; one day he was going to want to retire, and would need the money. So he did join, but after that the dairy was sold, and there wasn't that much of a pension for him. He didn't enjoy it, however, because he died before he could collect on it.

Getting started in the union

I got started in the union while I was working nightshift. In those days, any time there were mistakes made on day shift, they were always blaming the nightshift. That damn nightshift, that damn nightshift all the time - that's all you heard. I knew Anne Baranyk a little bit, because her brother Joey used to play in my husband's band. So I went up to her one day before she went home, because she worked day shift. I told her that I wanted my money back. She asked, “What do you mean?” I said that I wanted my money back because nightshift was not worth anything, and that I even heard the shop steward say that nightshift's no damn good. If I'm no damn good, I want my money back. Why am I going to belong to the union if I'm no good? She looked at me and started to laugh. I complained that it was not funny. She said that if I didn’t like something, I should get involved and change it. That's how I got involved.

I became the nightshift shop steward, and then I was really busy. Anytime anything came up, people came running to me. Of course I'd have to go and speak for them and try and resolve it, and I managed that not too badly. We wouldn’t get everything we wanted, but it did help some. I was shop steward for quite a few years. Then there was an election for president, and Annie Baranyk asked me if I wanted to run. I said, well the president has always been on dayshift, and I don't think people would be in favour of my running. She said that it wouldn’t hurt to try, and that I should run for president and see if I could maybe you can get on dayshift. So I did run, and was elected in 1967 or 1968.

Handling workers’ problems

When a machine was broken, the worker lost money. Or sometimes the supervisor wanted them to do what they didn't feel they should because somebody else didn't do it properly. It was always something about sewing. In those days, the rates were set so that you couldn’t argue that the rate was no good, because everybody else was working on that rate. All I was doing was trying to do was to see that everybody got treated the same on nightshift, vecause some people didn't. Just petty kind of stuff, but there were still

serious issues, because there was only one mechanic on nightshift, and he was a trainee. So people were having a hard time. If your machine broke down, you'd have to go on another machine and then you didn't get compensated for what you lost. So it took a bit of doing. When I got to be President, I was on nightshift for awhile and then I asked to go on dayshift, and they put me there as soon as there was an opening. After that, I was president for 10 years before I took a job full time with the union. I worked part time in the office before, while Anne was still there. In the morning I'd work in the plant, and in the afternoon I'd go down and help, because she was doing a lot of work for the Labour Council. She was president of the Labour Council at that time. When I started full time, it was to take her job after she left.

When I approached a supervisor as President, the response depended on the supervisor. Some were more stubborn than others, and they wouldn't correct the problem,. If this happened, I came in early the next day before Anne went home, and give her the complaint to see if she could resolve it. She still worked in the plant at that time, and didn't work in the office until some time later.

My pay for being President was $5 a month. Well if I lost time, I got paid for it by the union. When I was working on union business that required time off, I was paid by the union for the time I lost. But other than that, for my troubles it was $5 an hour, which was nothing. But I didn't care, because I was doing something I wanted. I liked to help people. and remember that the wages at that time, maybe I was making about $2 an hour on piece work.

Time-motion studies

In the old days, when I worked there the first time, pay rates were set by a black book. The union had a black book, in which the company and the union together would set the rate. Then, in the new plant at Levi Strauss (I mean GWG when they moved) they brought in an engineer to re-engineer the whole company. When these engineers came in, there was nothing but trouble. They took every rate and tore it apart. They'd stand and watch one girl sew, see how many she sewed, then they'd drive that up a little bit and set a rate on that basis. That was the ‘base rate’, after which you worked on ‘piece work’. When I first started in '63 there was no base rate. You just worked on the minimum wage. The base rates came about '66, when they started re-engineering everything. The engineer would stand behind watching you and his clock. In fact one day I asked one if he needed a whip. I just turned around and asked, “Would you like a whip?”

They were known as engineers, but nobody had any use for them. The company hired engineers to fix things, but all they did was to mess it up. These engineers came from England. One was engineering soup cans there, and another was engineering a plant that had totally nothing to do with piece work. They raised the production levels, but the pay we received didn't really go up that much, everybody just had to work harder if they wanted to make money. We might see one person making 140% of the base rate, because it was based on percentage points. As long as you made 100 points you were safe, but if you made more, you got an incentive. If you made 145, let’s say, they'd look to see if they had to either change the method or do something to curb that, so they didn't make as much money, but still put out the same production. That's how they were operating.

During the time the engineers were there, they started to bring in newer machines, some technological change. But they were playing havoc with the people working there. I remember that the year when I became president, we were negotiating for a straight pay rate; No piece work, just a plain rate. When they first reengineered, even the cutters were put on piece work. Some of them were making darn good money, but the quality was terrible. The company came to the union and asked us to do something, because the quality was so terrible. Anne told them to get off the piece work basis of pay, because people on piece work were not going to give them the quality they wanted.

They took cutters off piece work, so the union put in a submission to take everyone off this type of pay, but they just laughed in our faces. I remember when I took over from Anne and went in myself to ask for this change. He looked and me and asked if was crazy. When I asked why, he asked if I wanted to put the company out of business. I argued that I'd like to see the people have a little bit of peace here, and end to the constant push and push. I also talked about injuries, because there were a lot of carpel tunnel injuries.

For quite a few years they didn't even look at our proposal until we got a different manager. That was in 1972, when Levis bought them outright. We talked about it, and we instituted a base rate. But they still had an incentive. They have an incentive where if they whole department produces their quota for that week, everybody gets a 10% bonus. What they have now is a straight rate, but they are still in groups, depending on the difficulty of what you were doing and the machine. For example, a single needle machine would be group 1, a two needle would be group 3, and then the surgers were group 4. So it was all grouped. Then, they went into only two groups; 1 and 2. The easier jobs get a little bit less, and the others get more. So nobody has been making less than $12 an hour there now. We started doing that about '94 and '95, going from, one department to the next.

They're still in business and doing just fine. Took the whip away from the engineers; there’s only one of them now.

Finally when we got it all going through and I negotiated a new agreement, that's when I retired. Because I was also involved in setting the rates. We had a different system where we were setting the rates, not so much the engineer standing there and watching. It was a system where a girl was sewing, she got so many points for this, so many for that. Every time the engineer would set that rate, I would take that rate and go and watch the girl. If I felt she was doing something that she wasn't getting paid for, then I demanded that they give her that. That's how the rates became. They still have sort of a rate, not like they used to. They don't work on that rate, but just as a guideline. Then if they produce over their quota they get 10% bonus.

After that, GWG became Levis. Instead of the GWG label, it became Great Canadian Northern Apparel. But the president was always from Levis, the president for the company, and he was always in the office. They had two of them at one point, but no local or Canadian people; these ones came from San Francisco. Some of them were a little easier to get along with, were nicer people, but some weren't. The Haus brothers that owned it used to come once a year and look on the place. This one fellow used to call me a thorn in his side. He was the production manager, and when I was introduced him, I was introduced as a thorn in his side. But, he looked at me, he winked and said that

somebody's got to keep the manager in line. I immediately complained that I was a utility girl at that time, and if anybody was out, I'd have to go and that I was constantly moving to a different machine. This one was quite close to the door, and I joked that I was getting closer and closer to the door. He started to laugh and walk away. So I met both of them, I met Walter and Peter while they were here, and I met the son who took over now, before I retired in '97.

Employment benefits

We had a health and safety committee that was started when Anne Baranyk was still in the office. This committee made a lot of improvement; however, they weren't able to get us any benefits. They only had one benefit: sick pay - 15 weeks of sick pay in a year. They got 70% of their wages, which was pretty good considering they get that length of time. The employees contributed 1.5% and the company contributed the rest, to that fund. They used to call it the welfare fund. There was no such thing as maternity benefits, just sick benefits.

I'm not sure exactly what year the company gave us benefits, benefits to which we didn't have to contribute to. We got long term disability. The sick benefit didn't change, but they employees weren't contributing now, it was all paid by the company. There's a dental plan now, but the employees contribute 20%. The health care, when Anne Baranyk was there had the employees paying half. Now employees are paying 40% and the company is paying the rest. Then later we got a pension, which wasn't there before. It came in with the latest manager.

They also won jury duty and, when you have a death in the family, they paid bereavement leave for 3 days. They used to have bereavement leave, but it was paid through the welfare fund, to which the workers had to contribute 1.5 % of their pay while the company contributed the rest. When the cheques came, the union would sign the cheques and then the company would sign them. Long term disability, which they never had – and they still don't have life insurance.

We used to have long service awards years ago. They had a banquet and presented an award to everybody with 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, 40. There were some 50 year awards, as well.They they didn't have any new gifts, and people often received just the same gift they received before. Some of the people complained, so I asked the company to give them money instead. So they started doing that. After 30 years they give them $300, 40 years they used to give them $400, and at 50 years I think they got $500 and they could get whatever they wanted. But they were primarily those at 50 years were primarily cutters.

The benefits are important. When I was still the representative, there was a young Chinese woman sitting in the cafeteria, and I asked her, what she was doing here. She said she was starting work, and I asked her where she worked before? She worked at that Emery company that used to be on Yellowhead, but had a sister who worked at GWG and got all the benefits and makes $7.50 an hour. She came straight there because she wanted to get benefits. I asked about her previous employment, and she said she was receiving the minimum wage, with few benefits. In our workplace, a lot of the Chinese retired at 65, some of them with more 30 or 35 years. It was seen as a good place to work I don't know if I wanted my kids to work there, but it was not bad. It may change now

that it has a new manager. The previous manager, the one that got up to the microphone and said, ‘We appreciate your help. We appreciate what you're doing for us.’ – he’s gone. He retired this December. They have a new manager now, and she used to be an engineer. They have already contracted jackets out to a factory in BC. They sent her there to set the plant up, to put the rates in and everything for it. She was the manager there.

Edmonton & District Labour Council

When Anne Baranyk left, I got involved in theLabour Council in her place. I was on the Board first, and then I became Secretary Treasurer, for 13 years. After that, I decided not to run anymore; somebody else could do the work.

The Labour Councils do good work. They're good for keeping unions up to par with things and informed. The Secretary Treasurer's job at that time, however, was mostly reading correspondence at the meeting and taking minutes. Then the secretary would type them and I would proofread them and they would go out. As well, I had to sign cheques, and help to set a budget. Now they don't have the Secretary Treasurer doing these things, because now they have a computer, and the president is full time. In those days Ed Ewasiuk was the secretary treasurer, followed by Dave Morris.

I got involved with the unemployment insurance through the Labour Council. When GWG had periodic unemployment, we used to go to Unemployment Insurance, get application forms, and do them for the workers in the plant. There were so many different people that didn't speak English, and then there came a lot of Chinese and East Indian many of whom didn’t speak any English. When they got unemployed, they didn’t know where to turn or what to do. So I used to bring the applications there and do them and take them back to the unemployment office. Then, when the cards came, everybody brought them to me, and I’d help fill them out. If they didn't have their pay slip with them, I used to go to the office and get their earnings and fill them out. So when they received a letter from the CLC saying that Edmonton needed a new rep on the board, Doug Elvis, the president, asked me to get involved, because I knew a lot about unemployment insurance, and was doing a lot with my union. Besides, they ask for preferably a woman.

So that's how I got involved on the UI Board of Referees in 1986. It's a 3 member panel, with a chairman, a union and an employer rep. We receive the dockets at home and we deal with 8 for one hearing. We have to review them, and to know the Act. We got information on the Act, and some training. When you study the dockets at home, you don't make up your mind totally, but you have some idea which way you're going to lean more or less. I always took the employee's side – I did for my whole life - when they got disqualified from Unemployment Insurance. We decide as a 3 member panel, and if the other two don't agree with me, if I don't get my way, I can write a dissent. There are some cases, however, that are trivial; that you know you can't do anything about. At one time the Act was lenient, but now it's tougher. If it's right there in black and white and the person doesn't come, then you just have to take what's written. You can't question them, and there's little you can do. But if I feel strongly, I write a dissent that goes to the claimant, and if they want to appeal to the umpire, then all that goes to the umpire. The umpire looks at it. I'm still active in UI, but. I don't know for how long. My term expires this year in July. I wouldn't mind going another term.

What I'd like to say in closing is that I think unions are good, that they help people a lot. Some people, such as my sister in law - are very anti union. She used to always tell me that I was only working for the union because I had to. I replied that I do it because I want to. She worked at the Compensation Board, and said that she didn't need a union. It told her that if that was her opinion, but that I knew that I needed a union – that's why I supported my union.