

1 GWG INTERVIEW WITH ANNIE BARANYK

2 2005

3 Interview GWG04-01

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7 **QUESTION:** Could you start by telling us about when you started working at the plant?

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9 **RESPONSE:** Yeah I would say I started, in, you know I said '50, I came to town in '52
10 so it might be a year or so difference there but if you want to put '52 that's as close as
11 you can get.

12

13 **QUESTION:** And was this your first job or had you worked before?

14

15 **RESPONSE:** No that was my first job. As a matter of a fact I, we actually left Calgary,
16 my mom and dad and the rest of the party [which was] me and my brothers. And, [we]
17 came to Edmonton.

18

19 **QUESTION:** And how did you end up at GWG?

20

21 **RESPONSE:** Very, uh unwillingly because I, I maybe I knew something about them but
22 very little but I, I wanted something that would be uh, uh safe. I had a little bit of a uh
23 what should I call it, a little bit of schooling where I took up some ... college, uh I have to
24 refer to some things here.

25

26 **QUESTION:** Is it an examiner?

27

28 **RESPONSE:** Uh sorry I ... You know sometimes you, you kind of fly away. Well junior
29 business is what I had, junior business and that's all I had. I finished grade nine and uh
30 where we lived out in the country that's as far as I could go. So I took my
31 correspondence course, a correspondence course for grade nine and I did pass it but I
32 didn't do a very good job with it ... on the grades you know uh from one to eight.

33

34 **QUESTION:** Mmmhmm.

35

36 **RESPONSE:** Grade eight I was uh all over the place and I was having uh a fun time.
37 But when I hit that oh now and that's when I quit. I finished grade nine, I passed to
38 grade ten and I stopped school there. That was still on the farm.

39

40 **QUESTION:** And where did you do the junior business class?

41

42 **RESPONSE:** Through correspondence.

43

44 **QUESTION:** That was through correspondence?

45

46 **RESPONSE:** Yeah. I was a corresponder.

47

48 **QUESTION:** And so how did you get the job at GWG?

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44**RESPONSE:** Uh at that time they had these people uh governed by the government
45that were helping you to get a job eh?

46

47**QUESTION:** Mmmhmm.

48

49**RESPONSE:** And uh it was wintertime and it was cold and there were very few jobs so
50they told me 'you go to GWG and uh as soon as we find you a better job we'll get you
51back.' And I never did go out. I got interested in the union and there I was.

52

53**QUESTION:** And so what positions did you hold while you were working in the plant?

54

55**RESPONSE:** Well I started out with a grievance committee, I looked after the
56committee on grievances. And uh and um and then by the end of that year I was a
57secretary and after that another, maybe not even a year I got to be president and I
58stayed on that president business until I was on full time.

59

60**QUESTION:** With your union work?

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62**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

63

64**QUESTION:** It became full time?

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66**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

67

68**QUESTION:** OK when you, when you first started at the plant you said, you mentioned
69that you were an examiner?

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71**RESPONSE:** Oh yeah. Examiner. They gave me another job too because I was sort of
72um looking after one of the places that they had there that, that actually my work had
73been on and then I was supposed to get to then I got that, I was holding on to that one,
74that was examiner, went to quality control and stuff like that. And uh but I never wanted
75it. They asked me to work for the company but I uh said I was interested in the union
76and that's where I was going to stay. Nice of me I thought.

77

78**QUESTION:** But you never worked as a sewer? Never?

79

80**RESPONSE:** No. No.

81

82**QUESTION:** You were never allowed to?

83

84**RESPONSE:** No. No. No I guess I didn't think I could do a good job anyway.

85

86**QUESTION:** So what was the plant like when you first started working there, could
87describe the environment for us?

88

89**RESPONSE:** Uh which type of environment do you want?

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90

91**QUESTION:** Physically was it, was it hot, was it dusty, was it loud, was it?

92

93**RESPONSE:** Well we had a few run ins because they started getting in, bringing in uh
94different sorts of materials and uh that, that was when they were changing materials and
95... they were not washable but they had a smell to them and the people were
96complaining and complaining and I finally got somebody to come in and have a look at
97it. And they did come. Uh you might remember his name uh Jack or maybe you weren't
98around at that time because I don't know.

99

100Anyway he came and he spoke to them and he spoke with me and he asked them to
101send that material out to see if it was actually uh hurting the people that worked with it.

102

103Now that was one of my biggest ones that I started on because ... the small ones there
104were many. And, they answered, [that] they sent that stuff back and ... afterwards we
105had no problem. So that was sort of a good beginning for me because it was very
106important.

107

108**QUESTION:** And so when would that have been, shortly after you started?

109

110**RESPONSE:** Oh that would be when I was president already I would think and I had a
111little more swing.

112

113**QUESTION:** Mmmhmm.

114

115**RESPONSE:** And uh I did the best I can with that and uh they didn't want to listen to
116me at first but I went to another person that was involved in things like that and he
117spoke with them so they, they went along with.

118

119**QUESTION:** Could you tell us about the work force at the plant when you started
120there?

121

122**RESPONSE:** How big it was?

123

124**QUESTION:** How big it was and what kind of people were working there?

125

126**RESPONSE:** Oh golly there was you know what it was like ... there were all sorts of
127people there at the time. ... from Europe, from China, from uh, Italy lots of lots ... all
128sorts of people there. But ... we all got along very well. And most of them were very
129hard workers. And uh I ... looked after them.

130

131**QUESTION:** How did the work force change while you were there? Did it become more
132multi-cultural or?

133

134**RESPONSE:** Well I don't think it could be uh any more than it was because there was
135so many different nationalities and, and uh races.

14

15

136

137**QUESTION:** Mmmhmm.

138

139**RESPONSE:** We only had one Black person, a very nice lady and I made friends with
140her to make her feel like she's one of [us].

141

142**QUESTION:** She was on the union executive at one time?

143

144**RESPONSE:** Yes she was. Yes she was.

145

146**QUESTION:** I just saw her picture.

147

148**RESPONSE:** Is that right? Yeah, yeah she was very nice person but I think she went to
149Vancouver after that.

150

151**QUESTION:** Oh OK.

152

153**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

154

155**QUESTION:** Could you describe a typical day at the plant, what time you started and?

156

157**RESPONSE:** Well yeah well eight o'clock was the starting time and ... I think it was five
158o'clock or maybe four o'clock, no it must have been five o'clock that we stopped. It was
159an eight hour day unless they needed overtime which happened quite often.

160

161**QUESTION:** Well you said at one time there was up to twelve-hundred people working
162at the plant?

163

164**RESPONSE:** Yeah when there may have been some of those people that were
165working not on the machines or anything. They were doing different jobs.

166

167But they were still counted with our people. You know with the union. And anyway that
168was the biggest one we had. It, it started falling apart quite quickly, quite soon. So it
169ended up by about I would say at first it was twelve-hundred, then it was a thousand
170and you know it went down about as low as eight-hundred. But that was still a fine sum.

171

172**QUESTION:** And so that would be in the '60s or the '70s that it was down to eight-
173hundred or when?

174

175**RESPONSE:** Well maybe it was a little sooner than that but by that time it was still
176about that much.

177

178**QUESTION:** Well when you first started working at the plant um that would have been
179just around the time that it opened, the new plant opened in December '53 so you must
180have started just after it opened then did you?

181

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18

182**RESPONSE:** Yeah but I was somewhere else for awhile.

183

184**QUESTION:** That's right yeah.

185

186**RESPONSE:** I had some family there and I had found a little job myself and stayed
187away. Maybe I was trying to see the town.

188

189**QUESTION:** When you started working there the factory was still quite new and I read
190that they had visitors who came from Europe and from all over the country to see this
191great plant.

192

193**RESPONSE:** Yes they did.

194

195**QUESTION:** Do you remember any events?

196

197**RESPONSE:** Oh yeah there used to be quite a few people coming in. And even you
198know the ... people on top at the union ... they wanted to see it too, so there used to be
199a lot of visitors, a lot of visitors there.

200

201**QUESTION:** And what were they most impressed with about the plant?

202

203**RESPONSE:** Oh well I suppose the size of it for one thing, and all those machines.
204And then there were the cutters that cut the material for the jean or whatever it is they
205cut it for because they had shirts as well and they had Levi's of course you know the
206pant ... that was their first thing that they started with I think. But they just put on other
207things until it was all full ... and uh some people worked on finer material, some worked
208on Levi's denim.

209

210**QUESTION:** Right.

211

212**RESPONSE:** Which was the hard one. It was a hard one in a way, but at the same
213time it was easier to run through the machine.

214

215**QUESTION:** It was hard on your hands but.

216

217**RESPONSE:** That's right.

218

219**RESPONSE:** But it held out, it didn't fall ...

220

221**QUESTION:** OK. What significant changes did you see at the plant while you were
222there in terms of new machinery or new ways of doing things?

223

224**RESPONSE:** Oh yeah they were always getting machinery. If they could get one that
225went faster than the other one did or anything like that then ... they changed different
226things as it suited them. And then ... you know, some of them had to be ironed out so
227they had these big things that would pressing them out ... Yeah.

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228

229**QUESTION:** Did you get involved with any of these changes when they introduced new
230machines and new methods of doing things?

231

232**RESPONSE:** Well only when people were having trouble with their machines. That was
233fair enough for a grievance. We had a lot of grievances. Matter of fact we met every
234week at least to talk about things like that. I'm not talking so much about the people as
235the uh, management. Management sort of started getting interested in sort of co-
236operating better and uh, that was the way I saw them anyway. They may have wanted
237to fire me sometimes but there was no actual reason because I did my work well. I'm
238not bragging.

239

240**QUESTION:** No, no that's a fair statement. When you were working at the plant it
241changed from piece work to paying people by the hour didn't they?

242

243**RESPONSE:** Well, well there were a few that were working on 'time work,' we called it
244time work.

245

246**QUESTION:** Time work.

247

248**RESPONSE:** Yeah but the majority of the machines were on piecework. I was so upset
249with that piecework because I kept asking them to get it off what the government was
250paying uh the, the uh what do you call it now, Jack?

251

252**RESPONSE:** Minimum wage.

253

254**RESPONSE 2:** Oh.

255

256**RESPONSE:** I don't know why it skipped me. It's probably because I wasn't on it ever.
257But the new people were always on the minimum wage and then when they gained their
258speed then they were making pretty, quite good money. Some made a very good wage
259on [piecework], and they wouldn't have gone off that piecework because they were
260making a lot of money. But others were trying to do a good job but uh [earned] less.

261

262**RESPONSE:** But you needed those people too because they [did] good work.

263

264**QUESTION:** Is it hard to maintain quality in working on piecework?

265

266**RESPONSE:** Well I spent some time in quality control and there was a whole line that I
267was looking after to check the clothes. I thought the easiest way for them would be if I
268went and looked at it while they were doing it. So I [thought] maybe they did it a little
269easier ... but I would tell them that they had to do their work the way it should be
270because ... it's easy to miss a stitch and miss a lot of things. I can't even tell you how
271many pieces there were that they had to put together but generally each group had one
272of the pieces they were working on and so it went through the line. If you understand
273what I said.

23

24

274

275**QUESTION:** Mmm, it's very complicated but uh.

276

277**RESPONSE:** It is, it is.

278

279**RESPONSE:** It is complicated. But once they caught on to it like I say then they did
280very well. Not all of them, I can't say that, but some of them that had the easier ones,
281they were very fast but you can't picture it unless you see it.

282

283**QUESTION:** How did you become involved in the union then?

284

285**RESPONSE:** How exactly I don't know. Probably [because] I spoke English well for
286one thing because there were a lot that had problems [speaking English]. And I didn't
287have the fear that some might have to talk with management. I sort of took over very
288quickly and started that grievance committee that I was on. I didn't really need to be
289taught to do that because although I never did anything like that before. But I started
290with taking up grievances. Even after I became president they brought me grievances.

291

292**RESPONSE:** And I still participated in them all the time.

293

294**QUESTION:** What kind of things did people grieve?

295

296**RESPONSE:** Well they would grieve if they thought they were doing something right
297and [management] said it was wrong ... and uh there are some things that are very
298uncomfortable to do so ... it was very difficult for them. I'm kind of going off my head
299now [with] how many there were but it was usually the work that caused the trouble, you
300know, having problems with the work and then they might have got fired and I tried, if I
301thought that [management] were in the wrong I would take it up with management. And
302I was quite successful.

303

304**QUESTION:** Were there any incidences in your family life or the community you grew
305up in that encouraged you to think about joining the union and getting active in it or was
306it just something personally you took on?

307

308**RESPONSE:** Uh well my father was a railroad man.

309

310**QUESTION:** OK.

311

312**RESPONSE:** And he actually belonged to the unions of the Canadian Pacific Railway
313(CPR).

314

315**RESPONSE:** So he used to tell us about that. I guess that's how it started in my head.
316But then not really because I'd never seen it, I'd never been with one until I got to
317Edmonton and within the year I was there.

318

319**QUESTION:** How long were you president of Local 120?

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27

320

321**RESPONSE:** Oh golly! Well let's see now. I left the GWG and I left the presidency see
322because I [became an] agent for [the union], and I didn't like that word [agent]. I was
323using something else. But I still looked over all the people. Did you speak to an Anne
324Nozipco?

325

326**QUESTION:** Yes.

327

328**RESPONSE:** Yeah well she took it over from me. But even then I was there until '78.
329That's all I can say.

330

331**QUESTION:** As president?

332

333**RESPONSE:** No I wasn't president. I was already an outsider.

334

335**QUESTION:** OK.

336

337**RESPONSE:** And I didn't work for the company anymore but I worked around the
338union, sort of worked for the union.

339

340**QUESTION:** OK so do you remember how many years you did the examining and
341worked inside the plant?

342

343**RESPONSE:** Uh let's see now I thought I had a sort of a number that would have been
344um sixteen years.

345

346**QUESTION:** OK. I looked through the ledgers of all the employees and it has you in
347there until sometime in the '70's. I haven't got all of the years for the '70's so I didn't
348realize there was a shift in your job during that time and that you were actually working
349for the union and not working for the ...

350

351**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

352

353**RESPONSE:** Well they were sort of dependent on me.

354

355**QUESTION:** OK.

356

357**RESPONSE:** Even when I was out they would call me. You know, if they had a
358problem then they would call me by phone. I had an office in the Labour Council and uh
359that's when I really started to work with the Labour Council.

360

361**QUESTION:** OK. So at first when you were both working as quality control as an
362examiner and also doing union work how did you balance the two roles?

363

364**RESPONSE:** Well I would just go and tell whoever was my boss at the time that I had a
365problem and that I wanted to look after it and they had agreed to give me the time off if I

29

30

366needed it. I would take somebody with me. I never went actually to a meeting with
367management by myself. I always took either a secretary or uh whatever, somebody.

368

369**QUESTION:** Probably a good policy?

370

371**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

372

373**QUESTION:** OK. What were working conditions like when you first started there in
374terms of the environment at the plant, the hours people worked, wages, opportunity for
375advancement that kind of thing?

376

377**RESPONSE:** Uh it's kind of difficult to answer because when I first came into that place
378—and I always laugh at myself— I thought that it was a very gloomy place because as I
379was coming to work on that first day there were people that came to talk to me and I
380asked them how everything was with them and they said uh 'oh we have to be careful
381what we say.'

382

383They were small complaints but they were complaints. Yeah. And I asked them 'Why?
384Why are you scared? What have you got to be scared of, you're working?' And I guess
385their job was very important to them [because] that was the only job they could get. So it
386was very important to them but uh sometimes they didn't do as well as others and uh
387they maybe didn't have enough time to learn, some people are slower learners than
388others. And uh if the job was good if they were doing a good job uh I would have liked
389to see them there for awhile. I didn't try to, you know, to run the place uh but I did want
390to serve them as well as I could.

391

392**QUESTION:** So how, how did you feel the workers were treated over all?

393

394**RESPONSE:** It improved and improved and improved. That is a fact. They became
395more understanding of people. I remember and Mr. (Clarence D.) Jacox. You've heard
396about Mr. Jacox. [Jacox was GWG General Manager from 1931-1941. He was
397President/co-owner from 1941 until his death in 1958.]

398

399**RESPONSE:** I wonder if I should give it to you but uh, there was one girl that got hurt
400on the presser and she hurt her back very badly and they had to send her to the
401hospital.

402

403**RESPONSE:** And she had to go to compensation and when she came back, they
404wouldn't give her her job back. And she came to me and she said, 'They took my
405machine away.' So I went to see the secretary and I went to the president of the
406company. I went up because the one that laid her off that machine was the line
407supervisor.

408

409**RESPONSE:** And she saw me going, that I was going to go but she beat me to it, and I
410don't know what she told them, but anyway I went there with one of our secretaries and,
411and uh I don't know if you want stories like that?

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33

412

413**QUESTION:** Definitely.

414

415**RESPONSE:** And anyway uh I spoke to Mr. Jacox. Mr. Jacox was a very stern man
416you know and uh he said, 'that girl couldn't do it and she can't get that machine back,
417she's not going to get that machine back'. And I sort of argued with him and he said uh
418'well what do we do with a horse when he breaks a leg, we shoot him.' I said Mr. Jacox
419that's a human being not a horse!' Oh well I think he felt very bad about that.

420

421**QUESTION:** I'm sure.

422

423**RESPONSE:** But he said 'well was she on compensation?' and I said, 'Yes she was.'
424So he said 'why didn't somebody tell me?' He meant his people, not ours. And then he
425said, 'Well I'll tell you this much Annie, as long as she's here she's going to get her
426[money]. If that thing is too hard for her to do she will get her money that she was
427making on that machine.' Yep.

428

429**QUESTION:** But even giving a different position?

430

431**RESPONSE:** But she did though. She eventually left, I think she was very hurt about
432that. But you know what that lady still phones me.

433

434**QUESTION:** Oh really?

435

436**RESPONSE:** Occasionally yeah she still phones me. She was very fond of me for
437some reason.

438

439**QUESTION:** Yeah. You went to bat for her.

440

441**RESPONSE:** I was helpful yeah.

442

443**QUESTION:** Yeah.

444

445**RESPONSE:** But things like that you know happened and uh this time the boss got a
446scolding not me.

447

448**QUESTION:** I talked to a woman that said she had worked at the plant very briefly for
449about six weeks or so because a friend of hers had to have an operation and so she
450went to work at the plant to hold her friends job open for her during those six weeks
451otherwise her friend would have lost her job. Now she was talking about the early '60's.

452

453**RESPONSE:** Who was this?

454

455**QUESTION:** Just, I can't remember her name off, off hand but just someone who
456worked

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36

458**RESPONSE:** Well you know there may be things that I didn't know. I knew the girl who
459had an accident.

460

461**RESPONSE:** And that she had hurt her back. And I never heard a word about it
462because certainly management would have told me.

463

464**RESPONSE:** Now you know if it was a person was not doing the right thing I would get
465after them. I've never tried to put them into something that they don't deserve. Now I
466tried to be very honest with the management.

467

468**QUESTION:** I was going to ask you about Mr. Jacox because when you first started
469there he was still running the plant for a few years.

470

471**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

472

473**QUESTION:** Could you tell us a bit about what he was like and what it was like to work
474with him?

475

476**RESPONSE:** Well liked the old boy you know in spite of the fact that he was uh a little
477bit of a curmudgeon eh? He liked to have his way well which is I guess he was the
478boss.

479

480**QUESTION:** Mmm.

481

482**RESPONSE:** But when he became ill he came to talk to me and he said something like
483he's good for nothing ... I sort of told him that we would like him to be here all the time
484because by that time I knew how to work with him. So he said, 'Eh' he said 'Eh I'm not
485going to be here long' or something like that he said.

486

487**QUESTION:** So he knew he was ill for sometime?

488

489**RESPONSE:** Yeah. Oh yeah.

490

491**QUESTION:** Before he

492

493**RESPONSE:** Oh yeah he had cancer.

494

495**QUESTION:** Um so could you say when the change was made from piecework to
496hourly wages, do you remember when that was?

497

498**RESPONSE:** No it wasn't in my time.

499

500**QUESTION:** OK.

501

502**RESPONSE:** Because this is we were, we were trying to do that to do it that way.

503

38

39

504**QUESTION:** Yeah.

505

506**RESPONSE:** But uh I uh I couldn't see it that the piece work still didn't exist.

507

508**QUESTION:** It didn't. By the end they were getting paid ten or twelve dollars an hour
509plus bonuses for working faster so it was all kind of piece work ... kept track of how fast
510you work.

511

512**RESPONSE:** One way or another.

513

514**QUESTION:** Yeah.

515

516**RESPONSE:** This piecework.

517

518**QUESTION:** Could you talk a bit about the time engineers and what happened when
519they came to the plant and

520

521**RESPONSE:** Oh well you know we didn't get along very well. I didn't like the idea that
522they came and, and they were timing the people and the people were scared. You
523know they thought somebody was going to take their job away. I was trying to learn
524piece work, not piece work but time, the time thing. I went to, to New York and the lady
525that was there, she was very good with time work eh. She knew all about it. That was
526within our union and she was ... [with] the garment workers.

527

528**QUESTION:** Mmm.

529

530**RESPONSE:** Yeah, Canada and the States, yeah they were. I went to see them a
531couple of times there.

532

533**QUESTION:** Well in terms of then doing these time management studies.

534

535**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

536

537**QUESTION:** They watched the women work and tried to explain a new way of doing
538the process faster or something, I'm not really sure how it happened.

539

540**RESPONSE:** Well the time work was they were trying to get them to cut out some of
541the things that they do and, and still make it a uh a good garment.

542

543**QUESTION:** They were actually trying to cut out steps in the process then?

544

545**QUESTION:** You said they would try to get them to speed it up, how, how could you
546speed up the process?

547

548**RESPONSE:** Well they, they probably adjusted the garment a bit. But also the
549machine had to be adjusted and also they tried to show them an easier way to do it

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42

550where they can do it faster. And how fast can you go, you can if you want to get a good
551garment sometimes.

552

553**QUESTION:** Was there a designer in the plant who came up with the different styles?

554

555**RESPONSE:** Well they had a designer for quite a long time while I was there and he
556was actually the one that was doing those for the cutters, you know these pieces.

557

558**QUESTION:** For the templates?

559

560**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

561

562**RESPONSE:** And he was there for a long time but then he left I don't know whether he
563got sick or not of them but we didn't see him before I left he wasn't there anymore.

564

565**RESPONSE:** But he was a good one, he was really a good. He had his own plant, a
566small plant but he wanted dress clothing rather than uh, the denim.

567

568**QUESTION:** Do you remember his name?

569

570**RESPONSE:** Now I just remember his first name was Bill but I, I he was actually he
571was Ukrainian too, but no I don't remember his last name now.

572

573**QUESTION:** OK. So generally speaking what would you say the management was like
574between or the relationship was like between union and management?

575

576**RESPONSE:** I think we had tried to be fair and most of the time when you went to the
577upper management if you were having trouble with the lower management they would
578most of the time they would look our way if it was right. And I tried never to bring
579something that wasn't.

580

581**QUESTION:** So how did your relationship change when Mr. [J. Gerald] Godsoe
582became president?

583

584**RESPONSE:** Oh we had fun! Mr. Godsoe uh, uh was a, I think he felt he was going to
585bring me down uh but he didn't because I, I didn't let anybody do that to me because if I
586was doing something, I only did what I had to was, was told to do by the person. The
587person needs something or, or was not treated fairly I would go to bat for them, that
588never stopped me.

589

590**QUESTION:** And what was he like as a person?

591

592**RESPONSE:** Well he liked to talk. I had one joke on him too that, that I came in
593I don't know he called me for something and uh he had his feet on the table and he
594says, for some reason he said, 'Well you're doing your work and I'm doing mine.' And I

44

45

595said, 'Yeah but I'm working and all you do is put your feet on the table.' Which is an
596awful thing to say and he ... I guess I was rather cheeky.

597

598**QUESTION:** I read some minutes that Lilly Tabish wrote about some negotiations that
599you had in the early '60's.

600

601**QUESTION:** '62 and '65 I think they were. Um it sounds like the negotiations were
602pretty difficult in terms of the contract ...

603

604**RESPONSE:** Oh yeah sometimes they would give us something very small and we
605wouldn't accept it and we'd just go on and on and you can't go on and on so uh, the,
606the, the Louis Cambridge where Louis works, knew Louis very well and he used
607to be the secretary and he used to be president of that union at one time. But uh well
608what was I going to say about Louis. Now Louis was a very quiet person, he was a very
609good person and too good almost.

610

611**QUESTION:** Mmm.

612

613**RESPONSE:** Yeah. Yeah you have to be uh well he's the one that actually asked me
614to run for president. If you, if you knew him quite well.

615

616**QUESTION:** I did interview him when I did the earlier ones.

617

618**RESPONSE:** Mmmhmm.

619

620**QUESTION:** He started working there in the late '30's.

621

622**RESPONSE:** Pardon?

623

624**QUESTION:** He started working in '39 I think.

625

626**RESPONSE:** Yeah, yeah I guess so, I'm not uh when I got there he was there already
627for quite a long time.

628

629**QUESTION:** Yeah quite a long time.

630

631**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

632

633**QUESTION:** Um there was a, there was a reference in there to the possibility of the
634union hiring a full time person as an agent and, and that you were interested in that
635position and Mr. Godsoe didn't sound very happy about that, that idea at all?

636

637**RESPONSE:** No uh that, that, that was one thing that never uh we had already agreed
638to have one. It wasn't me that was pushing that it was Mrs. Ross. Mrs. Ross was the
639person from the, from the uh, uh you know well she lived in uh the BC but she was the
640uh sort of running for in Canada she, she's the one that was trying to help the uh people

47

48

641up you know like me she would come and we would sort of discuss things if there was
642any way she could help us out. But I think I was sort of pushier than she was. I'm not, I
643shouldn't say, uh I said it.

644

645**QUESTION:** Um I'll come back to Emily Ross because I'm quite curious about her as
646well. I've seen a lot of things in the minutes about her and you and

647

648**RESPONSE:** Yeah, yeah she was appointed by the uh, uh our uh president from the
649States.

650

651**QUESTION:** Mmmhmm.

652

653**RESPONSE:** Yeah

654

655**QUESTION:** And she had been president of the Local too at one time?

656

657**RESPONSE:** Oh no yeah that she was.

658

659**QUESTION:** Yeah.

660

661**RESPONSE:** But she wasn't there already when I came she was already the person
662that worked for ... I never worked for Emily Ross.

663

664**QUESTION:** You never worked with her?

665

666**RESPONSE:** No.

667

668**QUESTION:** OK. So was she already living in BC by then?

669

670**RESPONSE:** Yeah she was in British Columbia for a home, her home. Ah she wanted
671to, it was warmer there. And she, she, she was a good traveler.

672

673**QUESTION:** Mmmhmm.

674

675**RESPONSE:** Yeah she traveled a lot.

676

677**QUESTION:** She traveled a lot

678

679**RESPONSE:** She did, she did.

680

681**QUESTION:** So if you, when you worked with the union did you work through her or did
682you go directly to the people in New York?

683

684**RESPONSE:** No, no, no. We uh I, I rarely, rarely went to her about anything because
685uh I, I was a very forceful person even though I was little. If you stick to your guns and

50

51

686you're you have proper uh something's that wrong uh I think you have to work
687at it until you get it. Yeah.

688

689**QUESTION:** I read at one point that Mr. Godsoe was looking at closing the Edmonton
690plant and, and opening a plant in Ontario. Do you remember that story?

691

692**RESPONSE:** No I didn't and uh that's funny he would like to tell the people that uh
693what he would be doing unless they were going to make another uh, actually that was
694owned once by uh, by what was well Mr. Jacox is the one that accepted there were
695people buying you know buying into it.

696

697**QUESTION:** Mmmhmm.

698

699**RESPONSE:** And sort of in the end actually I don't think they realized it but they were
700selling you know the having these people putting money in and uh then they had more,
701the people had more than he did. You know they were not, I shouldn't, but that's not,
702that wasn't our problem. Except that we lost a good president. He was a, he was an
703honest man.

704

705**QUESTION:** Godsoe or Jacox?

706

707**RESPONSE:** No Jacox.

708

709**QUESTION:** Jacox.

710

711**RESPONSE:** Yeah. Well Godsoe was a he was a, a kind of a, how shall I say it, you'd
712have to work hard with him to get some place sometimes. And at other times if he
713thinks it was right it was right.

714

715**QUESTION:** Oh.

716

717**RESPONSE:** So.

718

719**QUESTION:** Godsoe was the one who sold the plant to Levi's right?

720

721**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

722

723**QUESTION:** And, what's your understanding of why that happened?

724

725**RESPONSE:** Well we, we were all uh taken aback when they did that because we
726never expected it to ever to be sold to anybody but Levi's took it over. And he was still
727president then. I remember he brought the, the Levi people to introduced me to them.
728And uh I, I thought, I thought that and in his own way he was all right. I don't know
729whether he said that about me.

730

53

54

731**QUESTION:** Do you think things changed significantly for the workers after Levi's took
732over?

733

734**RESPONSE:** Well I think that they were very much more business like than it had been
735although uh they grew up with that you see. That was, they had uh their own in the
736States you know they probably a big uh I never saw their place in the States but I know
737they must have had a big one. And then they thought that this would be a good place
738that's when they bought it.

739

740**QUESTION:** Um around the time that you started there was a um the revitalized
741movement for the union label and, and uh there they were arguing about the importance
742of the union label, could you explain why the union label was so important?

743

744**RESPONSE:** Well I think it was important because the unions thought that believed
745that their work was perfect and uh that they put that label there they're selling a very
746good garment. And that is why for a long time the company was taking that label.

747

748**QUESTION:** Mmmhmm.

749

750**RESPONSE:** And uh it, I don't know what happened after I left whether that was
751discontinued eh.

752

753**QUESTION:** At one time they, they attached or put the words 'Union Made' right on
754GWG label.

755

756**RESPONSE:** Mmmhmm. Well uh it, it would have to have the union's uh you know the
757uh oh golly, there are some things that skip my, my mind, but they had to say that they,
758that's a union place.

759

760**QUESTION:** Mmmhmm. So

761

762**RESPONSE:** Yeah and because a lot of people they wouldn't buy them if they didn't
763have the label so it actually was something that they didn't really uh you know say
764anything about. They were even paying for the label for a while I remember.

765

766**QUESTION:** Mmmhmm.

767

768**RESPONSE:** Yeah. Yes that's right.

769

770**QUESTION:** Well I gather that around that time in the late '50's the labels were being
771brought in from the United States.

772

773**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

774

56

57

775**QUESTION:** And they cost a lot of money to produce and so there was a discussion
776about why they were so expensive and can't we have them printed here and all of that
777so.

778

779**RESPONSE:** Well I don't know if it was ever printed there because uh in Canada uh
780but I do know they came from, from uh where the president lives. They, they had their
781own stuff and they were doing it and sending it over for us and we had to pay for those,
782they were expensive.

783

784**QUESTION:** Mmmhmm.

785

786**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

787

788**QUESTION:** Um could, could you tell us what some of your accomplishments were
789when you were the president of the union, what you're proud of?

790

791**RESPONSE:** Oh that's sort of like bragging although maybe I sounded like it
792sometimes. I, I can't remember if, if there is anything world shaking but I, I, I uh I was
793uh very tough. When I say tough I don't mean I'm mean but I stuck to my guns all the
794time and that is why I was able to sort of uh be most useful to even sometimes the
795management.

796

797**QUESTION:** Mmmhmm. Could you explain that?

798

799**RESPONSE:** Could I explain that?

800

801**QUESTION:** Mmm.

802

803**RESPONSE:** Well uh I, I would take things, the way I would take things to them they
804started believing me because I didn't lie to them, they knew that I didn't lie to them that I
805only if I thought it was wrong. And uh I think that was one of the things that
806management sort of uh didn't mind me being there.

807

808**QUESTION:** Mmmhmm. Yeah. Yes I imagine it would be quite helpful to them to have
809someone that they trusted and that the staff trusted as well.

810

811**RESPONSE:** Yeah. And uh, uh you talked about Mr. Jacox, Mr. Jacox offered me a
812job. He, he said I'll give you any job you want, he said and I said to him, 'Yes. And
813there's only one job I want.' And he said, 'What?' 'Yours!'

814

815**QUESTION:** He wasn't giving that one up?

816

817**RESPONSE:** No. 'No.' he said, 'That's mine.'

818

819**QUESTION:** Were there any times that you thought you had some set-backs with the
820company or things you were disappointed in?

59

60

821

822**RESPONSE:** Oh sure, sure. But uh I, if, if I thought it had to be, sooner or later it had
823to be corrected then uh I stuck with it.

824

825**QUESTION:** How did your involvement with the union change you?

826

827**RESPONSE:** Change me? Well probably I became more sure of myself and uh, you
828know I think it was a very good thing in my part, in the part of my life having been in
829GWG. That's why I never left it because I had no intention of staying there.

830

831**QUESTION:** OK. Um.

832

833**RESPONSE:** I was, sorry, sorry, I was really dedicated to being in the movement
834actually.

835

836**QUESTION:** Beyond GWG?

837

838**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

839

840**QUESTION:** As well yeah. Um so I was just going to ask you about the Edmonton and
841District Labour Council.

842

843**RESPONSE:** Mmmhmm.

844

845**QUESTION:** Um how did you get involved with the Labour Council again?

846

847**RESPONSE:** Well uh, most of the unions had somebody to represent them at uh at the
848Labour Council. And uh most people didn't want to go but I did. They told me that I
849should go since I was presidential [or] whatever I was at the time and, and I just grew
850there and before I knew it I was an officer in there. And gradually I became president as
851a matter of fact.

852

853**RESPONSE:** For four years I served as President of the Labour Council, that's it before
854I married.

855

856**QUESTION:** That was in the mid-seventies was it?

857

858**RESPONSE:** Yeah '78. Up to '78. [In] '74 I was elected president and up to '78 I left.

859

860**RESPONSE:** And I, I hated leaving it but I had something better.

861

862**QUESTION:** Marriage?

863

864**QUESTION 3:** Who were some of the people when you first got on the Labour Council,
865like President Jim Shewchuck?

866

62

63

867**RESPONSE:** Yeah Jim Shewchuck was president.

868

869**QUESTION 3:** Who became very renowned for The Jim Shewchuck Award.

870

871**RESPONSE:** Oh yeah, well Jim was a very good person, really good person.

872

873**QUESTION 3:** So him and there was Mike English?

874

875**QUESTION 3:** Were there some things that happened at the Labour Council that you
876were happy with and that accomplished [good things] for the overall trade union
877movement?

878

879**RESPONSE:** I think there were many things that come, that came right but there were
880other things that were, there was maybe a little lack of co-operation.

881

882**QUESTION 3:** That was always a challenge for the president?

883

884**RESPONSE:** No.

885

886**RESPONSE:** Well if somebody would have wanted to run I couldn't stop them.

887

888**QUESTION 3:** So there were things that were happening that accomplished things for
889the Trade Union movement overall in general?

890

891**RESPONSE:** Uh I don't know how to answer that. Jack?

892

893**QUESTION 3:** Were you involved in the Alberta Federation of Labour?

894

895**RESPONSE:** Yes. The Labour Council had an officer there and I had to serve, as you
896know.

897

898**QUESTION 3:** Oh so automatically you had a chair at the [AFL?].

899

900**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

901

902**QUESTION 3:** Executive of the [AFL].

903

904**RESPONSE:** Yes that's right.

905

906**QUESTION 3:** Do you know when about that was Ann or, or was it the time you were
907president?

908

909**RESPONSE:** Well particularly then, particularly then I was. And I was already full-time
910in the Labour Council. When I say full-time I mean I was out of that job and I had more
911time to spend there.

912

65

66

913**QUESTION 3:** I see. OK and so you had to spend a lot of time at the Federation of
914Labour too, then?

915

916**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

917

918**QUESTION 3:** Were you there at the time that the Civil Service [Association of Alberta]
919became AUPE?

920

921**RESPONSE:** Yes.

922

923**QUESTION 3:** So you might remember?

924

925**RESPONSE:** I was all for it.

926

927**RESPONSE:** Well I didn't really know Bill [Broad] then. You know I knew that there
928was a Bill Broad but, uh, I was sort of pulling for the Labour Council. (Bill Broad was the
929last president of the Civil Service Association of Alberta and the first president of the
930Alberta Union of Public Employees—AUPE was born in June, 1976).

931

932**QUESTION 3:** So it was a move you supported then?

933

934**RESPONSE:** Yeah. Exactly.

935

936**QUESTION 4:** Right. OK. Katherine asked some questions about how a typical day
937was at the plant. If you were on a machine how did you get time for a coffee break or
938bathroom break?

939

940**RESPONSE:** Oh we, we had uh.

941

942**QUESTION 4:** Was it set up?

943

944**RESPONSE:** Fifteen minutes uh you know they let people out only they varied the, you
945know, the lines that were all there so that everybody didn't go at once.

946

947**QUESTION 4:** I see. Did the plant go right through noon hour too without stopping or
948what?

949

950**RESPONSE:** No.

951

952**QUESTION 4:** Oh it shut right down?

953

954**RESPONSE:** That's right.

955

956**QUESTION 4:** I see.

957

958**RESPONSE:** No that, that, that part was very fair I thought. Yeah.

68

69

959

960**RESPONSE:** I sound a little bit creaky you know. I had a heck of a night last night no
961kidding I couldn't fall asleep.

962

963**QUESTION:** Oh it wasn't too much, [the] Easter party?

964

965**RESPONSE:** No it wasn't, [there] was no party. There was no party. I was trying to,
966we were trying to get things ready to go but and at the same time I was still looking at
967these things here and uh there you are I got really tired and, and maybe I was over
968tired.

969

970**QUESTION:** I hope we haven't added to your stress then.

971

972I wanted to ask you a question that might be difficult to answer with all these men in the
973room.

974

975**RESPONSE:** Oh I won't ... You mean ... and things?

976

977**QUESTION:** No just what it was like for you being a woman in such a male dominated
978uh environment when you were doing the labour work that you were doing, union work,
979not so much in the plant because GWG was female dominated.

980

981**RESPONSE:** Mmmhmm.

982

983**QUESTION:** But the work with the Local and the Trades ... and the rest of them that
984was all very male dominated, is that an issue for you?

985

986**RESPONSE:** Oh yeah but there were quite a few ladies that were beginning to uh to
987come in didn't they Jack?

988

989**QUESTION 3:** Yep, I guess so.

990

991**RESPONSE:** And uh beside that it didn't matter to me whether it was men or women
992you know I got used to people. I like people very much you know and I, I would have,
993you know, if I could help anybody in any way I helped a lot of people in small ways. The
994people uh they wanted me to write a letter or do things, I used to do things for them if I
995had the time.

996

997**QUESTION:** So you didn't feel that you were in a male dominated world?

998

999**RESPONSE:** No. No. I really didn't and, and that comes from the heart.

1000

1001**QUESTION:** Did you think of yourself as being a feminist in what you were doing?

1002

1003**RESPONSE:** No I, I didn't think in those terms, not at all. I just enjoyed uh being what I
1004was and uh I tried to be as, as good as I could be to do, to do something for people.

71

72

1005

1006**QUESTION:** It sounds like you were very busy between the plant and the union and the
1007...

1008

1009**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

1010

1011**QUESTION:** Different things you were involved in, was it difficult to balance your work
1012life with your personal life?

1013

1014**RESPONSE:** Well most of the meetings that we had were in the evening and I tried to
1015always stay in where they could reach me if they needed me like ... my office was in the
1016Labour Council. But after I left I don't think that, it's only right that I not, I wouldn't live
1017on that place when I [was] looking after the people and not, not the uh management.

1018

1019**QUESTION:** Right.

1020

1021**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

1022

1023**QUESTION:** Are there any other people either [on] the management side or the uh
1024union side that are important people that we should talk about?

1025

1026**RESPONSE:** No I didn't know anybody special. I had the friends in there and uh one
1027thing maybe I should tell you ... I think we were one of the oddest unions there is ...
1028because every year we had a party, a party a real party a dance and everything and
1029management and the unions got together and we, we uh paid half of the money too. It
1030was going to cost us and every year we had I don't know ... 'party' isn't the right word
1031but it was sort of a ball.

1032

1033**QUESTION:** It was a banquet wasn't it?

1034

1035**RESPONSE:** Banquet.

1036

1037**RESPONSE:** A banquet and a dance.

1038

1039**QUESTION:** And a dance?

1040

1041**RESPONSE:** Oh yes.

1042

1043**QUESTION:** And that I gather went on from the '40's?

1044

1045**RESPONSE:** Yep.

1046

1047**QUESTION:** Right through?

1048

1049**RESPONSE:** Yeah. Nobody can blame me but oh no, no but when I came they, they
1050were already there.

74

75

1051

1052**RESPONSE:** They were doing, that's where they started.

1053

1054**QUESTION:** Were there other social events during your time there?

1055

1056**RESPONSE:** Uh no they.

1057

1058**QUESTION:** They didn't mix or sports team or anything like that?

1059

1060**RESPONSE:** No not really that I can think of. But that one was something special.

1061

1062**QUESTION:** Yes.

1063

1064**RESPONSE:** We all dressed in our best and.

1065

1066**QUESTION:** We have some beautiful pictures from it, I'll show you another time.

1067

1068**RESPONSE:** Is that right?

1069

1070**QUESTION:** Yeah. Um were you ever involved in any fund raising activities [that]

1071happened at the plant during your time?

1072

1073**RESPONSE:** If somebody ... is leaving and the people wanted to collect some money

1074for them for a present I probably did.

1075

1076**QUESTION:** But not for community things like?

1077

1078**RESPONSE:** No.

1079

1080**QUESTION:** You know poor people or?

1081

1082**RESPONSE:** I, I don't think that they would have liked that because uh if, actually it's

1083an important thing but to some people it isn't.

1084

1085**QUESTION:** Mmmhmm.

1086

1087**RESPONSE:** There are some that uh won't uh donate money to anything.

1088

1089**QUESTION:** Mmmhmm. But there's certainly a lot more pressure at work now to do

1090that with the United Way and everything than there was.

1091

1092**RESPONSE:** Well uh I don't know of anything that ever happened like that. No.

1093

1094**QUESTION:** And you left specifically to get married?

1095

1096**RESPONSE:** Uh.

77

78

1097

1098**QUESTION:** No you left the plant before that was right, you left the plant to become the
1099agent?

1100

1101**RESPONSE:** Oh yeah, I said I was in GWG sixteen years [and] the rest of the time to
1102'78 I was the agent for the union.

1103

1104**QUESTION:** Oh. And how did you feel when you heard about the plant closing?

1105

1106**RESPONSE:** Well I was a little bit shocked. I really was shocked that they were
1107closing the plant. I thought that the place is there to stay forever.

1108

1109**RESPONSE:** But it didn't work, it ... finally came to an end. Yes I'm sure there are a lot
1110of people that are feeling very badly about it because they depended on it for ... well,
1111they thought like I did, that it would be there forever.

1112

1113**QUESTION:** And especially as you mentioned before, the women who don't have a lot
1114of English and language skills or.

1115

1116**RESPONSE:** Yeah.

1117

1118**QUESTION:** A lot of education.

1119

1120**RESPONSE:** Well there used to be teachers that, that didn't have a job or there was no
1121room to go they, they used to come and sew there. All kinds of, we got all kinds of
1122people there.

1123

1124**RESPONSE:** But uh it's gone.

1125

1126**QUESTION:** That's a huge loss to Edmonton I think. I just want to ask you finally if you
1127have any photographs or company memorabilia that you would show us?

1128

1129**RESPONSE:** No I'm afraid not. I've got one from the Labour Council I was showing
1130Jack today.

1131

1132**QUESTION 4:** Yeah, that's right.

1133

1134**QUESTION 2:** Were there any generational workers there?

1135

1136**QUESTION 4:** Mothers and daughters and granddaughters?

1137

1138**RESPONSE:** That's my uh thing from the Labour Council.

1139

1140**QUESTION:** Oh yes. That's your gavel so you could keep everybody in line is it?

1141

1142**RESPONSE:** Oh yeah!

80

81

1143

1144**QUESTION:** That's great. And 1956 is when you became president of the local so you
1145were a member of the Labour Council all those years?

1146

1147**RESPONSE:** No I, what did I say? In '74 I became president.

1148

1149**QUESTION:** But you had been a member?

1150

1151**RESPONSE:** Oh yeah.

1152

1153**QUESTION 3:** You were a delegate?

1154

1155**RESPONSE:** Yeah, yeah that's right.

1156

1157**QUESTION:** Yeah.

1158

1159**QUESTION 3:** Yes.

1160

1161**RESPONSE:** Yes I was all those years and uh, at first I was a little bit shy of going but
1162afterwards uh nothing could stop me.

1163

1164**QUESTION:** I was just asking about women who, people who worked at the plant
1165where there's a multi-generational families.

1166

1167**QUESTION:** And the mothers and daughters or things like that. Do you remember
1168cases like that of people ... people at the plant who were part of an extended family?

1169

1170**RESPONSE:** Yes there probably were a few.

1171

1172**RESPONSE:** But they would have been very, very few. And they wouldn't stay long
1173because sometimes you know when kids are out of school uh young girls.

1174

1175**RESPONSE:** And they want a job maybe temporarily for a couple of weeks or
1176something.

1177

1178**RESPONSE:** And uh that's all there would be that way. I don't think that there was that
1179much ... not that I was aware of anyway. Sometimes you can't tell one from the other.

1180

1181**RESPONSE:** But uh no I don't think there was that much.

1182

1183**QUESTION:** That's it for me. Good. You're done. Thank you very much. Unless
1184there's something else you'd like to share, stories that ...

1185

1186**RESPONSE:** Uh, uh I gave you enough stories. I mean they were facts but they were
1187stories.

1188

83

84

1189 **QUESTION 3:** That was great. That was excellent.

1190

1191

11921:13:00

1193

1194 **NOTE FROM TRANSCRIBER:** It seems that the recorder was accidentally left on from

11951:13:00 to 1:39:25 with only some personal background conversation taking place so I

1196did not bother to transcribe it.

1197

1198

1199 **RECORDER TURNED OFF**

1200