

Interview with John Jervis on June 28, 1976.
Interviewed by Dr. Louis D. Silveri.

[Side I, Tape I]

Dr. Louis D. Silveri: I always like to start off in a biographical way. I'm interested in you as a person. I'm interested in the Labor Movement in Western North Carolina, and I'm interested in many things.

First of all, let's start off with when you were born and where.

Mr. John Jervis: I was born in Marshall, North Carolina, March 10, 1909.

Dr. Louis D. Silveri: How far back can you trace your ancestors in Madison County?

Mr. John Jervis: Back before 1860, I guess.

Silveri: Before 1860!

Jervis: I have a book on them here.

Silveri: Where did they come from before that? Were they Scotch-Irish, or English, or German?

Jervis: I couldn't tell you that. I remember my grandfather telling me that they come down from Pennsylvania, down through that way.

Silveri: That's the way that most of them did come, down through the Shenandoah Valley and settle in the mountains. Your father was born in Madison County?

Jervis: He was born in Mars Hill.

Silveri: Your mother was born in Madison County, too?

Jervis: Cataloochee, Haywood County.

Silveri: Your father's father was born in Madison County, also?

Jervis: Yes. Oh yes, he was born in Madison County.

Silveri: Do remember any stories about ^{your} family fighting in the Civil War?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: What side did they fight on? Do you know?

Jervis: They fought for the North!

Silveri: In Madison County--

Jervis: You know, Madison County didn't take sides with either one. It was about the only one that did, and they didn't have slavery up in here in the western part of the state. They leaned towards the North, and he had six or eight brothers that leaned toward the South. That's what caused the change of the name: Ours is Jervis, and the rest of them are Jarvis, but they are all close related.

Silveri: The Jarvises fought for the Confederacy, and the Jervises fought for the Union.

Jervis: That's right.

Silveri: The split ^{during} the Civil War resulted in the split of the names.

Jervis: That's right.

Silveri: That's very interesting! Did it result in anything more than that? Was there feuding, discontent, and animosity in later years?
and

Jervis: I was told, I don't know how true it was, that the boys from the South locked their father up where Mars Hill College now stands, and

Jervis: (continued) he died nailed up into a cabin. He was for the North, also. My grandfather was the only one who took with his father.

Silveri: How was your father employed? Was he a farmer?

No.

Jervis: He was a printer. Taught school awhile, and he was a printer. He owned a part interest in News-Record in Marshall, Old Fort Centennial in Old Fort, and the Bryson City Times in Bryson City.

Silveri: When you were born, he owned these three newspapers?

Jervis: Yes. We would travel wherever the business was the most pressing. We lived in Old Fort part of the time, Bryson City part of the time, and Marshall.

Silveri: How did he happen to get into that kind of profession? Let's talk about his education. What kind of education was available when your father was growing in Madison County?

Jervis: He was very well educated. All of his ^{family} /was. He had seven brothers and one sister, and they all taught school. My father taught school some.

Silveri: Where did they get their education? In Madison County?

Jervis: In Madison County.

Silveri: Did they go to Mars Hill College?

Jervis: They went to Mars Hill College, and my grandfather was president of Mars Hill College for seven years. I had two uncles that was on trustees and taught at Mars Hill College.

Silveri: That grandfather you are talking about is a Jervis?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: Let's talk about him for a minute. You said he used to be President of Mars Hill?

Jervis: President of Mars Hill College for seven years. If you want the dates, I can get it for you right quick.

Silveri: That's all right. We can check that later on. He must have gone to Mars Hill to get his education, too? Do you know?

Jervis: He's one of the founders of Mars Hill College, my grandfather.

Silveri: Well, that story must be printed somewhere.

Jervis: I have it here, yes.

Silveri: O. K. We won't go into that since it has already is pretty much printed. How many children were in your father's family?

Jervis: He had seven sons and one daughter. In my father's family.

Silveri: Seven boys and a girl. Did the girl come last?

Jervis: No. No. She was one of the older ones.

Silveri: Well, that's a good family. So, when you were born in 1909, your parents were at that time residing in Marshall. I think you said in Bob Terrell's column you were born a couple of doors down from the courthouse?

Jervis: Second door from the courthouse! Bob had my age one year younger than what I am!

Silveri: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Jervis: Two brothers. Both of them are deceased.

Silveri: So, there were three in your family. Now, your mother came from

Silveri: (continued) Cataloochee?

Jervis: That's over in the heart of the Smoky Mountain Park.

Silveri: How did your father and mother meet?

Jervis: She was going to school in Clyde. There wasn't any school in Cataloochee, so she was going to school in Clyde, and he also run a Baptist paper in Clyde, a small paper. They met in Clyde while she was going to school.

Silveri: Was newspaper work the first kind of work your father got into when he finished college?

Jervis: He taught school a couple or three years.

Silveri: Where?

Jervis: Somewhere in Madison County. Pine Creek was one place, and I think at Meadow Fork. Then he went into the newspaper business.

Silveri: He must have been an apprentice at sometime or other in the newspaper work, wasn't he?

Jervis: I don't think so. I don't think they had apprentices back then.

Silveri: When he first when into the newspaper work, he bought into the newspapers as a part owner?

Jervis: Mr. Jim White, a banker in Marshall, actually owned the paper. Then my father went to work for him and let so much of his time go into the interest of the paper.

Silveri: I see. So, little by little he was able to acquire an interest in it. He must have really enjoyed that work, and been quite successful at it?

Jervis: He did, and I have ever since. I've always wished I was, but when he died, any of us boys was too young--

Silveri: To go into it.

Jervis: Yes. So, my mother had to sell her interest in it.

Silveri: You went to school in Marshall for the first time?

Jervis: I went to school one year in Marshall, and then went to Clyde from that on. My father died when I was nine.

Silveri: Your father died in 1918?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: And the war was going on. You were in Clyde at that time?

Jervis: Yes. I went through the tenth grade at Clyde.

Silveri: Then what did you do?

Jervis: I went to work at American Enka Corporation on a construction job in 1928, but I was also a substitute mail carrier for Clyde Route One at Crabtree and Fines Creek. I was a substitute, but I carried most of the time.

Silveri: That was before the Enka job?

Jervis: Oh yes.

Silveri: How many years did you do that?

Jervis: About three or four years, I guess it was. That was during the Hoover administration. I've always boasted I made good money during Hoover's administration. Made seven dollars a day!

Silveri: Seven dollars a day?

Jervis: Yes. But I had to furnish my own buggy and horses. I had to carry by buggy at that time. The roads was impassable for a car.

Silveri: This was up around Clyde?

Jervis: Clyde. Clyde Route one, which goes into Crabtree and to the Fines Creek Post Office.

Silveri: Who were your customers? Was it people way up in remote areas?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: Could you always go in a wagon, or sometimes did you have to go on horseback?

Jervis: I could almost go most of the time in a buggy. Sometimes I would unhook the horse over at the head of Bald Creek on Crabtree and ride the horse up and leave my buggy. There was an old lady Noland who lived at the forks of the road at Bald Creek. Lots of times it would be dark by the time I would get there, and she'd say, "John, you leave the mail here with me. I'll take it up Bald Creek. You go on back home!" It was real cold weather. It was rough carrying it at that time.

Silveri: That was pretty much of a lifeline for the people, wasn't it?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: Can you remember carrying an mailorder catalogues?

Jervis: The Sears-Roebuck Catalogue was the most important mail they got! If that catalogue didn't come the day they thought it should be there, they would always come, wanting to know about it. I'd get the reports at

Jervis: (continued) the post office that I hadn't delivered their catalogue yet!

Silveri: What did they used to call those? Didn't they have another name for them?

Jervis: They called them the Wish books, the Sears book; they had different names for them

Silveri: The Wish book, I've often heard mentioned. That was an interesting thing for them to see all the new products.

Jervis: That was the most popular catalogue there was out at that time.

Silveri: I want to go back and ask some questions about your father again. What kind of politics did your father have?

Jervis: He was a Republican.

Silveri: A Republican in the tradition of many people in Madison County.

Jervis: My grandfather was a Republican, but all of his brothers were Democrats.

Silveri: Did your father ever hold any public office?

Jervis: No.

Silveri: How about your Grandfather Jervis?

Jervis: No. He held large offices in churches, like Baptist conventions and things like that. I'll let you read the book. It gives all of that in it.

Silveri: The family was Baptist, right?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: From your grandfather on down.

Jervis: Back in that time, Mars Hill was about the only Baptist. The rest of it was Presbyterians. Presbyterians had a big hospital in White Rock in Madison County, and Hot Springs was mostly Presbyterian. Mars Hill was the Baptist center.

Silveri: You said they had a hospital in White Rock?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: That's part of Madison County?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: It must have been a small place.

Jervis: No. It was a real big hospital. I have a picture somewhere. I had my tonsils took out there when I was three years old. You had to go by, they called them a hack then. You know what a hack is?

Silveri: Yes.

Jervis: We made daily trips back to the hospital way back in the mountains there closer to Hot Springs than it is Marshall.

Silveri: This is the first time I've heard that there was ever a hospital in Madison County.

Jervis: It was big fine hospital, noted almost everywhere.

Silveri: Did you know the Bailey family in Marshall when you were growing up? Jesse James Bailey?

Jervis: I know quite a lot about the Baileys. My father and Jess Bailey were real friends.

Silveri: The Sheriff, Jesse James Bailey?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: He was just eighty-eight years old June 14.

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: He's doing well.

Jervis: Bob Terrell's doing a job on him now, a story.

Silveri: Why did you leave the mail route?

Jervis: You know, they passed a ruling back then that a service man would get a permanent job. I wasn't in the service. I could have still continued as substitute, but I went to work at Enka fulltime, and I just couldn't handle it then. But I did substitute awhile **after** I was on the there construction job. I could get off anytime I wanted to and go back. That lasted about sixteen months, the /construction job on American Enka. Then in August '29, I went in the plant.

Silveri: So, you were involved in the actual building of the plant in 1928?

Jervis: Oh yes! I was there before there was ever a brick laid on the ground.

Silveri: How did you know about that? Did they advertise in the paper?

Jervis: Yes. They advertised in the paper, and the employment manager was from Haywood County. That's been a pretty good conflict over the years. Half of the people at American Enka are from Haywood County. people Buncombe County/resented it because they hired more Haywood County than they did Buncombe County people back at that time.

Silveri: You found out about it while you were employed in the construction work building the--

Jervis: Yes. It's just twelve miles.

Silveri: Twelve miles from Clyde?

Jervis: From Clyde over there.

Silveri: How long were your working days back then when you were building?

Jervis: We worked ten hours on the construction.

Silveri: What kind of wages did you get?

Jervis: Twenty-five cents an hour for a common laborer. Then when I went to work with a glazier putting glass in, I got a five cent increase. I got thirty cents an hour for that.

Silveri: That was fairly good wages in 1928?

Jervis: Yes. Then I went into the Enka plant and worked for twenty-seven and a half cents (it was) for several years, and we finally began to increase. The Union came along in 1939, but it was 1941 before we got a contract. We got a fairly good increase then, and one each year from that on.

Silveri: August of 1929 is when you began employment in the plant itself.

Jervis: That's right.

Silveri: What did you do?

Jervis: I went into the lacquer shop. That's where they sprayed paint. I was supervisor in there for awhile. They sprayed this enamel on there and baked it. That's the only thing that could stand that acid.

Silveri: They go into the production of Rayon in 1929, right?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: There was no Union there when it opened?

Jervis: No. No.

Silveri: The Union didn't come in until about a decade later?

Jervis: Right. In 1939 we started the campaign. We had to go through every court in the land and all the way to the Supreme Court. In LRB, we finally got our recognition the first of '41, and we started negotiating the contract. In April of 1941, we had the big strike, which lasted thirteen days.

Silveri: I wanted go back. Nineteen twenty-nine is the year in which the Depression hit.

Jervis: That's right.

Silveri: It got worse from '29 on. What was the story at Enka then?

Jervis: Enka run good all during that time.

Silveri: Why?

Jervis: Because they were just a new product in this part of the country, new company, and they had very little layoffs or anything during that Depression. I never lost a day as long as I worked there. A few did, a few women, but not very many.

Silveri: I guess the people up in this part of the country were very happy to see Enka come in?

Jervis: They sure was! It saved this part of the country by coming in at

Jervis: (continued) the time it did.

Silveri: Approximately how many employees did it have in 1929, 1930, and 1931?

Jervis: I believe I would be safe in saying eight hundred at that time.

Silveri: What about the pollution during that time? Was there much discussion about that?

Jervis: Oh yes! It was very bad! This gas is heavier than air, and it would settle to the ground floor. You could see that, and it was poisonous gas. You could almost see it in certain times, rising up from the ground floor. Then they finally put in fence. A lot of people died at that time that they said was from this gas.

Silveri: Also there was the odor coming from it, right?

Jervis: That's right. Bad odor, yes. It out smells Canton! Canton smells real bad! Pulpwood.

Silveri: The workers during the Depression were very happy to have jobs there. They didn't have any kind of share work during that time? In other words, they would tell workers, "You work twenty hours, so somebody else can work twenty hours?" Did have that there?

Jervis: Oh yes! They'd tell you to do something, and if you didn't jump right at it like you was anxious to get it done, they would say, "There's a man at the gate awaiting on you." They always threatened us with someone else at the gate wanted our job.

Silveri: Were there any attempts to unionize the workers before the end of the 1930's?

Jervis: Not before 1938 and 1939. C. I. O. come in and tried it, but they failed. Then the United Textile Workers, which was the A. F. L. at that time, finally made the grade.

Silveri: When was your first contact with unions or organizing and so on?

Jervis: I was in Old Fort when that strike went on where they killed those people, but I wasn't working there. I just knew about it.

Silveri: You knew about it and went down there?

Jervis: Yes, I was down there.

Silveri: Why? Just out of curiosity?

Jervis: Yes. As I say, we used to live in Old Fort, and Marion's not far off.

Silveri: You're talking about the textile strike, in what year?

Jervis: In 1929 when the people got killed.

Silveri: That was in Marion, a textile mill in Marion?

Jervis: Yes, Marion. Then they had one in Gastonia about that time.

Silveri: This was an attempt on the part of the unions to organize the mills?

Jervis: Yes. United Textile Workers. The United Textile Workers was organized in 1900. The Textile Workers Union came along, and they tried to claim the credit for it, but United Textile Workers was organized in 1900 and was the only textile union there was at that time.

Silveri: Was kind of unionization existed in the South in 1929?

Jervis: Craft unions were very strong. Asheville was considered the strongest union city in the South at that time. Every carpenter, plumber,

Jervis: (continued) electrical worker, and everything was organized:

Printers, bus drivers, and motion picture operators. I have the charters (most of them have been sent to Atlanta) dating back as far as 1890. Eighteen eighty one was the first Carpenter's Union.

Silveri: But as far as organizing a textile mill, that was a different story?

Jervis: Oh yes. AFL didn't believe in organizing by groups; they organized by certain trades and crafts.

Silveri: There's been a lot written about the attitude of the Southern worker, factory worker (textile worker) towards unionization. There's been a lot written about their suspicion and so on. What do you have to say about that? Is that true?

Jervis: No. Just fear is the only reason that they don't organize, because I get calls everyday. I would say there is not a day in the week that someone wants to organize, but they won't give me their names. I tell them, "Well, you've got to give me your name or somebody to contact. We must get cards signed and turn it over to the ^{National} Labor Relations Board!" "But if I tell you my name, I'll lose my job!" That's everyday business right now.

Silveri: If that ^{existed} exists now, it certainly [^] a long time ago when there was even greater danger!

Jervis: One reason it is hard to get organization here: Nearly everyone in this part of the country owns a small farm or a patch of land where they can make a crop and make a half acre of tobacco crop that they can sell for a couple of thousand dollars. They had just rather have a part time

Jervis: (continued) job if they can get it that way, and farm the rest of the time. Burley tobacco does bring a good price, and it's very little trouble to raise, and everyone that can get an allotment, has got an allotment. They had rather put that time in on tobacco than work at public works.

Silveri: They have that part time. They have their base of economic support back there on a small farm. They may even raise some cattle.

Jervis: That's right. Yes.

Silveri: The mills over the years, particularly in the twentieth century in the South, have been populated by a lot of mountain people, people coming down out of the mountains to work in the mills. I suppose they saw more cash than they had ever seen before, and even though their conditions may be pretty bad, they had a greater income than they ever had before. Probably this is one of the reasons why the unions were having a difficult time moving in. What were your feelings after you saw what happened in Marion in 1929?

Jervis: It just made me just want to fight that much harder, so I went into this union over here. The first day I went in, I let them know that I was in! At that time and the same way now, if you could prove that you were discharged for union activities, you hardly ever got discharged, because companies usually had to take them back and pay them back time. That's what we preach to people today: If you are going to join the Union, come out and let us write the NLRB a letter and say you are on our organizing committee, and you are protected, but it is hard to get them to believe that! We do it, wherever the group, and we hardly ever lose a

Jervis: (continued) case. We write the company a letter and advise them that so and so is on the organizing committee. They are actually treated better than anybody else. The company does that: "Well, you don't need a union!"--and try to be good to them.

Silveri: Well, that's what it's like today. Back fifty years ago, it was a lot different. If they suspected you even of trying to organize, you were kicked out of your job, and that was it! You were black listed!

Jervis: We didn't have industrial unions back in here in that time, but you take in the Craft Union fifty years ago, if you didn't belong to the Union, you didn't get a job here. I've heard it said that every building on Haywood Street in Asheville, and Patton Avenue, were Union built. If they would start a building and maybe got it part of the way up, they would hook the cable to the streetcar (the streetcar was on all of them street), and it would fall down. Back then our streetcar operators were one of our oldest unions. They was all in the Union.

Silveri: They say Asheville was one of the strongest Union--

Jervis: Towns in the South.

Silveri: Why?

Jervis: People believed in it.

Silveri: Why did more people believe it in Asheville than they did in Atlanta or some other place?

Jervis: I don't know. The old man--I had that dinner for him not long ago. He passed away two months ago.

Silveri: Was it Worley?

Jervis: Worley. He was the oldest. He was really interesting to talk to about it. He taught me what I knew about the Labor Unions!

Silveri: I'm sorry I wasn't down here earlier to talk with him. He was very much involved in it early. I think he was a carpenter, wasn't he?

Jervis: Yes. He was a carpenter, and he was Secretary-Treasurer of State FL. He run the Asheville Advocate, which was a Labor paper, for a number of years. He was very active in the whole Labor Movement! He turned all of his records over to me six months before he passed away, and I took them to Atlanta.

Silveri: Is there a Labor newspaper today in Asheville?

Jervis: No. There's one that pretends to be, but they are on the black list of the AFL-CIO, the Labor Advocate. We don't recognize it.

Silveri: Why? Because it's not really run by the Labor Organization?

Jervis: The man who owns it has a print shop. He don't have a Union member in it. He's an insurance agent; he don't have no Union people in that. He has got a construction job; he don't hire the first Union man. So, we just don't recognize it as Labor!

Silveri: When you went down to Marion in 1929, was it during the strike?

Jervis: I was down there during the strike, but I wasn't right on the picket line at that time.

Silveri: What was the situation? The Union was trying to organize in 1929?

Jervis: The Union was trying to organize, and they had an agreement with this old lady that owned the East Marion cotton/^{mill} that she would recognize

Jervis: (continued) the Union. She was from up North, and she had dealt with this Union, so she wasn't down here all the time. The other plants protested against them organizing in East Marion. The sheriff's department went in, and they had this strike. She had agreed to recognize the Union, and it would have been the first textile union in the South.

So, the sheriff's department went out and shot these people down! They had the trial and had it over in Yancey County. They all come clear; all the deputies did, and the sheriff. Shortly after, the sheriff committed suicide. I published this book. I got permission from Sinclair Lewis before he died through United Textile Workers. I put four thousand of other book over there, Cheap and Contented Labor. I put four thousand of those in McDowell County, and I get calls every few days wanting some, but I have run out. I'm going to have it reprinted.

Silveri: This^{is} all about the Marion Strike?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: O. K. It was written by Sinclair Lewis, who came down to observe it.

Jervis: We have won two unions on account of passing out that book down there. It's the only two unions in McDowell County, but we do have hundreds of union members in McDowell County that belongs to unions here in Buncombe County. We have no problems in Buncombe County organizing. The law or nobody interferes with us.

Silveri: After the Marion Strike, you came back here. Did you say you

Silveri: (continued) joined the Union, when you came back after this?

Jervis: No. I joined the Union when we started at Enka.

Silveri: What Union was that?

Jervis: United Textile Workers.

Silveri: What year was that?

Jervis: That was 1939. Ten years later.

Silveri: I just wanted to know if there was any union that you could have belonged to in the 1930's, before 1939, in Asheville while working with Enka.

Jervis: No. Because I wasn't at that time old enough to join plumbers, or carpenters, or anything like that. They was well organized in Asheville, but I lived over in Haywood County.

Silveri: What do you know about the 1930's, the Depression Years? Did it hit Western North Carolina hard?

Jervis: It certainly did! I know all about the Depression years. People would have to go out and mortgage their cow for ten or fifteen dollars, and then come due soon as the mortgage/they would take their cows. That would leave them without anything, and that was out in Haywood County. This was just as bad.

Silveri: For people who were on the land, they were able to raise their food.

Jervis: Oh, they could raise their food, but there is a certain amount of stuff you can't raise, like shoes and things like that. They could make

Jervis: (continued) their own clothes. My grandparents, I was living with them. My grandmother knitted all of our socks and sweaters. She made all of our clothes and everything, and my mother, too.

Silveri: Who did you vote for in 1932?

Jervis: Well, I guess I voted for Hoover! I hate to own up to it, but that's the last Republican ticket I ever voted on.

Silveri: You probably voted for Hoover because of the Republican tradition.

Jervis: Hoover ran in 1928.

Silveri: Yes, and he ran in 1932 against Roosevelt.

Jervis: I voted for Roosevelt the last^{two}/times he run. You know, he run four times.

Silveri: You didn't even vote for him in 1936.

Jervis: I voted for Roosevelt the last^{two}/times, and I've voted Democrat even since!

Silveri: I think that very interesting because I've talked to a number of oldtimers from Madison County. A fellow like Jesse James Bailey was with the Republican party because of tradition in the family. He's never voted for a Democrat; he's never moved out of that mold. You made a change there.

Jervis: I certainly did, and all of my people on my mother's side are strong Democrats.

Silveri: But your father's side, were Republicans, and remained so.

Jervis: Yes. I have about six cousins living right here in Asheville.

Jervis: (continued) Everyone of them strong Republicans.

Silveri: So, what you saw around you in the Depression years and also around at your job, made you feel that it was necessary for working people to organize and to get unions.

Jervis: It sure did. See, I lived in Haywood County, and we was trying to organize Champion Paper Company. I had a big riot at my house in Haywood County. I guess there was three or four hundred people there. That was after we had already organized Enka. So, I had Jim Barrett, who was the Southern Director for the AFL at that time, out there speaking. These here people that hated unions was--I lived up on a knoll, and the road went around it there. That road was full of these people, listening to what he had to say. The next morning, they sent a group up there from the Baptist church to tell me to either get the union out or get out myself, that they didn't want no part of it in Haywood County.

But now Haywood is the most thickly unionized county in the State of North Carolina. It's ninety percent organized. There's only four big factories there, and they are all organized.

Silveri: Haywood County is where the Champion Paper Company is in Canton, right?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: That was the major stumbling block in organizing?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: This came after Enka, so you 're talking about the Second

Silveri: (continued) World War when it was organized, during the war?

Jervis: Yes. Unagusta Furniture Company in Hazelwood, that was organized right along the time Enka was. There was about six or eight big companies in this area that was organized within two years of the time that Enka was. We led the campaign, and then along come Sayle's Biltmore Bleachery, Hardwood Corporation, and Unagusta in Hazelwood. That was the biggest and best period in organizing we've ever had at one time.

Silveri: I wanted to indicate here or ask you this: It seems to me in my reading of history that labor unions got their greatest help and the greatest advancement from the labor legislation passed during the New Deal, the "Wagner Act."

Jervis: The "Wagner Act." That's right.

Silveri: The National Labor Relations Act and so on. More from that than what they could do themselves.

Jervis: John Lewis, as soon as the "Wagner Act" was passed, he went into the mines and told all the miners that Franklin D. Roosevelt wanted them to join the Union. Well, they thought anything Franklin D. wanted, they should do, and that's where John Lewis organized most of the miners right at that time.

Silveri: As far as industrial unions are concerned, the "Wagner Act" is the piece of legislation that really opened the door for them to get organized.

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: We had Section 7A of the NIRA in 1933, which said that Labor had the right to organize.

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: But still didn't set up the kind of mechanism that would protect the laborer in organizing. This was done with the National Labor Relations Board, right. So, with that kind of protection, then, things like organizing Enka took place and so on. Working people got no help from State legislation?

Jervis: No, never have in North Carolina.

Silveri: Why?

Jervis: They courted us an awful lot during the election, but as soon as the election was over, they would forget us! I don't know why it is, but we have Buncombe County, Madison County, and Haywood has the best legislators now in regard to labor you'll find anywhere in the State nearby. We're the best organized right here in Buncombe and Haywood Counties than anywhere in the State. They hate to own up to that down in Raleigh and around, but it's that way! I'll give you a list of all the locals we have here. We have the oldest Central Labor Union here that we have any record of! I'm sure it's not the oldest in the nation like Terrell put in there, but it is the oldest one we have any record of, organized in 1881.

They went to Cincinnati, Ohio and organized the American Federation of Labor in 1886. We sent three people, I mean they did, from Asheville to organize the American Federation of Labor.

Silveri: Let's go back to the 1930's again. In what year did the movement to organize the Enka plant take place?

Jervis: Nineteen thirty nine.

Silveri: It began in 1939. You were involved in that from the beginning?

Jervis: Oh, yes. From the very beginning!

Silveri: Could you explain what happened?

Jervis: We went in and talked to Mr. Gill, who was the plant manager. I will bring on up the story about Mr. Gill later on. They had the Factory Workers Committee. The foremen would tell the people who to vote for, for Factory Workers Committee. We had no connection with the Union. You had to vote for whoever your foreman told you to.

Silveri: It was a company union?

Jervis: Yes. Naturally the foreman was going to tell you to vote for somebody that he could get along with all right. It went on like that, and then they got an injunction on us (against us), and we had to go down to Shelby and be tried. Every penny of money we had, they took it for a couple of years. Then we went to the NLRB. It went into Federal Court. So, we fought it out until 1941, early 1941. We went in to negotiate the contract. They give thirty two one-hundreds of one percent raise. That's what caused the strike. They said, "That's all we are going to give you!"

The next day we were on the picket line. We've had three strikes. "Come on up, " and I was a member of the Salvation Army Executive Board, and Mr. Gill was a member of the Salvation Army Executive Board. He was plant manager. We would go to the Executive Board

Jervis: (continued) and meet at the Salvation Army. We would have dinner, and they would put our names around on our plates. They had Gills and mine at a different place, so he picked up his plate and moved it up next to mine. (This was after he had retired)

He said, "John, you used to think I was an S. B., didn't you?" I said, "A lot of times I did, and a lot of times I didn't!" He said, "If I had of fired you and Nick Collins everytime I was asked to fire you, you would have met yourself going in and out that gate!" He reached in his pocket and pulled out a Union card a whole lot older than I was. He said, "I've always been a Union member!" Now, he was our plant manager.

He told me that the reason he let us get by with so much, he charged it to organization. He knew we needed the Union. The company didn't know that, but he never let it be known until after he had retired.

Silveri: What was his name again?

Jervis: Gill.

Silveri: What was his first name?

Jervis: Joseph Gill.

Silveri: Joseph Gill. G-i-i-l?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: That's a very interesting story!

Jervis: We talked labor many times. I've been up on the mountain. He lived up on Sunset Mountain. He had a shop up there, and he had stuff in there from Enka. He said, "John, if you look around in here, you would think I'd stole everything I got from Enka, but I never carried one penny

Jervis: (continued)of the stuff out of there that I didn't pay for before I got it!" He had one of the nicest shops you ever saw.

We discussed the organization back from the very beginning. He said, "I was always on the side of you boys!"

Silveri: Is he still alive today?

Jervis: No. He and his sister started on a European trip, and they started the car to warm it up (it was wintertime), and both of them died with gas.

to me
He had explained a lot of times about it. Dr.Moritz was President (they of the company, and his son Leo Moritz were both Dutchmen) was Vice President. They went through that plant: Dr.Moritz would be on this side, Leo on this side, and Gill in the middle. They would go through the plant everyday.

While we had that thirteen day strike on, they would come out for lunch and go up to Enka Lake Club for lunch. Nick Collins would get on the loud speaker (He was president of the local), "All right boys! Open the line up here! Let the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost through!" That's what he called them!

Old man Gill said he would look over at Dr. Moritz, and he would be stubbed up like a big bull, and Leo the same way. He said he couldn't hardly keep from laughing. Everytime he started through that picket line, Nick Collins would make that statement!

Silveri: Was there any violence in the picket lines?

Jervis: Oh, we had a few fist fights. Lawrence Brown was the sheriff. Lawrence Brown came out and brought a whole bunch of city policemen

Jervis: (continued) and all.

Vernon Bailey, he's a set of this here mean bunch of Baileys over in Yancey County and first cousin to Jesse, had been tried times for murder, but he always come clear. It didn't mean no more to him to shoot a man down than it did to shoot a chicken! He walked down there to Lawrence Brown and said, "Lawrence, if you try to break this picket line, God have mercy on you!"

Lawrence knew he meant what he said, so him and Lawrence never did get along. He'd been accused of robbing banks and things, but he had no connection whatever with the Union. He was just upholding for the people at Enka. He owned nearly half of Pisgah Mountain up yonder at the right hand side. He kept them wood there all the time that they was on strike.

Lawrence didn't try it, but that one time, and it didn't work, so we went ahead and got recognition and got our contract and kept building from that on. We never did have many more problems.

Silveri: Lawrence Brown was the Sheriff of Buncombe County?

Jervis: Yes. Brown was sheriff for about thirty six years, I believe.

End of Side I, Tape I₁

Silveri: . . . You say you were out for thirteen days?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: That wasn't too long, then, was it?

Jervis: No. I'll give you the story of it before you leave.

Silveri: So it was organized for the United Textile Workers in America?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: Who became the officials of the Union? Of the local?

Jervis: Roy Whitmire. and myself. We had twelve executive officers. I was part time business agent most of the time, and I was Secretary-Treasurer. That's as high as I ever got, Secretary-Treasurer. and Business Agent.

Roy Whitmire was president. We elect officers every year. It's just back and forth.

Silveri: What percentage of the workers were unionized?

Jervis: You mean in the Union?

Silveri: In the Union.

Jervis: Ninety-five percent, and it's never been no less than that!

Silveri: Ninety-five percent!

Jervis: People, if they go to Enka, join the Union. It's the best Union I've ever seen to keep membership! There's a lot of things I don't think they do to get the best results for the people, but it has always had a strong membership.

Silveri: What effect did the so-called "Right to Work" laws have on the Union, let's say at Enka? A person coming there to be employed does not have to belong to the Union, right?

Jervis: They don't, but they join just because they want to and because most of the people up here that works at Enka are natives right around here. They're either brothers, sisters, uncles, or something kinfolks. It's no problem to keep good membership. They'd rather walk out than

Jervis: (continued) anything they ever done in their life. They do that for celebration more than anything else! It's harder to keep them in than it is--

Silveri: Was Enka the first place in Western North Carolina that the industrial union got in?

Jervis: Yes. The first place. Then the Hardwood Corporation, then the Unagusta in Hazelwood, and then Sayles Biltmore Bleachery all went in within a year's time. Then the United Textile Workers were very strong over American in Elizabethton, Tennessee, which is right across the mountain. Enka put a plant over there, and they had serious trouble over organizing the Tennessee plant.

Silveri: Yes. I know a little bit about Enka. I've already talked to Wilson Ayers and three or four people who were at Enka in their early years. I haven't had a chance to talk with someone ^{who was involved} in the Union as you were. I'm very happy to see this side of it.

Jervis: Francis Gillman, the personnel director out there, and Wilson Ayers, I guess, would know more about it than any two people.

Silveri: I've interviewed a fellow by the name of Kriek, who was there then--

Jervis: Kriek, yes.

Silveri: Hubbeling, another one who came very early, was a chemist, I guess, with the plant. There are quite a few of the oldtimers still around.

Jervis: One of them lives the next street up here. Huffman, he was in the chemical part.

Silveri: When did Ramsey come into the picture at Enka?

Jervis: Ramsey had been in a long time, but he come in as a young man. He worked everywhere nearly before, and he's a well qualified man. I think the world of Ramsey. Ramsey's father was one of Lawrence Brown's deputy sheriffs. He was his first deputy.

I wanted off to do a little politicking. Anybody going to see this besides you?

talked,

Silveri: After we have this talked, this will be typed up, and I will send it back to you. Anything that you don't want to be in it, you let me know. We can change it.

Jervis: Well, this part I don't think should be in since Ramsey is still in . Ramsey always took sides with me when old man Stull come in there, who was president of the company. He fought me every way in the world, and that's how come me to retire early. They gave me early retirement to leave because I had always upheld for the Union.

me

They come and told me they heard I was dissatisfied. Gilman did, this Francis Gilman, Personnel Director now. I told him I was. I said, "Putting a lot of pressure on me." One or two of the union officers were, too. Jealousy, I reckon. They didn't have anything else they could have said.

So, Francis Gilman said, "I want to talk to you John. It's not the company that is after you. It's the Union." That's when Phillip Stull come there. Ball Danzy went in as President of the United Textile Workers.

I fought Ball Danzy (Joseph Jacobs and I did) for years and years

Jervis: (continued) when he was in the Textile Workers Union. Then he promised them all that if they would come to United Textile Workers, that he would take care of them, so he got about eight or ten locals to come into United Textile Workers, and he got elected President of United Textile Workers. They stayed in about two months, and all of them went back to the Textile Workers, except one local (Local 440 in Salisbury).

Ball Danzy got to be president, and he could never get over the years that I had fought him and the raids at the United Textile Workers. Me and him had a fist fight out here in front of the Enka plant. So, him and Stull both took out after me. The personnel director told me, "It's not the company that's after you! It's the Union!" He meant Ball Danzy, and Stull was, too. I knew that.

[The Personnel Director] said, "If you ever take a notion to quit, will I'll see that you get your pension the rest of your life. We even say that your wife can get it five years; if she lives longer than you, she'll get it five years after your death."

I said, "How long will it take for you to fix those papers up?" He said, "Just a few minutes." I said, "Get to work on them! I'll check my tools out!" At ten-thirty I was gone!

Silveri: What year was this?

Jervis: That was 1960.

Silveri: How old were you?

Jervis: Fifty eight, I believe.

Jervis: I believe it was 1960. I've been out ten years, and I'm sixty-eight now. (I'm sixty seven, now)

Silveri: If you were born in 1909, and it was 1960, it was only fifty one years old.

Jervis: No. I've been out ten years.

Silveri: Well, it was 1966.

Jervis: Yes. 1966. I get my figures mixed up.

So, I called United Furniture Workers right then, and asked them if I could go to work. They said, "Yes. You can start today!" So, they paid me the same day that Enka did that day, and I went to work for United Furniture Workers.

Silveri: Up to 1966 all of your labor activity had been parttime?

Jervis: I didn't have to work any, unless I wanted to. I would go in and maybe work a couple of hours a day. The rest of the time I would be handling grievances. I had a free run of the plant. I would go anywhere I wanted to in the plant, but that was set up under Mr. Gill. They have an office in the plant now. I could have got one then, but I didn't want it. I just knew it would look too well having an office right there, and it don't work because people out there are having problems. Not near as good as when we had our own office out of the plant, and go in when we got ready.

Ramsey always took up for me, and they was going to fire me on Friday, so Ramsey got in touch with their lawyer that they had let go not long before that and told their lawyer to get in touch with Joseph Jacobs, who was our Southern Director before Ball Danzy went in.

Jervis: (continued) Joe called me and said, "John, get you some labor board charges filed right now. They are going to fire you. Their attorney notified me that they were going to fire you Friday. " I put the charges into Winston-Salem right quick. So, Friday they had my check wrote out, and they had got the word that I had filed unfair labor charges, so they held the check up for awhile.

That's when Gilman come and talked to me and asked me if I was dissatisfied and why I filed the charges against the company. That it wasn't the company that was against me, that it was the Union. That's when I retired then.

Silveri: Were you head of the local then?

Jervis: I was the Business Agent.

Silveri: You were the Business Agent.

Jervis: Yes. But I was wanting to get out because it was not a healthy place. I wanted to get out and organize, so I organized the Furniture Workers for two years. I had to go up in Bluefield, West Virginia, and all up in there: Kentucky and South Carolina. I got tired of that, so I just went to work for the meatcutters and different unions around here. I've never been out of work a day since I started to work because I've always had contacts.

Silveri: There is so much I still want to talk to you about. The Second World War period, you remained here with the Union with the Enka plant?

Jervis: Oh, yes.

Jervis: (continued) The Enka Plant at that time was called one of these here--where you couldn't get out of it. You couldn't go somewhere else-- what was it? The "defense plant." Enka was a defense plant. A Massey boy that worked with me, we went over to the draft board. We were going to try to get into the Army. They asked us where we worked at last, and I said, "American Enka." They said, "Well, you can't leave American Enka!"

He tried to make them think he had been away from Enka for a long time, but he hadn't. So, they turned us both down.

Silveri: We mentioned the textile strikes around 1929 and into the '30's in places like Gastonia. Was there a big strike at Kannapolis?

Jervis: Yes. Yes.

Silveri: They called the fellow Uncle Joe Cannon?

Jervis: Yes. That belonged to Cannon Mills. They owned the whole--

Silveri: The whole town?

Jervis: Yes. We had a strike down there at the Colonial Stores last year. I had to go down and get them out. It's a real rough place.

Silveri: Do you remember Scottsboro boys?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: The Scottsboro Case?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: The black man in the South has always been caught in the middle.

Silveri: (continued) When these plants opened up, blacks were not allowed to work in them, were they?

Jervis: No. No. Not at all.

Silveri: That went for Enka as well, right?

Jervis: They didn't have a black out there, only the boy that cleaned up the restrooms. That's all that they had out there. Now two of them are foremen out there.

Silveri: The two fellows that started?

Jervis: They started cleaning up restrooms. We used to have fun night. Enka local did. We would have entertainment. Anybody could come in and make music or anything at some school house around over the county. There was a little black kid. There was six in the family. They was good singers from one year old on up. I've got pictures of them here where we would have them out singing. They are the ones that are foremen out there now!

Silveri: What was the Union attitude towards blacks? When it was first organized at Enka?

Jervis: We've never held anything against blacks because the only blacks we had here was blacks that was raised here. We had always been used to them, so we've always tried to treat them--I guess some of my best friends are blacks.

Silveri: Did any of the companies that were being struck by Unions attempt to bring in scabs, among them black?

Jervis: Champion Fiber is the only one. They shipped them in in freight cars. After they got them inside, they would open up the freight car and let them out. They done that. They broke the first strike at Champion Fiber Company.

Silveri: In 1941?

Jervis: Way back. I forget the year.

Silveri: It must have been before. Nineteen forty one is when they were finally organized, I think you said.

Jervis: No. No. Champion wasn't organized in 1941. That's when we were trying to have that meeting at my house, and they told me to quit the Union or move out of Haywood County. Champion has only been organized (this is their third contract) twelve years. They have a Champion in Waynesville that was organized at the same time, and then we've got the rubber plant that was organized about fifteen years ago in Waynesville.

Silveri: Why did take so long to organize Champion?

Jervis: That first strike they had. They fired everybody and brought in strike breakers. They got the jobs, and those old people that tried to organize it lost out. Their children were always afraid to start it. Just had to take two or three generations later to get it done, but they've got a real union there now.

Silveri: What was the situation after the Second World War for the American worker, say, in this area? We are talking about the Central Labor

Silveri: (continued) Council here in Asheville. That existed back in the 1880's, you said?

Jervis: It was 1881 when it was organized.

Silveri: Which is a group of local unions?

Jervis: Unions joining together.

Silveri: When the Enka plant was organized, they became members of the Asheville Central ?

Jervis: The Asheville Central Labor Union was a lot of help to us in organizing.

Silveri: What is the role of the Central Labor Council? What are they supposed to be doing?

Jervis: They cannot interfere in any local affairs, unless they have a request from local, but it's just an affiliation of all the locals working together. We have a meeting once a month. We have it the first Tuesday. We used to have it twice a month, but so many other meetings come up that we have it once a month 'cause we usually have several other meetings along with it.

Silveri: What about sympathy strikes?

Jervis: In sympathy strikes if anyone has a strike, the Central Labor Union write all the local unions to contribute to them financially and help on the picket lines. We have very good relations with the public. We can appeal to the public for help.

Silveri: You continued to work with Enka through the 1940's and the 1950's, and always a member of the Union (an officer of the Union) during those years.

Silveri: (continued) All of that time.

Jervis: An officer of the Central Labor Union at the same time.

Silveri: Most of your activity, then, was to handle grievances?

Jervis: Oh yes. And organize it.

Silveri: You didn't work in the plant anymore then? Is that it?

Jervis: I would go in maybe an hour or two a day, maybe once a week, or something like that. Hold my seniority rights.

Silveri: Was this a common thing for members (officers) of the Union?

Jervis: Sure. Business Agent and President could do that. Now, they are full time. They never go on the job.

Silveri: What was the work of the Business Agent? What ^{were} you supposed to be doing?

Jervis: Go around and handle grievances, discuss grievances, and investigate grievances.

Silveri: Who did you deal with in management?

Jervis: I dealt with Mr. Gilman, the Personnel Director, who is Personnel Director now.

Silveri: I see. He had the power to make decisions on grievances?

Jervis: Yes. If Gilman and myself could ^{the} agree on one, we would appeal it to the Appeals Board, which consisted of the company attorney and the top international officer. That was the final step or go to arbitration.

Silveri: Did Enka have any strikes in the 1940's and 1950's and 1960's, while you were there?

Jervis: We had three, but I don't remember . I could look at the record back here, but we had three strikes. [On one strike, the funeral homes all come out and put us up a tent, up next to the highway. We had about two acres covered up in tents. We fed the people. We fed the whole county nearly. They would come in and eat. We had four or five poultry places that would give us eggs, every egg we could eat and use. Potatoes, people brought it in just like it was the Salvation Army or something! We really had a ball at that time. That just lasted seven days.

Silveri: What were the issues on that strike?

Jervis: Wages.

Silveri: Wages. Was it wages most of the time?

Jervis: Wages and work load is the only two big issues we've ever had. Wages never been too bad. We've always agreed on wages, but they've got that "Bidault ^{point} (B.E.do) system. You know what that is, don't you?

Silveri: No.

Jervis: That's a point system that Hitler used in Germany! It's a "Bidault" system.

Silveri: "Bidault"?

Jervis: "Bidault"; nobody can understand it, not even the Administrators out at Enka.

Silveri: Is this supposed to represent how much a worker works? do.

Jervis: Yes. How much you are supposed to do. It seems like the less you done, the more points you got, but they wanted you speed up. It's a very

Jervis: (continued) unfair system. That's always been the problem out there, production. Last Thursday, some girl called me here about my dinner and said that she wanted to go. I said, "How's your work load at Enka?" She said, "You know what, Solsy? You're not going to believe this. They come around now and tell us to slow down, not to work so fast!" That was hard to believe!

Silveri: You didn't work there anymore when they closed down the Rayon Plant?

Jervis: No. I wasn't working there.

Silveri: That was not too long ago?

Jervis: No. I've been in several disputes since that. Remodeling in the old part is being done by people that was laid off. They are trying to make efforts to organize the carpenters and building trades in there, but I can't get involved in ^{that} because they are putting them back in ~~the~~ Textile Union. They don't feel like they are being exactly treated right working at textile wage and then doing carpenter work and stuff like that.

Silveri: Textile wages are still low throughout the South, aren't they?

Jervis: Yes, but Enka's has got up pretty good now.

Silveri: Well, Enka has always been synthetic fibers, and has never dealt with cotton, right? But as far as the cottonmills are concerned, it is still pretty low?

Jervis: Our problems around here, we have one cottonmill that's unorganized down on the river that pays awfully low wages. They just pay the minimum wage. Then we've got these "sweat shop" garment plants.

Silveri: Around here? Around Buncombe County?

Jervis: Yes. We've got a hundred of them. Garment workers began to break in on them. They've got four now here.

Silveri: They must be small plants then, if you've got a hundred.

Jervis: They are. Just small places, you know. I don't mean a hundred right around here. I mean in Western North Carolina, out in Jackson, and Haywood County. But Wintex and Hadley is all organized now, and they are doing very well.

Silveri: About this plant that they have built recently out in Swamanoa that had changed hands? A textile plant out there not too far, I think, from Warren Wilson?

Jervis: Was that Beacon Manufacturing?

Silveri: No. Somewhere closer into the city.

Jervis: Oh, it's gone out of business.

Silveri: Wamsutta?

Jervis: Yes. Wamsutta.

Silveri: I thought someone else was coming into that?
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Jervis: It is. It's going to be organized when they get in. They agreed on the contract last week. Garment Workers taking that over, the Garment Workers Union. It's going to be a Wintex Mill.

Silveri: O. K. Used to be Lowenstein's (sp) outfit?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: Through the '40's, '50's, and '60's, you've mentioned the Asheville Central Labor Council, it's called.

Jervis: Central Labor Union.

Silveri: How many different unions are there under that umbrella?

Jervis: You can't count postal workers as one union. Every little post office has got their own union. So, I can say we've got one hundred and forty two counting all of them little post offices! Of course, the only big postal union is the one here in Asheville, and it's got a hundred and sixteen members. So, all of them are supposed to affiliate. We've got to work on some international yet. We did have the big Ecusta Plant. We've got sixteen counties.

Silveri: The Asheville Central--

Jervis: Yes. We had twenty-three counties. When I first went in as President of it, I got George Meany to agree since there was no organizer that's ever coming into Western North Carolina much that he give us twenty-three western counties. He did. So, since that, we have carved out Hickory's Central Labor Union. They set up their own down there, and Haywood County's Central Labor Union, which just covers one county. We still have sixteen counties in this Central Labor Union, all the way to Murphy (from McDowell County to Murphy), excluding Haywood County.

Silveri: The next step up from you is the State AF of L-CIO, right?

Jervis: Well, we are altogether a different organization. We handle the welfare of the unions as far in the community, you see, or anything they have. The State only is the legislative branch.

Silveri: They are concerned with the kind of--

Jervis: Getting legislation in Raleigh and in Washington. They can't interfere with our local affairs in any way.

Silveri: But you call on them as a resource organization for help in getting information and so on, don't you?

Jervis: Well, we get all the information out of Washington out of the AFL-CIO that they get, see? Anything that is sent to the State, I get it here. We don't have to call on them for that, but if it's a bill we want passed in Raleigh or one passed in Washington, then we contact Hobby, and he contacts us to call our Congressmen and Senators. The State is the legislative body, and they don't interfere with us in any way with our local problems.

Silveri: When did you first become an official of the Central Labor Council?

Jervis: In 1930.

Silveri: Nineteen thirty?

Jervis: Right at the time I organized Enka.

Silveri: Wait a minute now! That's why I want to go back again. In 1930, after you came back from the Marion strike down there--

Jervis: Wait a minute! Nineteen thirty nine is what I'm trying to think.

Silveri: In 1939 you became an official of the Central Labor Council?

Jervis: No, it would be 1940. I got my dates mixed up.

Silveri: What did you become?

Jervis: Well, I was a delegate, and I was a trustee. In 1941, I went in

Jervis: (continued) as Secretary-Treasurer.

Silveri: Were you elected or appointed?

Jervis: Elected.

Silveri: How were the elections held? All union members?

Jervis: All locals were entitled to the number of delegates that they
Union,
pay for capital tax on, so the Enka, just as soon as they were trying
to organize, they affiliated with the Central Union. I was Secretary-
Treasurer for four years and have been President ever since.

Silveri: President ever since 1946?

Jervis: Yes. They had an awful nice guy. He was a Republican, and
these people around here said--he was only in one year--"We'll never
get nowhere as long as we've got that damned Republican in there!"

I said, "I won't run against Liston Sams. I'm just not going
to do it!" They said, "If you don't, somebody else will! We are
going to put him out!" Liston was my very best friend, and I went to
Liston and I talked to him. That liked to have killed him, so I just
had a few minutes to do it. They went along with the election, and
they put me in, but we still remained friends. I told him why. I
said, "They said they wanted a Democrat in there. Somebody that
could deal with the sheriff's department and everybody."

Silveri: This was 1946 that you became President?

Jervis: 1946

Silveri: 1946, and you've been President ever since?

Jervis: I was out two years while I was working for United Furniture Workers, because I was out of town all the time. Ray Stepp, the Vice-President, served those two years.

Silveri: How often are you re-elected?

Jervis: Every year.

Silveri: That has been a full time job?

Jervis: That's just an honorary job, no pay or nothing there.

Silveri: People call you on the telephone all the time! You are looked upon as the Leader of Labor in that area?

Jervis: That's what they say! If anything comes up they always--if it had been a paying job, I guess I would have been beat a long time ago. Nobody wanted it!

Silveri: What about the endorsement of political candidates? Does the Council do that?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: O. K. After interviewing them or what?

Jervis: After interviewing them, yes. We interviewed all the candidates for Congress two weeks ago.

Silveri: Have they come up with an endorsement yet?

Jervis: Oh, yes.

Silveri: Who?

Jervis: Mike Bogg.

Silveri: Oh, I see. He's the only one you're endorsing!

Jervis: He's the only that said he would try to appeal the Taft- Hartley law, the only one who said he would support the Agency Shop.

Silveri: He's a young fellow. He's the youngest in the bunch running.

Jervis: He looks the youngest, but he's not as young as he looks. He's fifty-eight.

Silveri: How was Congressman Taylor for labor?

Jervis: Congressman Taylor wasn't no good. I always got along with him, dealt with him. If I would go to Washington, he would turn the thing over to me here, and anything I wanted up there, I would get. Actually voting for the Right to Work Law and all, he never was for us, but we could call on him for help in other--you know the Congress can help you in a lot of different ways. I've always found him that way.

Silveri: Going back before him, who was the one in the office before Taylor?

Jervis: They were all just as rotten as they could be as far as labor was concerned: Shuford and Hall and that crowd. Now, Monroe Redden, back in the 1930's, we helped put Monroe Redden in. He beat Zeb Weaver. Zeb Weaver was anti-union, but Monroe Redden only served two terms. Then he retired and quit. Monroe Redden was fairly good.

Silveri: Tell me how many votes difference does the endorsement of the Council mean in an election, let's say for Congress?

Jervis: They could mean a whole lot. That's what I went upstairs and talked to Wilbur about a while ago. We've got seventy thousand factory workers under the jurisdiction of our Central Labor Union. That's Union and (un-

Jervis: (continued) union. So, I was making arrangements for Wilbur to give me the money to take a bunch of people I have lined up (about thirty people) to handbill all these plants, not mention Union. Mention the working man and the senior citizens. See, I set up five clubs for senior citizens in Western North Carolina. Just come out and say, "It's a Union endorsement, a Union vote." It should be around fifteen or twenty thousand, but half of them are Republican or a third of them. It ~~don~~'t mean that.

Silveri: So, you're talking about the working man, the consumer, and for the retired person?

Jervis: Yes. When go out and give out leaflets or anything, I never say for a candidate, Union. He's endorsing the Union. He's for the working man.

Silveri: You're talking about leafletting for Vaughan, right?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: The Union is for Vaughan. How about governors of North Carolina? Have any of them been sympathetic to the laboring man?

Jervis: Yes. Kerr Scott was the best Union governor we've ever had. Dan Moore was anti-union as he could be. Kerr Scott was good; Bob has been fairly good, not too good. Jim Hunt has promised a whole lot; I don't know whether Jim is going to.

Silveri: Has the Council endorsed Jim?

Jervis: No, they've not endorsed Jim, but I think they eventually will.

Silveri: He's the best there is on the horizon.

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: Wilbur Hobby's not running this year?

Jervis: No. That's the worst mistake Wilbur Hobby ever made when he run!

Silveri: Back in 1972?

Jervis: Yes. Because at least one-third of our members are Republicans, and you've got to work easy. When Wilbur come out and run on the Democratic ticket, it hurt Wilbur. We was against him running. He made up his own mind. It wasn't the members that asked him to run.

Silveri: There was a black candidate for governor that was almost as good. He . . . [inaudible]

Jervis: He had the promise of the blacks to support him when he run. Then when Dr. Hawkins from Charlotte come out, a black, why the blacks went to him. Wilbur would have got it, if he had gotten the votes he was promised when he announced. He would have got a hundred thousand instead of fifty thousand. But the blacks all promised to support him and then when Dr. Hawkins came out he got the black vote.

Silveri: Well, that just shows that the Union vote and the black vote is not enough to elect a governor in this state.

Jervis: No. Because you can't keep them together. You can figure the Union vote at a hundred thousand, and you can figure about thirty thousand of them are Republicans. A lot of them are not registering, a lot of them say, "Don't tell me how to vote or what church to belong to."

We don't tell nobody how to vote. We tell them what the issues are, and who stands for certain issues.

Silveri: How about the Secretaries of Labor in the State of North Carolina?

Jervis: The Commissioner of Labor?

Silveri: The Commissioner of Labor. How important is he in this state?

Jervis: He should be very important. He's supposed to represent the working man, but we have never had a Commissioner of Labor who would represent the working people. They come around and give these here safety prizes, and all like that, but they never invite a bunch of working people or union representatives to these meetings. They give them to the companies. It's the working people that causes the safety programs to work out.

Silveri: Has there ever been a union official or union member who has been a Commissioner of Labor?

Jervis: Frank Crane was.

Silveri: Back when?

Jervis: Frank retired just before the Republicans took over. Frank was in there about twenty eight or thirty years. Frank was a member of the United Textile Workers, but he didn't stay long on the Union side.

Silveri: What was his name?

Jervis: Frank Crane. C-r-a-n-e.

Silveri: The last of '72 when I was here, I heard a fellow who was running for that office. Brooks?

Jervis: John Brooks. He's running this year.

Silveri: Has he been endorsed?

Jervis: Yes. He's already been endorsed.

Silveri: What are his chances?

Jervis: He's going to be good up here, I think. I don't know about the Eastern part of the State. He's one I'm going to handbill for, too.

Silveri: He was at one time associated with Terry Sanford, I think.

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: What kind of Governor was Terry Sanford?

Jervis: Terry Sanford, I'd say, was one of our best.

Silveri: But it was under Terry Sanford's administration that the tax on food was imposed?

Jervis: Yes. That was the only thing that hurt Terry Sanford. They had to have money from somewhere. I didn't hold it against Terry. I was on Terry Sanford's Human Relations Council. Everybody fought Terry on that, but that was just three cents. The county here has raised it, and they've got us a food tax higher than that. We're trying to get it off, but I doubt whether we ever do or not.

Silveri: I heard someone say that the reason why Terry Sanford went for that tax was that the money was going to upgrade education. Is that true?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: Is there any chance of getting that tax on food repealed?

Jervis: Well, we've tried it every year, but these Congressmen we've talked to, they just couldn't see taking the tax off of food, except Vaughn and Bo Thomas. Bo Thomas is against tax on food. Of course, he's a food man. He sells all kinds of vegetables, fruits and things.

Silveri: Do you have any idea what percentage of the State income comes from that tax on food? It's quite a bit, isn't it?

Jervis: Oh, yes. They announce it once a month in the paper.

Silveri: If they're going to repeal, they've got to find some other way to raise that money, but it's one of the worst taxes around.

Jervis: A lot of people say, "put it on tobacco or whiskey," but these tobacco farmers, which is the largest industry in the State, don't want it on tobacco.

Silveri: It's very cheap to buy a pack of cigarettes down here compared to back home in Massachusetts, where I live. You don't have anything to do with agriculture, though?

Jervis: No.

Silveri: What about some of the national leaders? Since you've been involved in the labor movement here in Asheville, some of the national leaders have come through here. You must have met just about all of them, all the candidates running for President.

Jervis: Oh, yes. I was very close with all of the Kennedys and Mrs. Roosevelt.

Silveri: Did you ever meet Franklin Roosevelt?

Jervis: Oh, yes. I met Franklin.

Silveri: Oh? When he came through here?

Jervis: Yes, and I've been up in Washington. I had dinner two or three times with Eleanor, and several times with John and Robert Kennedy.

Hubert Humphrey was an investigator for the McClellan Committee. I stayed with Hubert two full weeks, day and night, over in Morristown, Tennessee. That's the reason I think so much of Hubert Humphrey. I've actually been with him. About a year ago he was down in Raleigh

at the State office. I've got the picture here somewhere. I was on the inside, and he was talking to some folks, and I flashed that picture through the glass, of Hubert. It took me in there taking the picture (reflect). I've got the picture of me taking the picture of Hubert Humphrey on the other side of the glass. Mine is just as plain as his, and his is on the outside.

Silveri: Let's go back to Eleanor. You said you had dinner with her a number of times. She was a good friend of labor, wasn't she?

Jervis: Oh, yes. She was the best friend labor ever had. She was a friend to anybody who was down and out, poor people.

Silveri: When was the first time you met Eleanor? Do you remember?

Jervis: I couldn't give you the date. I've met her several times.

END Side II, Tape I

. . . She said, "we can't afford to let a Kennedy get in there." She wasn't for the Kennedys at all.

Silveri: You didn't know her while her husband was president?

Jervis: Oh, yes.

Silveri: Oh, you did?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: Did you ever go to the White House when Roosevelt was president?

Jervis: I was there one time. . . No. I was there when Kennedy was president, but I never was there when Roosevelt was.

Silveri: In the way Labor's Magna Charta was passed, when the Wagner Act came through, but Roosevelt wasn't terribly enthusiastic about labor unions, was he?

Jervis: No. He certainly wasn't.

Silveri: But Eleanor was?

Jervis: Yes. There's a story about Hitler: When those Jews got away from Germany coming over here. There was a shipload of them, and Roosevelt said he didn't want them, to send them back and let Hitler have them. Eleanor, some way, worked out to where they sent boats out. These people jumped off of this ship into those boats and was saved here. Roosevelt was sending them back to Hitler. I've got a story on that here somewhere. I don't remember just where it is.

Silveri: How about Frances Perkins?

Jervis: She was very good.

Silveri: Did she ever come through Asheville?

Jervis: Not that I know of.

Silveri: They tell a story (You've probably heard it) of her having a difficult time throughout the South in talking. On one occasion the only place she could speak to townspeople was on the steps of the Post Office. The local sheriff would have run her off if she was anywhere else.

Jervis: She did have a rough time in the South.

Silveri: Did you ever meet Harry Truman?

Jervis: Oh, yes. I met Harry a time or two.

Silveri: Was he sympathetic to labor?

Jervis: Yes, he was.

Silveri: He went out on a limb a couple of times for labor.

Jervis: Oh, he did, with the railroad.

Silveri: Vetoing the Taft-Hartley Law.

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: How about Eisenhower?

Jervis: Well, Eisenhower wasn't too bad. We got along with him pretty well. We would have liked a lot of things being done that we didn't get done, but he wasn't too bad.

Silveri: Then Jack Kennedy?

Jervis: Jack was all right until Nixon got in. Then we were going down hill. That was the worst of it.

Silveri: Before that, Lyndon Johnson was pretty sympathetic to Labor.

Jervis: Yes, but Lyndon Johnson could have helped us more. He could have repealed that Taft-Hartley, you know, but he left the country the day it was supposed to come up. He didn't do what he was expected to do.

Silveri: What about the war?

Jervis: I have a letter here from Lyndon Johnson to Jack Kennedy telling Jack not to be too closely associated with Labor, and it's signed by Lyndon Johnson.

Silveri: Is it the original?

Jervis: It looks like it is original. It could be a copy, but it looks like the original.

Silveri: Advising him on how -- this must have been while he was running for president.

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: Did you ever meet Richard Nixon?

Jervis: No. I was at the convention where he came down to Miami. I was there. I was pretty close when he came down shaking hands with everybody, and George Meany took a . . .

Silveri: Was that the convention when Meany really gave it to him?

Jervis: Yes. I was there and I was pretty close to the front and Nixon asked Meany and his executive board to leave the platform and get down and Meany told him: "This is our convention, not yours, President." So as soon as Nixon spoke a few words he started down in the audience, and Meany said, "The Convention now will be called to order. All members not delegates please be removed from the halls."

Silveri: Have you been a delegate to the National AFL-CIO Convention every year?

Jervis: I have every year, and I've attended all except one they had in California, a couple. You see, Central Labor Union has two delegates to a national convention. You see, we work directly under George Meany's orders.

Silveri: Oh, I see.

Jervis: We get all of our orders from George Meany at the Central Labor Union, and when I endorsed McGovern, Wilbur and me both endorsed McGovern. Wilbur soon backed down and withdrew his endorsement, but I never did. I got letter after letter from Meany, "You've got to go along. You're going to have to withdraw that like you did in Colorado." But I never did. I would answer his letters/^{which} caused a little delay there, but I never did withdraw the endorsement of Asheville Central Labor Union.

Silveri: Does he still remember that? Was he mad at you for that?

Jervis: No. You never get to speak to George Meany. George Meany is higher powered than the President when it comes to meeting him. He's got an old lady there that's about -- she's been in that office about sixty or seventy years -- she's 'way up in the eighties -- she has spent her life in that office, even under Gompers, and anything she don't think that George Meany is interested in George Meany never knows about.

Silveri: What do you think of George Meany as a labor leader? Do you think it is time for him to retire?

Jervis: It's been time for him to retire a long time. He's never walked a picket line in his life. He don't know anything about strikes. George Meany never was on a picket line, and before you know the problems of the working people you've got to get out there and be with them on the picket line.

Silveri: Why did you want George McGovern in 1972?

Jervis: Because I thought he'd be the best man for the working people.

Silveri: Were you concerned also about the Viet Nam war?

Jervis: Yes. I went to Washington with a group of people for peace from here--went up there--

Silveri: Of course, Meany's stand on foreign policy has been very conservative throughout.

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: There has been a significant percentage, I think, of labor leaders and members of the union who don't agree with him.

Silveri: (Cont'd.) Yet/ ^{he} didn't want to get the two issues involved, did he?

Jervis: No.

Silveri: The future and the betterment of the American working man has nothing to do with our foreign policy.

Jervis: I mean, The only one he is really interested in is Israel-~~that~~ he comes out to support, and the majority of the working people don't approve of Meany, but I reckon he's got such a hold up there with the Internationals; all of his board is made up of International presidents.

Silveri: Are they the ones that elect the president?

Jervis: Yes. The people that go as delegates elect him, but they've got such a strong/^{hold} on them that they always put Meany back in, will, as long as he lives, I guess.

Silveri: Did you know John L. Lewis?

Jervis: I knew John Lewis well. I have met John Lewis several times.

Silveri: I wanted to ask you about John L. Lewis.

(LONG, BLANK SECTION ON TAPE)

Jervis: I get four copies of that every week on what the AFL-CIO policies is on everything. I send two of them down to Atlanta.

Silveri: I want to ask you again about John L. Lewis. You mentioned you got to meet him when you were organizing furniture workers up in West Virginia.

Jervis: No. I had met him before that. I learned more about him when I'd be in Kentucky and West Virginia while I was working the furniture workers. I'd talk to those old coal miners, and you couldn't say anything against John L. Lewis to those real old coal miners.

Silveri: From the early years, when you come up into the fifties and later, what John L. Lewis did offended a lot of coal miners. A lot of them felt that John L. Lewis had sold them out when he agreed to go to automation, and a lot of other things. They felt that John L. Lewis was in cahoots with the coal operators, and, of course, Tony Boyle followed.

Jervis: He was, in a way. John L. Lewis was here in Asheville at one time and I met him here. What John Lewis did: whenever they'd get so much of this old dust and stuff out on the mines, that's when he'd call a strike. The operators could sell that stuff when they couldn't sell it otherwise. But, I still think the majority of the coal miners were behind Lewis.

Silveri: You said you went up there to organize?

Jervis: Furniture workers.

Silveri: But North Carolina was the leading state in making furniture, right?

Jervis: Yes, but we had the Hardwood Corporation here that had a plant here that was organized. They had one up in Sutton, West Virginia, that was not organized. So I went up there and organized the plant and didn't know who the manager was. Had no problem organizing, so I went in to meet the man to start on the contract, and it was the same man that I dealt with here for years, and I didn't know who I was meeting. Walked in and there was Mr. Anderson, with the Hardwood Corporation. He owned the plant in Sutton, West Virginia. I done a lot in Bluefield, West Virginia. Mostly what I done was work on runaway plants from the North down here. I went up to, I forget the place, now.

Silveri: This activity you've done since 1966, you're talking about organizing the furniture, since your retirement from Enka, you've done this.

Jervis: Yes. I worked for several of the Internationals just on campaigns, except I did / ^{work} full time for the United Furniture Workers. I worked on Lazy Boy Chair Company in South Carolina, which was eventually organized by them. Very rough company to deal with, and they would not hire any black women at Lazy Boy, and I got to checking in on it and found out the Chamber of Commerce asked Lazy Boy not to hire any black women because they was short of maids in Florence, S.C. They paid a maid two or three dollars a day where they could make ten or fifteen in the plant. And I filed under the Fair Labor charge and finally got them where they put the black women in there to work and wherever you've got the majority of blacks you're going to win the union. It don't matter where it's at. We're happy to start on a plant that's got the majority of blacks.

Silveri: They're strong union people.

Jervis: I'll uphold a bunch of blacks anytime when it comes to organizing.

Silveri: What year was that, that you went down to Florence, S.C.?

Jervis: That was during the two years I was with the United Furniture Workers. Sixty-six to '67, '68, along in there.

Silveri: What would you do when you went in to organize? What was the process? Did you go in to talk with the management right away?

Jervis: No, no. You'd go out and get the cards, first, the application cards signed.

Silveri: How do you know who to contact. Has somebody already called you in?

Jervis: Well, you usually get a contact to make and then find out who works there and go to their homes. I was in Florence over in a black community and/going from house to house at night. I was being followed part of the time by KKK members and by the Law and everybody. I was out in Warsaw, North Carolina. I was working on a pillow company down there: Reeves Brothers, and the Law come and got me out of the house. They said: "We're giving you just so long to get out of this county and don't show back up." So I went up to the other county where Clinton is and called back down there and wanted to talk to the Sheriff, and I got to talk to the high sheriff and he said, "Well, I was having my deputies to leave you alone." Dan Moore was Governor. Every time I got on the highway I'd be stopped every mile by a Highway Patrol. The same Patrol followed me and stopped me again, especially in front of a group of people, coming out of the plants. Search my car from one end to the other, and that's the worst thing in the world to scare people out from organizing. And it's that way in the Eastern part of the State. Anywhere you go, and if you're dealing with blacks, you can expect trouble.

Silveri: You're talking about in the last ten years.
recently.

Jervis: Oh, yes. I'm talking about / It's happening down there. You see, I'm working with the Meatcutters now, and I go down in there, there around Clinton.

Jervis: (Cont'd.) That's pretty strong country for Ku Klux, and they'll stop you almost any time to see what you're doing down there. That's one problem we never have up here and we're not used to it.

Silveri: That's another way in which the mountains are different from the rest of the South?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: Is it because the whites in the mountains are more enlightened, or is it because there are just less blacks up here?

Jervis: It may be because there's less blacks.

Silveri: They don't feel threatened by them?

Jervis: No. And the blacks treats the whites right up here and the whites treats the blacks right. There's not all that kind of discrimination. We have the senior citizens over here that's mostly blacks, but there are, I guess, about a third whites. I go over there and set and eat with them, and all. I had some kind of attack they thought was a heart attack, but it wasn't, it was a spinal; something, attack. I was in the hospital and the blacks here in Asheville called three prayer meetings for me while I was in the hospital. Nothing but blacks. I get along with them fine. When they heard about this dinner I was going to have, the first thing they wanted, a bunch of blacks wanted to go. I had nothing to do with the dinner. Of course, they's/ ^{selling the} tickets for twenty-five dollars, but some of them's already bought tickets and going. I saw one check the other day for fifty dollars from one black and his wife.

Silveri: When is this dinner going to be held?

Jervis: The 10th of July.

Silveri: I'd like to get back to talking again about some of the people in the Labor movement in the South. If I asked you to name one person who did more for labor in the South than anyone else in the South, would any particular person come to mind?

Jervis: I'd have to say Uncle Jim Barrett, who was Southern Director for the American Federation of Labor.

Silveri: Jim Barrett.

Jervis: Barrett, and Mr. Worley, the picture over there on the wall, I'd say was two of the individuals that done more.

Silveri: Where was Mr. Barrett from?

Jervis: He is a native of Madison County.

Silveri: Is he still around?

Jervis: No, he's been passed away quite a while. His first job was building the Redmon Dam below Marshall in Madison County, he organized those people in that construction. He was a printer. He struck -- was printing the Citizen-Times when they called a strike and the Citizen-Times fired all of them. He was an old printer.

Silveri: We mentioned Wilbur Hobby before. How long has Wilbur Hobby been head of the State AFL-CIO?

Jervis: Twelve years, I believe.

Silveri: What is his background? What was he?

Jervis: Tobacco worker.

Silveri: From the flatlands?

Jervis: I had always supported Wilbur Hobby years ago. The name

Jervis: (Cont'd.) Hobby was enough to beat him down in that part of the country. It's a big generation of people down there. So every time Wilbur would come up for election I'd take all the locals from the Western part of the state down there and support him. I was running for President against him. Him and Millard Barbee (?) and myself. So I withdrew in favor of Wilbur the year he was elected. But all of our locals up here was affiliated, used to: one person, one vote; but now one person can vote the entire vote for the local union. So I usually load up a ^{crowd} / and take down.

Silveri: If you had been elected president, or is it Chairman, of the state, could/^{you}still have remained President of the Labor Council here?

Jervis: No, I wouldn't. You see, I was Secretary-Treasurer of the State for four years, I believe it was, and just had been re-elected for another term and the merger come along, so the agreement was that the President be in the AFL and the Secretary-Treasurer be in the CIO. So I stepped down for Bill Holder to be Secretary-Treasurer. I might have still been in there if I'd just--

Silveri: Did you know Walter Reuther?

Jervis: Oh, yes. Knew him.

Silveri: He was a different kind of labor leader.

Jervis: Yes, but I never was around him much. I've met him. Shook hands with him, but not too much, just in conventions.

Silveri: Leonard Woodcock?

Jervis: Yes, I don't know too much about Leonard, but, you see Walter Reuther and I was at the national convention when him and Meany-- It's a merger, you know. He was Vice President with George Meany.

Jervis (Cont'd): I've got a lot of pictures here you might be interested in.

Silveri: Yes. I'd like to look at them later on. I just -- you know, within the context of labor in the South, the South has been traditionally hostile to labor in the past for so many reasons.

Jervis: Those three books there will explain all that. All of them's on the South.

Silveri: You, yourself, are born and bred up here in the mountains, and the mountain people have been quite a source of labor for the mills that have been first in the Piedmont, and then some of them have been moving up here in the mountains in Eastern Tennessee and Western North Carolina. What is your attitude about industrialization, how it should take place? Do you think that all of the changes that have taken place have been good for this part of the state, up here in the mountains?

Jervis: I think so. We've got this Western Carolina Industries that fights labor all of the time. That's Harry Clarke that tries to keep wages down, and we have had it before the NLRB and the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. We still have him there, the last ten years. That organization is pretty strong, you know. He collects dues for each worker that the people has in the plant, union or non-union, to keep unions out.

Silveri: Called Western North Carolina Industries?

Jervis: Western Carolina Industries, and they have a big building right this side of the Gerber plant out here, and it don't matter

where we're in a campaign at, what part of North Carolina, he'll have a letter passed out at those plants, no matter where they're being organized. He puts out one letter about-- confidential letter to all the companies, who's organized, who's not, and what union they're in, and I have several of his confidential copies, but they're all wrong. He don't know what union, and he gets mixed up with them. Then they've got this religious paper out of Mississippi. I forget. They send that in here and handbill with -- it's awful anti-union.

Silveri: What company is he head of, Clarke, Harry Clarke?

Jervis: He's got his own company.

Silveri: What is that?

Jervis: Western Carolina Industries.

Silveri: Oh, that's his own company.

Jervis: It's a union-bursting company, that's what it is. He's President, Secretary-Treasurer, and everything, of it.

Silveri: Oh, it's not a manufacturing establishment of any kind.

Jervis: No, no. And he runs for public office every--but he's never been elected. He run for County Commissioner this time.

Silveri: Oh, yes.

Jervis: But we always defeat him.

Silveri: Is he a local boy, born up here?

Jervis: Yes. All we have to do is say, "Don't vote for Harry Clarke," and everybody knows Harry Clarke.

Silveri: I wanted to ask you another question. . . well, I probably can come back another time, when I do think of something.

Jervis: Yes. Any time.

Silveri: Because I find it very interesting and particularly, I

Silveri(Cont'd.): suppose that a lot of people don't realize the extent of labor organization here in Asheville, Buncombe County and Western North Carolina, probably more than any part of the state.

Jervis: Oh, we're the best organized here of any part of the state. And when they want something really done they always call on us to do it because we've actually got three Central Labor Unions here counting now, /Hickory, Haywood County and Asheville, that used to all be in one. We work very close together, so any time that we can find a county that's got six local unions in it, Meany's office will not give them a charter unless he gets a letter from us saying it's Okay, because he give us the twenty-three counties and he will not set up a Central Labor Union. We've got some people over in Brevard that's been a-fighting like everything for two or three years, trying to get a Central Labor Union over there, and I tell them when they all affiliate and come in here and work with us a year or two, then we'll give them a release and let them have one, but -- one of them's a teacher's union and the other's paper workers.

Silveri: Teacher's unions, how are they?

Jervis: We have three locals affiliated with Central Labor Union here now, hoping to have Western Carolina before long.

Silveri: Are the Asheville City Schools unionized?

Jervis: No. One local is mostly headed up at Reynolds High School; one in Brevard and the Western - Cullowhee.

Silveri: How about college professors? Are they organized?

Jervis: Well, some of them are. Most of them at Cullowhee -- Professor Hamill, do you know him?

Silveri: No.

Jervis: He's an arbitrator and Professor of Economics at Western Carolina. He is a delegate to the Central Labor Union.

Silveri: I wanted to ask you about this: Since the labor union is involved in litigation so much, do you have a particular law firm or an attorney that handles labor cases?

Jervis: No. We handle our own better than any lawyer we got. They aint no labor lawyers in this part of the state.

Silveri: You mean, you go into court yourself and argue cases?

Jervis: Well, we never go to court. It's either arbitration before the National Labor Relations Board. Very few cases ever gets in court, and if we go to the Labor Board we represent our people and the Labor Board furnishes the attorney. The U. S. Department of Labor is the same way. In arbitration, we handle our own arbitration.

Silveri: You don't have any outside arbitrator coming in?

Jervis: Oh, yes.

Silveri: You do.

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: Is this from the Department of Labor?

Jervis: The Department of Labor, the state conciliation service appoints some.

Silveri: Whenever you call in an arbitrator, then his decision is the final decision?

Jervis: Yes.

Silveri: You have to accept it.

Jervis: You don't have to -- you can go to court on it if you think he's not right. We went to court on lots of them.

Silveri: Then, when you do go to court, who do you have representing your case? What attorney?

Jervis: Well, the International usually furnishes the attorney on that. But if it's a case that concerns more than one local union like it affects the International, International furnishes the attorney.

Silveri: When you say, International, George Meany is President of AFL-CIO.

Jervis: Yes, but there's 240 International unions. Let me give you a directory.

(End of tape)