

*This is Randy Brooks and I'm interviewing Howard Jorgenson.
Today's date is February 21, 1992.*

I was born in Valley City, North Dakota on July 26, 1939. I lived in that area until I was approximately six years old. At that time my dad and family moved to Everett, Washington where I went to the Mukilteo School District until I was a sophomore in High School at which time I went to Everett High School and graduated in 1957. I then spent one year at Washington State University and couldn't find summer work. Therefore, I joined the Air Force and spent four years in the Air Force. I spent one of those years in San Antonio, Texas and the other three years at Deep Creek Air Force Station outside Spokane. When I got out of the service on July 1st, 1962, there wasn't much work available at that time. We were in kind of recession in this state. I was going to draw Unemployment after my annual leave time from the service had run out. I had to apply for at least three jobs to qualify for Unemployment. One of those applications was at Eastern State Hospital. Believing that I was safe and was going to be able to sit around for a while, much to my chagrin I got called and went to work there. This was on November 7th of 1962. My supervisor at that time said that if I could last a couple of years I'd be hooked. I didn't believe him, I didn't expect to stay there. I was working on a high risk, high security ward and that started in November of 1962. On July 1st, 1963, I had an opportunity to move to the Maintenance Department and have been

there every since. I will finish my 30th year there on November 7th, 1992.

I started getting active in the local union in the early '60's. Mainly because I came from a very strong Union family. My dad worked for Weyerhaeuser and it seemed like we were on strike every other year. It started slowly when I went to meetings, I first became a Trustee and then later ran for Local President. I got elected there as Local President. I still remember my first Policy Group that I attended at a hotel in the Sea-Tac (Seattle Airport) area. It was the year that Elsie Schrader first got elected to the Board. She was the first woman out of Institutions to hold a Board Position. I spent a period of time at the Local President level. In Spokane in 1970 I ran for Council Vice President. I was not elected. Two years later in June 1972, I decided to take a shot at Council President. I made the run-off election and got elected. I have been re-elected as Council President every since. I will be finishing up my 20th year as of June, 1992. Approximately eleven years ago I was appointed by Jerry Wurf, International AFSCME President, to the Judicial Panel of our International Union and have held that position since then.

I think it has been a very fun time for me. It has been very rewarding. I enjoy it very much. I've gotten to see a lot of the world as well as large portions of the United States. I have met a lot of good people. Some bad people, too, but for the most part good people. On the Local level people that I have dealt

with for the most part have been sincere. I have had a good relationship with management from the standpoint that we both understand that we have a role to play. I think the one thing that has allowed me to continue very effectively in this job is in the support that I got from my fellow workers. It can get to be very frustrating when I'm gone all the time and they have to cover for me, but I've never heard of one word of complaint from them for doing that. I've always worked for managers that have allowed me the flexibility to take the time off to do Union business. They allowed me to do this without any jeopardy to myself.

Who convinced you to join the Union?

It was one of the Local Union Officers that happened to work on the same ward that I worked on. At that time Union membership was strictly voluntary. I was one of those that came from a Union background so it wouldn't have mattered who asked me, I would have signed.

What changes have you seen in the Union since you joined?

We've gotten a lot bigger and a lot more complex. Right now the budget that we work with handles more money in one month than we handled in the entire year when I first started. In terms of members we have about double what we had when I was first

elected. The agencies have become much more sophisticated and I would say probably a little more meaner. Mean spirited. My own opinion is that I don't believe that state employees have had a good Governor to work with since Dan Evans left. I aim that criticism at Democrat and Republican alike. Dan Evans had more credibility than any of the people that I deal with now. Evan's staff, his assistants, had more credibility and support from the Governor than Governor Gardner's staff. I don't know if I'll ever see that category of people all together again.

Has it become politically expedient to not appear to support state employees?

Well, I don't know if it's expedient, but it is more of a philosophy and I don't know whether it is addressed to the Union or just a posture. I think some of the people that are in, some of the Agency Directors now do not have the best concerns of their employees at hand. They are more interested in a product being produced. They are more interested in their own political ambitions or desires. They are more reflective of their bosses's political strategy. There is a lack of trust, it's not there anymore.

Back when you started, what was it like in terms of conditions for workers?

You know, frankly, I think that conditions for employees at the time I started were not the best. But I think by 1969 that it was a good time for state employees. They had a Governor who cared, salaries were at the highest. In fact, it was the only time while I've been in state government that we received prevailing wages and I think it was a good time for state employees. Then I think it stayed there at a fairly good level until the early 1980's. Since then I think things have gone downhill. While now we may have sophisticated equipment, I don't see the morale being anywhere near the high point it achieved in 1969. In the early '70's I enjoyed going to work. We talk a lot about it now that a lot of people don't enjoy going to work. People have to go to work for a variety of reasons, but I believe the sense of being a team isn't there anymore.

During your time as President what were the key decisions that you can remember?

I think there were two key decisions that happened that really affected the growth and the operation of the Organization. One was the Union Shop Bill that went through that allowed us to go after Union Shop elections. That really built a solid base for the Union. It allowed for everyone to pay a fair share for the benefits that a few were paying for previously. The other key decision I think we made was when the Council delegates passed the dues structure so that you paid on a fair share. The more

you make, the more you pay. What the dues structure did for the Union was it gave us stability. We didn't have to tear our membership up by going back for per-capita increases every year. I think it really set the tone for the years to come on the viability to plan and develop the programs and service to our members that we would never have had without consistent dues. I think those are the two key things that really built this Union.

Were you involved in the strike decisions in the mid-'70's?

Yes, what a time. We went through two strike votes. On the first strike vote we came within 66 votes or something like that of going on strike. I think that vote sent a clear message to the Legislature. I think it was at a time when we could have had a successful strike. The second strike vote was not as close. I don't think the second strike would have succeeded, anyway. Since then I don't think we have been motivated enough to have a successful strike. I guess I feel that way because of my history with my Dad. When he'd go out on strike a couple of things would have to happen. One was that you'd have to have a way of getting back. In other words, you've got to win that strike in the first three to four days. Or if you don't win, you still have to have a way back. You have to be able to go out, hurt somebody and get back. By that, I mean you have to put a crimp in the Management's side so that they have a sense of wanting to come to the table to negotiate a settlement with you. I just don't

believe since the PATCO strike in 1981 that there has been an environment out there for a strike. There are just too many people out of work that are willing to cross a picket line to come on the site and take your job. I have really not heard the word strike among state employees for a while. I think there is one issue that would motivate a strike of state employees and that is if they were to decimate the medical insurance package. I believe that issue would drive state employees to a strike. I don't believe we would see a strike for salaries.

Did you have a role in the Dues Changes that helped to stabilize the Union?

Well I like to think I did. We had decided that we needed to do something. Local 443 had that type of dues structure. That change had been lead by Mike Watson. We developed what we thought we needed and then what percentage would get us there. Politically it was felt the increase would not pass unless there was a lid. Then it was almost a debate where that lid was going to be at. So we came up with the idea of the revolving lid. In other words it would go up on the same percentage that salaries went up. We went out and talked to our Locals to set it up so we had at least a good shot at getting it passed. We tried at the Convention on Saturday morning and we lost it on a roll call vote. There were several of us that thought that we still had a shot at it, we had certain key players that we needed to turn

around. George Starkovich and myself, and Mike Watson worked to divide up that group and went after them and said; "Look, what will it take to get this passed?" Some we were able to turn around just by continually talking to them. One of the larger Locals felt that if there was a reserve rather than all that money going to the Council Pot that the locals ought to be entitled to part of it. So an agreement was made that if there was a reserve left over that the reserve would be split 50/50 between the Council and the Locals, divided up on a prorated basis according to membership. We moved for reconsideration, won that and then had another roll call vote that we ended up winning. It was absolutely interesting to me to hear the debate that went on, the various players and their comments. We had one leader who had been for years telling us that the tax system was unfair and that we should be taxed on what you earned. Yet when it came to Union dues he felt that everybody ought to pay the same amount regardless of whether you made \$3,000.00 a month or \$800.00. You had other high-paid people that were saying I support you 100%, I just wish you'd go further and not have a lid because I am one of those making \$3,000.00 per month and I feel that I should pay \$33.00. So we had the whole spectrum represented. In the end I could sense that there was a relief once they were committed. Mainly this was because the Locals were catching a lot of heat from the Council passing a per-capita tax or the International passing a per-capita tax. When this happened the Locals would have to go back and hold a meeting and

raise the dues. And they would catch the heat, regardless of whether it was the Council or the International that had called for the increase. The other thing that was set up that was I think one of the key points that people did like about it was the dues only go up if there is a salary increase. It goes up at that time so that we very seldom ever get a complaint about the dues going up. It just doesn't happen anymore. I think that was really a turning point in this Union's ability to meet the demands as they come in.

Do you remember Norm Schut?

Yes, I remember Norm. When I was elected, Norm was the Executive Director. Then we hired George Masten and then we hired Gary Moore. Each of them had a separate personality. I think that one of the other things that has served this Union well is our structure and the ability of Norm, George, Gary and myself to work together. A lot of people involved with Unions across this country can not understand the unique relationship I have enjoyed with Norm, George and Gary. I can never remember a time other than behind closed doors that we have ever shown a difference. We have always been united. People don't understand that Gary and I are in phone contact I would say 95% of the time every day. We share concerns, we argue sides, but once we're done we have the same position. I think that has served this Union well. Norm was a very unique individual. I learned a lot. You have to

understand I was a thirty-two year old guy that had modest beginnings. I never dreamt that I was going to head a Union, much less a state wide Union at that age, or at any age. I thought when I got elected that my main job would be running conventions every two years. That was soon dispelled because we had a convention every year for five years until we changed our per-capita dues. I mean we were back for money every year. Those were very frustrating conventions. I can still remember my first convention when I believe my knees were shaking. I have to believe that the people that were in the first few chairs could hear my knees shaking! Now people come and say; "You go through the whole convention without getting rattled or showing any frustration or anger at anyone," and that has sort of been my trademark. I allow people to speak probably more than most people would like. I'm a strong believer that if we argue it out on the convention floor we go away with a lot less rancor. People always will have said that they had their opportunity to speak their piece, they were not cut off. Our conventions are lively, I think very enjoyable. I have had the opportunity to go to a lot of other conventions and I'll take mine.

I think Norm taught me one thing. I've been in this business for twenty years and don't have an ulcer. Early on, Norm took me behind closed doors and we had a talk. He called me "Young Man," and said; "Young man, in this business you have to learn one thing, and that is that you start every day new. You don't carry bad feelings or frustrations from one day to the other because it

will build up and you won't be able to handle it." So that is what I've done. Every day to me is a new day, a new challenge that I haven't seen before. My first wife used to say that my first love was the Union, the second love was her. That may be true. This Union is my life. Sometimes I get frustrated that other people that don't have the same dedication to this Union that I have. It will always be my first love. I remarried, but the lady that I married understands my love for the union, and walked into it with her eyes open. I think that lends to making it work because the time demands can be very tough on a married person. It puts a demand on Gary's time, Mark's time, and my time, that is very hard.

How was George Masten's style different than Norm Schut?

George's style was laid back. He moved a lot slower. I think the reasons that George was so successful came down to a couple of things. One was his work habits. He was always there. Secondly, he was exceedingly honest. He had a reputation of keeping his promises; what he said he was going to do, he did. Nobody questioned his truthfulness and I really do think that he had a style that lended itself to developing this Union. You had a sense of his being 'the Rock'. He could be tough when he wanted to be. He was very tough when he was dealing with management. I would always get a kick out of him because we'd be going up to negotiate a policy or something like that and he

always said he wasn't going to eat lunch before he went because he wanted to go up hungry and mean. He also had a very good sense of humor that he seemed to have the ability to use at just the right time. He had an awful lot of support from his wife, Lois. In some of his early days when we were travelling across the state meeting with people and immediately after that when we were trying to meet with as many rank and file to get a sense of what they wanted and were heading for we made what we called a 'dog and pony show'. We went out on this in some of the most adverse weather that I've ever seen in this state. We missed airplanes, spent nights in motels and it was very frustrating at the time. Through all that we emerged a much stronger Union and George a much stronger Director. He was well liked in the International Union. Once he became the International Vice President the relationship between us and our International grew substantially. That has been carried forward with Gary.

Gary was kind of 'sent out' by the International?

No, Gary started at Green Hill I think as an Area Representative for that Area. He was a 'walk on' hire. He kept pestering George until George hired him. I would be over and I'd say; "George, who is that?" And he would say; "Well that's Gary and we've got him on temporary." I'd say; "George, we don't have a position for him," and George would say; "He's just on temporary." Temporary became permanent and Gary was my Area

Representative in Spokane in the early years and we got along good then and Gary moved on to Seattle.

Did that help to 'cement' your relationship with Gary when he was in Spokane?

I think so. It was not the stress that it is at the top and it was the ability to develop a mutual admiration for each other. To see his ability when he first came in and develop kind of a labor management style all around was interesting.

When he came up, I understand that there were a lot of candidates for the job. Can you describe the selection process?

Well we have a process where the personnel committee goes through and interviews candidates. They look at the applications and cut them down to the top three candidates. These three are then interviewed by the entire Board. I always felt that the transition between Norm and George was easy, because George was actually running the day to day operation.

Can you tell me about your role in the Depth Study?

Let me start out by saying when Bud Shinpoch got appointed Director of Social and Health Services, we went through some rough times right off the bat. By the time the Depth Study⁴⁵

⁴⁵Bud Shinpoch, known infamously as "Bud the Knife" came to DSHS from the Legislature. His goal was to cut the levels of management between his office and the Department's clients. He

was over with I had developed a very, very strong admiration for Bud Shinpoch. I really ended up liking Bud. At the start we had some rocky times. But I think the further we went into the Depth Study and the Depth Study negotiations, Bud began to get a sense of feeling that we were the ones with the accurate information. That we were the ones that he could trust. When we said things they made more sense than what his supervisors were telling him. Bud's negotiation style was that if you were late, you paid, I guarantee it. Our meetings always started on time and Bud had a 'hands on' approach. Bud was involved in those negotiations. He's the only DSHS Secretary that has ever done that. I think if Bud could have weathered the storm, I think he would have been one of the few that could really have 'handled' DSHS. We went through rough times, as far as the Institutions had been, before. I think they came out of it pretty good. I don't think Public Assistance fared as well. Overall some of the things he did for Institutions, I think, were things that we'd been after for years that we'd not been able to get. We couldn't even get started. I just ended up admiring the guy. We had a mutual respect I think. We had gone to him early on trying to, when we were just starting the Depth Study thing.

sought to streamline the Department's operations and staff. The so-called "Depth Study" was the early Department title for the action. Initially, the plan would have had a disastrous effect on many Department employees as developed by Management staff. In its final development, with Union assistance, it changed into a predominantly positive measure as far as Council 28 was concerned.

One of the things that I had been after for years was we never could understand why you have a large Institutional complex at Medical Lake. Each institution had their own maintenance department. We kept saying; doesn't it make sense to have one maintenance department? We had been trying for years and years before that and all was shot down by those who were worried about their 'turf'. I had mentioned it to Governor Gardner. When I talked to Bud, he said; "It sounds like a good idea." He said; "Why won't it work?" I said; "Bud, it won't work unless there is a Secretary that is strong enough and has the authority and is willing to use it to force the Superintendents⁴⁶ into line." And Bud looked at me and said; "I am that person!" He said; "What would it take?" I told him. There had been a lot of work done on it before. I said; "One of the things, if you're willing to look at that idea, we need to go talk to our people and make sure they're still on board and are willing to look at it." They were because they were all so concerned about losing positions. So Consolidated Support Services was set up. I still work in Consolidated Support Services. I still think the state got a good buy. We can do more with less now. The Institutions are getting a bigger bang for their buck.

I think that can be counted as one of the things that Bud did. We started out with a very dark period at the start of the Depth

⁴⁶Superintendents of the affected Institutions. For example, the Superintendent of Eastern State Hospital.

Study. There was a lot of anger and frustration. I still remember doing those charts. We spent almost one full night downstairs here at the Governor's House Hotel with charts up on all the walls. We were preparing to go meet with Bud. I'll never forget that first meeting. It was bad, really bad. Bud came across as being very arrogant, very uncaring. Most of us thought we were going to end up on the 'bricks' over this one (lose our jobs or strike). Then at the second meeting when the charts got put up on the wall and at the very first Institution, a very small one called Portal, we caught Management trying to hide a supervisor⁴⁷. One thing that Bud did not tolerate (we knew this from his days in the Legislature) was trying to hide something from Bud Shinpoch. We used to say; "Who's going to go testify?, Bud's the chair," and none of us really wanted to. Because he could eat up the witness. From the first Institution, we went to the next Institution and the same thing happened again, Management hid a supervisor. We could see Bud get mad and they caucused and they came back from that time on, the meeting ended that day. The next time we came to a meeting it was an entirely different environment. It was as though Bud had decided that we were not the 'bad guys' but in fact maybe we were the 'good guys'. The managers were the 'bad guys'. When we got into

⁴⁷This means that management's own organization charts prepared specifically for this meeting, had deleted or understated supervisors. Due to management's unique position of owning the Personnel Unit, it is doubtful that these deletions were made accidentally. Shinpoch's reaction makes it clear that he didn't believe that it was an accident, either.

negotiations, none of the Superintendents were allowed in the room. We had a three member committee and it was Gary, myself, a person named Lee McNett from Eastern State Hospital and a lady from Fircrest, her name is Sandy Ugrin. The three of us did the negotiating. On their side, it was Bud and Dave Hogan and Bob Connor. Once in a while they would bring in Lyle Quasim and Tim Brown. They weren't in the room most of the time and they were very, very upset and so was his Labor Relations people. We worked out some things that resulted in substantial increases for our members.

How does the Council affect the Leadership? How does it transition from the Convention Floor to Leadership Goals?

Our goals and desires are set at the Convention. They start at Local Meetings and from there Resolutions are passed and sent to the Convention. One of the things that I believe very strongly in is that while I may have personal feelings, desires and try to set the tone, once the Convention speaks a position, I will not take a position that has not been developed at the Convention. I think that's one of the reasons that we are pretty strong. If the Convention says; "We're going to do this," Gary and I carry it out to the best of our abilities until it is done. One of the things that I think really helps balance it is the relationship that Gary and I have. I have seen other Councils where the elected President and the top-paid Executive Director cannot get along. It's misery. I have seen other Councils where the

President and the Executive Director are one and the same. I don't think that works well, either. I always say the strength of this Council is I'm the elected President and I have to run for re-election every two years. I respond to the needs of the Locals and the feelings and desires of the Locals. Gary is the paid staff person with total responsibility over the staff. He was hired by the Executive Board. Both sides can terminate that relationship with a 30 day notice. What that does is tell Gary; "You operate this organization, you don't have to worry politically about whether that Local has 3,000 votes or that Local has 24 votes. As I tell people when I go across country where the person is elected every two years; "It's sort of like Congress, you spend the two years worrying about how to get re-elected to save your job instead of running the operation involved." That's why I think we've got the Organization and the best way to deal with that. I think that is the strength of this organization. I don't know what would ever happen if you had a President and an Executive Director that couldn't get along. I couldn't fathom that because it has never happened to me. I think it would be a very frustrating time.

Do you have anything else you feel needs to be addressed?

I keep hearing people say we won't survive when someone retires. They said it when Norm retired, when George retired, I have the utmost faith in this Organization that they will select good

leadership from here on into the future. I don't know how much longer I'm going to stay or how much longer the membership will want me. But I'm absolutely convinced in my mind that when I leave somebody else is going to step in. The organization as a whole will continue it's growth. As long as people electing Governors like Spellman and Dixy Lee and Gardner we will continue to thrive as an organization. I guess I am the most disappointed in this Governor. I remember back when we got in the only Governor's race that I was ever involved in. It was the election of Gardner for his first term. Our membership said they wanted to be involved, they wanted to elect Gardner. We've spent the next seven years wondering why we wanted to get him elected. Some of his appointments have caused us nothing but heartache.

Do you think that evolved from Gardner's involvement with Weyerhaeuser and your traditional striking with your father with Weyerhaeuser?

I don't know. Governor Gardner and I have had a good relationship until probably the last three to four years. What I told him was; "You had the opportunity to be a great Governor. Your personality was such that people just loved to have you in the same room. But your reliance on some of your staff in carrying out the day-to-day operations is totally unacceptable. Their insistence on running the Personnel Bill, your unwillingness to sign on to the Collective Bargaining Bill, even

though we may never have gotten it through the Senate, those type of things made it easy for me to stand up and say I'm never going to invite you to our Convention. You don't deserve to come before our Convention." He has never outside of the time he was running since he's been elected, eight years, he's never been to one of our Conventions. The only incumbent (in-house) Governor that's been to our Convention was Dan Evans. I don't need to remind you that we're the largest Union of State Employees. No other Governor has appeared before our Convention for election. I think that is wrong. I think Governors need to take a look at that. I just think that they should find that unacceptable to them. Maybe if I stick around long enough, we'll have a Governor that will be worth inviting.

Maybe we should put Howard in for Governor, to make that happen!

This kid's looking at retiring! I'm at the point now where I can retire any time. I have consistently told the people that I'm going to take a physical, a complete physical, eyes, the whole bit. I'm going to see where I am, physically and then make a decision on whether I want to run again. As soon as that decision is made I'll let everybody know. From the other standpoint, I've always told them that I'd like to be around to help negotiate the first state wide Collective Bargaining Agreement. I don't know if I'm going to succeed on that. That question I will be able to answer to you in November. That

election will tell me whether it is possible or not. I guess that's about where it is.

Thank You