CSEA INTERVIEW

RETIREE SAM MOGAVERO

May 12, 2009
(Discussion off the record.)

MS. ASENCIO: Okay. So we can start talking about -- we touched on the purpose of this, right, already.

MR. MOGAVERO: Yeah.

MS. ASENCIO: It's for the CSEA 100th History Project. So if you can keep in mind when you answer, what we're trying to do is give members a greater understanding of what it was like throughout the forties and fifties and sixties during the times when they don't have any memory or really know much about the CSEA history or what it really took to get the union to where it is right now, so if you can keep that in mind throughout the questions that would be great, and try to give -- I mean whatever knowledge you have that you think would help CSEA members better understand what CSEA is and what it was and how it came to be where it is now.

MR. MOGAVERO: Well, actually, you know, I mean before you even start --

MS. ASENCIO: M-m h-m-m-m.

MR. MOGAVERO: What CSEA tried to erode was the fact that all the jobs that are now

CSEA were originally hand-off jobs, payoff for CSEA helping me get elected as a mayor -- get elected in the public office and there was no security whether you were a good worker or if you
were a slacker or if you were just a politician's follower.

MS. ASENCIO: M-m h-m-m.

MR. MOGAVERO: So what CSEA did is they established a system where faithful, continuous service was being recognized and paid for or blessed with.

MS. ASENCIO: Okay. What did you do for CSEA -- or what did you do for your job?

MR. MOGAVERO: I was a building custodian. I did custodial work and bus driver, yeah.

MS. ASENCIO: For who?


MS. ASENCIO: Can you say that all together?

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes. My original -- my reason for being involved in CSEA --

MS. ASENCIO: M-m h-m-m.
that I wanted to keep -- remind you of is that
when you're talking, just look at me 'cause that's
the -- the reason why we're doing it is not
because I need you to look at me.

MR. MOGAVERO: I understand.

MS. ASENCIO: It's because I want it
to look comfortable in the camera shot.

MR. MOGAVERO: Oh, I see.

MS. ASENCIO: But you looking at me
is just set up perfectly, okay? So try -- I mean
you can still look down and look around, but for
the most part try to remember to keep looking up.
Don't tell an entire story with your eyes down.
That would be very helpful.

Okay. So, yes, please tell that

story about how you got involved in CSEA and why.

MR. MOGAVERO: I had been -- okay,
I'll start. I was a newly-hired employee for Lake
Shore Central Schools in Angola and I was having a
conversation with a so-called building custodian
when the business manager for Lake Shore Central
Schools entered the building and he immediately
told me that we'd better get out of the hallway
because the business manager was coming in and it
would possibly do away with the possibility of a
few pennies increase in wages that year.

So I decided that -- I felt that it
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was not the right place to be working, so I
thought it's time that maybe I should do something
about it, so somehow I got in touch with Henry
Gadula (phonetic) who was an organizer for CSEA in
our particular area. Henry was from Silver Creek,
New York.

MS. ASENCIO: So your jobs were
potentially threatened at this point?

MR. MOGAVERO: Well, not the job.
The job wasn't threatened, but the possibility of
a few pennies increase in wages for the next year.

MS. ASENCIO: Oh, I see, so you may
not have gotten your raises.

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes, because, you
know, he had seen us talking in the hall.

MS. ASENCIO: Oh, dear.

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes. So we did end
that and in no time at all I organized the
employees of Lake Shore Central School, being the
custodial and the bus drivers and we became
members of CSEA. In turn --

MS. ASENCIO: What was that process
like, once you got in touch with the organizer?
What did you have to do?

MR. MOGAVERO: We -- what we had to
do is we had to distribute signature cards amongst
the employees requesting the right to have Civil
Service Employees Association be our bargaining
agent for benefits and without any problem upon the first submission the application was accepted, so from that point on Henry influenced me to continue and to contact outlying schools in Erie County.

MS. ASENCIO: So did you get any push-back from the school district? Was there tension --

MR. MOGAVERO: No, there was -- there was -- fortunately it was accepted readily by the school board on the first presentation.

MS. ASENCIO: Was that because of the reputation that CSEA had?

MR. MOGAVERO: Very possibly. Very -- well, upon our -- when I think back it was because of the fact that there were not the tremendous requests for benefits as there are today. We requested recognition of seniority and recognition of the fact that there would possibly be a fixed wage scale, where prior to that it was more at the will of the school boards, and I continued to, on my own time, to go throughout Erie County and I helped to recruit 13 school districts.

MS. ASENCIO: What was that like when you took the time on your own to do that? I mean obviously it was nights and some -- it was --
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MR. MOGAVERO: Some nights and
Saturday mornings, and I
distributed the applications at which time they
were notified that the employees were considering
joining me and I truthfully didn't experience too
much resistance from the School Boards because I
think they probably looked at the fact that it
would possibly establish a continuity of employees
because of the fact that there was gonna be some
job insurance and possibly a constant wage
increase to try to live up to the necessities of
the standard of living.

MS. ASENCIO: M-m h-m-m. So at that
time when you were bargaining with CSEA for
certain benefits, was that considered new
territory, what you were doing, or was it --

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes, it was.
Definitely, that was new territory because the
employees prior to that, the employees that were
working for School Districts, were hired at the
whim of someone on the School Board.

MS. ASENCIO: And then how did that
change?

MR. MOGAVERO: That changed because,
as an example, if you and I had hired as employees
of the School Board and there was a change in the
administration, that we were not let go because
the new administration would bring in some of
their friends. We became a perpetual part of the School District service employees.

MS. ASENCIO: M-m h-m-m. Okay. So between your -- so you were basically at the whim of the School Board.

MR. MOGAVERO: Prior to.

MS. ASENCIO: Prior to. And what was it like interacting with your -- who would be your direct supervisor, your manager, outside of the School Board in your position?

MR. MOGAVERO: Some schools had what they would call a lead cleaner who was in charge, who would make suggestions to someone on the School Board relative to what -- possibly what you or I were doing on the job.

MS. ASENCIO: Okay. But so there wasn't any direct management person?

MR. MOGAVERO: No, not a really established head person, no.

MS. ASENCIO: I see. Did that change?

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes, because then there became titlement positions. There was the head custodian and there were cleaners that were established.
MS. ASENCIO: And what did that do?

MR. MOGAVERO: That gave the average person security of knowing each and every day what their duties were when they reported to work, where prior to that we were at the whims of whoever was in charge of the building.

MS. ASENCIO: I see, and that was considered a breakthrough for your school districts. So you then took that and went to other school districts?

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes.

MS. ASENCIO: Tried to get the same structure. Can you tell me about that process? About --

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes.

MS. ASENCIO: I mean -- first of all, why did you decide that you would take this time on the weekends and take this time, of your personal time? What inside you -- what spoke to you? What were you thinking? Why did you think it was necessary to go out and help others?

MR. MOGAVERO: I have to say that I always felt that I was a little more gifted than the next person and I would like to have them try to get some, if not all, of what I have.

MS. ASENCIO: Gifted in what respect?

MR. MOGAVERO: Well, there is an old
proverb that says do good and forget about it. Do
some harm and your heart will always haunt you.
And if -- and I always felt that someone out there
was doing something that was getting less for
doing the same thing than myself, and that
shouldn't be so.

MS. ASENCIO: So you felt a
responsibility or an obligation to help others?
MR. MOGAVERO: I remember feeling
that, you know, that like I stated a little
earlier, you know, if you do good you can forget
it. But if you don't try, it has some sense of
haunt in your life.

MS. ASENCIO: So you wanted to pass
along what you had learned and the skills that you
had learned through the union --
MR. MOGAVERO: That's right.
MS. ASENCIO: -- to more people?
MR. MOGAVERO: Everything. Well,

primarily it comes about because I come from a
large family. We were nine children and we always
passed on what we had to the younger and it's just
an instinct that I have that if I've got
something, I should share it with somebody.

MS. ASENCIO: Kind of like what
you're doing right now.
MR. MOGAVERO: Yes.
MS. ASENCIO: You're sharing --
MR. MOGAVERO: I'm doing the same --
I've done the same thing with the fire company. I
joined the fire company because I think that I
could be of service to somebody in dire need who
couldn't help themselves at that particular time.

MS. ASENCIO: M-m h-m-m.

MR. MOGAVERO: And the good Lord has
made me able to do it for the past 59 years.

MS. ASENCIO: So what -- what year
was it that you had participated in organizing
your school district when you were working there
and when did that all come about?

MR. MOGAVERO: Fifty...oh, Lord,
'58 -- I get --

MS. ASENCIO: Was it the fifties,
the sixties?

MR. MOGAVERO: In the fifties.

MS. ASENCIO: It was in the fifties?

MR. MOGAVERO: I got the dates in
the other room.

MS. ASENCIO: Oh, they don't have to
be exact. We just want an idea.

MR. MOGAVERO: The early fifties.

MS. ASENCIO: The early fifties,
okay. In the early fifties, what were your
relationships on the job like with your
co-workers?

MR. MOGAVERO: I became the
representative for all of their labor problems in the school and in turn then I was responsible for establishing a County Division in CSEA because every chapter at that time never had a school district person on their board and I became a member of that board and they granted me the one position, yeah.

MS. ASENCIO: Wow, can you talk a little bit about that? How the county -- I mean Mr. -- I hear your nickname is "Mr. Local Government".

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes, because I -- like I say I became so involved in school districts that I helped to set up some of their negotiations; then in turn Henry consummated their contract.

MS. ASENCIO: So you got that title because of your involvement in the school district?

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes. And because of the fact that I took the time to go on Saturdays throughout the state and organize schools, yeah. Went all the way down to the Island.

MS. ASENCIO: Can you tell me about your adventures doing that?

MR. MOGAVERO: What transpired was I would make contact with someone in the particular school districts throughout the state and find out
what their working conditions were and I had a committee that was made up of one other person from this area and a representative from each one of the school districts in the separate parts of the state. And what we would do is we would set up a meeting on Saturday mornings, either in the school -- one of the school buildings or in another building so that we could formulate a means of getting more people signed up and in turn I was able to sign up practically all of the New York state.

MS. ASENCIO: And how did your family take to you doing all of that? Were they very supportive? Did they understand?

MR. MOGAVERO: Oh, my wife is worth an angel. She never, never complained or said why are you spending so much time. She understood right from the start that that was part of my nature. Do good and forget it.

MS. ASENCIO: Great. And then what kind of big changes did you see over the years with CSEA throughout your time? I mean you've been involved basically since the fifties. What were some of the big pivotal moments that you remember as being very important to pass along and to commemorate for members to come?

MR. MOGAVERO: Like I stated earlier
in our conversation, then I became active in the statewide union board and I had occasion where I was elected as statewide chairman of the County Division and at that time we had a meeting scheduled one Saturday morning during the time that the field staff members of CSEA were negotiating their first labor contract and upon arriving in Albany the field staff members were picketing 12 Elk Street, which was our CSEA headquarters, and I refused to have any of the members cross the picket line, board members cross the picket line.

Ted Wenzel was president and he almost had a heart attack because he said you're gonna hold up all the business of the local, the union. It was a local union then, and I refused. I said find some other place and we'll conduct the business, at which time he proceeded to rent the church up the street, on Elk Street, so that we could conduct the business that Saturday morning.

And it was, in turn, I feel responsible for consummating this field staff contract and the next time that an occasion like that arose was when we were having a statewide convention for the employees and we were in a meeting room in Buffalo and Ted had opened the convention and the members were standing at the
microphone.

There were four microphones. It seemed that the people in charge of the microphones were finding it convenient for them to constantly move -- there were four microphones and you could see people lined up; people with state questions and people with county questions relative to their employment.

And it seemed as though that the people in charge of the microphones had been tutored that the County Division was somewhat of a foster child so they would go possibly from microphone one to microphone two because the first person standing near the microphone was a county person, so they would jump to a state person and I decided that I wasn't gonna put up with that any more.

So I asked the County Division to caucus in the hall. Ted Wenzel almost had a heart attack but I -- I'll never forget it. He said you can't do this to a meeting like this. I said, Ted, I got something else we got to take care of.

Well, the outcome of it was that we established the rule that you would be recognized by your position at the microphone and there'd be
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no one superceding your position and we
established that ruling in the union.

MS. ASENCIO: Wait a minute. I'm
just going to make one little adjustment.
(Pause.) All right. We're back in business.

Let's see. Oh, okay. So the big
changes that you saw, we just talked about, were
your you witness to the restructuring of CSEA?

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes. I served with
Victor Costa on that committee when we
completely --

MS. ASENCIO: On which committee, if
you can start that again?

MR. MOGAVERO: The Constitution and
By-laws Committee of CSEA. We --

MS. ASENCIO: Can you start over
again? Say that full thing again so it's not
broken into parts?

MR. MOGAVERO: I was appointed as a
member of the group that was responsible for
reviewing the existing constitution and by-laws of
the union and we were one representative from each
of the areas. Henry -- rather Victor Costa was

chairman and we were responsible for re-wording
and re-writing the constitution of the Civil
Service Employees for the State of New York.

MS. ASENCIO: In what year?

MR. MOGAVERO: I truthfully couldn't
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tell you. I'd have to look in my book. I would have to look in my book truthfully.

MS. ASENCIO: Okay.

MR. MOGAVERO: Like I say, there's so much stuff in there that -- and I refer to the book and it's very ironic how I have it, which I would like to tell you. We were having a region meeting in Central New York and the photographer and the reporter, who would be doing a job similar to what you're doing for each meeting, and I saw him walking down the hall in the motel where I was staying and I asked him where he was headed for. He said I'm trying to find a room. They lost my reservation. So I said to him, well, I says, just put your bag on the bed there, I says. I've got two beds in my room and we established a very close-knit friendship. And when the Leader was released from reporting for CSEA he called me and told me that he had a tremendous amount of photos and he would like me to have them and I was blessed with all the photos that probably would have been just tossed into a wastebasket, which I have in my possession, of CSEA.

MS. ASENCIO: That's very nice. That's good to know. It's a resource.

Then during that time of restructuring what were the major challenges in
the State?

MR. MOGAVERO: We -- if I recall correctly, we established guidelines for representation from each of the areas throughout the state and they, in turn, followed the constitution to establish their local constitutions, which today governs the State of New York.

MS. ASENCIO: What was the reason for it?

MR. MOGAVERO: The original constitution and by-laws was very primitive. It didn't really have any specific references as to duties and establishment of offices. It became constitutional.

MS. ASENCIO: And also what kind of benefits did that bring to the union once it was done?

MR. MOGAVERO: It gave the members of each and every region the security that the executive body elected by them would be their representative group in the statewide constitution business.

MS. ASENCIO: And then also in the restructuring of the region, in creating the region, you were there for that as well, right?

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes.

MS. ASENCIO: Was that part of this
MR. MOGAVERO: Yes.

MS. ASENCIO: Can you talk about actually drawing the lines and creating the regions?

MR. MOGAVERO: Well --

MS. ASENCIO: How did you decide?

MR. MOGAVERO: There were originally -- am I moving too much?

MS. ASENCIO: No.

MR. MOGAVERO: There were originally

some guidelines so we made a few changes in boundaries, but these remained primarily the original. But what we did is we put it in a written, governing Bible.

MS. ASENCIO: Which -- do you recall around which decade or which time period this was? Was this the seventies, was it the sixties, was it later on in your time or earlier?

MR. MOGAVERO: I would say -- God, I could look in the book and I could tell you. I got it right in the other room.

MS. ASENCIO: Oh, yeah? What are some of the other things that you have in there?

MR. MOGAVERO: That big red book.

MS. ASENCIO: The big red book? Go ahead and get your things and we'll talk about them.
MR. MOGAVERO: This is a plaque that I received from the executive board of the statewide -- I'm sorry. I forgot to look at you.

MS. ASENCIO: Start all over again.

MR. MOGAVERO: This is a plaque that I received in 2008 from Danny Donohue for service in CSEA at the statewide convention.

MS. ASENCIO: Where was that, if you recall?

MR. MOGAVERO: Oh, my God -- that was held in --

MS. ASENCIO: Was that Rochester?

Was it in --

MR. MOGAVERO: No, that was beyond there.

MS. ASENCIO: Was it in Washington, D.C.?

MR. MOGAVERO: No, it was beyond that. My mind is --

MS. ASENCIO: The one in New York or was it the one in Washington, D.C.
MR. MOGAVERO: Syracuse, wasn't it?

MS. ASENCIO: Was it in Buffalo?

MR. MOGAVERO: No.

MS. ASENCIO: Buffalo, right? It was in Rochester, right?

MR. MOGAVERO: No, it was a little beyond that. Oh, my Lord.

MS. ASENCIO: Don't worry about it. Just keep telling me about the award.

MR. MOGAVERO: Yeah.

MS. ASENCIO: So what does that signify?

MR. MOGAVERO: It signifies service, for length of service in CSEA.

MS. ASENCIO: How many years have you --

MR. MOGAVERO: How many years have I -- I have had approximately 56 years.

MS. ASENCIO: And how many --so to commemorate 56 years of service.

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes.

MS. ASENCIO: Wow. And how many years have you been serving in CSEA up till now? So that's 67 years? Your total? Wow. That's amazing. That's great. What else do you have there?

MR. MOGAVERO: This is a memorabilia
from the County Division that we received in 1976
at our statewide convention. I have quite a few
of these and it would take an entire 24 hours to
probably go through them, so we'll only have a
chosen few.

MS. ASENCIO: I see, and what memory
do you have that's attached to that commemorative
piece?

MR. MOGAVERO: I was -- well, I was
very happy to receive it at that time. It was
something that was passed to each of the people in
attendance there and at the time I was still a
representative on the board.

MS. ASENCIO: And is that something
that you cherish?

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes, anything that's
relative to CSEA is near and dear to my heart.

MS. ASENCIO: What else do you have
there?

MR. MOGAVERO: This is a jacket that
we used in a protest march in Washington, D.C.

MS. ASENCIO: A protest march?

MR. MOGAVERO: A protest march at
that time for recognition for labor.
MS. ASENCIO: It was in 200...

MR. MOGAVERO: When we first got into AFSCME, in our beginning of AFSCME.

MS. ASENCIO: M-m h-m-m. Okay.

What year was that? Was it 2000-something?

MR. MOGAVERO: Oh, quite a way back.

MS. ASENCIO: Oh, I see. Was that where you cataloged -- that red book there? Is that how you cataloged all your --

MR. MOGAVERO: This particular item here -- Can you see it, Honey?

MS. ASENCIO: M-m h-m-m.

MR. MOGAVERO: It was given to me by Joe Ferlano who was the information service personnel manager for New York State Retirement System, and it's dated March 11th of 1972 and it states that I have been president of 20 separate school districts and I am submitting this request for 20 copies of each of the following information circulars printed by your office and I did -- I received the copies to distribute to each one of my people in my district.

MS. ASENCIO: What would that be?

MR. MOGAVERO: This was given to me in 1974 by then -- It says: As one of the Governor's last official acts. He finally signed the pledge taken last spring at the Concord, so I am dashing these out to you quick while they are
still of moment. Happy Holiday to you and yours and with continued success and good health to the New Year and that's dated 12/23/74 and it's --

MS. ASENCIO: And who are the men in the picture? Who have you got there?

MR. MOGAVERO: The Governor and that is at the Concord. Oh, I can't think of his name.

MS. ASENCIO: Oh, no worry.

MR. MOGAVERO: This is a picture of our attorney at the time and he was the president of the New York Chapter, and myself. These are numerous officers of school districts, people that I helped to organize getting contracts, getting work contracts. This is the officers of Erie Chapter, Erie Local Chapter at the time and which I was a member and approximately two/thirds of these people are deceased today.

MS. ASENCIO: Are you in that picture?

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes.

MS. ASENCIO: Can you point yourself out? Where are you?

MR. MOGAVERO: That was during the time when we were having our local --

MS. ASENCIO: Tell the people behind the camera. Tell the audience that's you and --

MR. MOGAVERO: This is a picture of
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me, the second from the end, and I'm bearded
because I was a participant in our local
centennial. This is one of our executive board
meetings.
I can go on and on. Do you want me
to go on?
MS. ASENCIO: Sure. Are there any
pictures in there that are connected to any big
moments in CSEA history that you want to bring
forward?
As you thumb through, if you see any
that remind you of anything that you think that
members should know about the history.
MR. MOGAVERO: Yes. Oh, my God.

What was Jim's name? He was killed in an
automobile accident. These are photos of the
original CSEA office for Erie Chapter, and -- Jim,
oh God. Jim Powers was our field representative at
the time and Jim had been negotiating the contract
quite late one night, and on his way home got in
an automobile accident that resulted in his
demise.
This is in the process of reviewing
a school contract, Bob Young who has passed away,
and this is a field staff member.
This is a photo of Joe Dolan who was
our adviser in CSEA. He was in charge of the
County Division as an adviser. He was hired by
MOGAVERO

15 CSEA, paid employee.
16 These are members of the Erie County
17 Sewer Authority.
18 This is an executive board meeting
19 of the Erie -- I beg your pardon. It's an
20 installation dinner 19...June 12 of 1970.
21 MS. ASENCIO: And what is that photo
22 on the right, of the bus?
23 MR. MOGAVERO: This photo of -- this
24 bus was a bus that CSEA had that was used by field

1 staff to go out and support people who were having
2 problems in negotiating contracts. Field staff
3 used it so that they could be on the scene with
4 supplies and even overnight preparedness.
5 These are the Chapter President, Bob
6 Young; this young man was a field staff member.
7 This is a Local installation dinner.
8 Yeah.
9 MS. ASENCIO: Do you want to hold
10 off a minute? We're doing fine on audio but I can
11 see the audio level. Okay.
12 MR. MOGAVERO: This is an
13 installation dinner. This is tragic. He
14 committed suicide.
15 MS. ASENCIO: Oh, you might not want
16 to talk about that.
17 MR. MOGAVERO: Yeah.
18 MS. ASENCIO: See if we can go
through those and find some more events of CSEA
history.

MR. MOGAVERO: There's quite a stack
of photos.

Signing contracts. He was one of
the members that traveled around the state with me
when we were organizing school districts.

MS. ASENCIO: M-m h-m-m. So that's
a photo of the people involved with organizing the
school districts?

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes. He was from
Niagara Falls, Niagara Falls, he was with the Erie
County and this was Bill -- Bob, Bob. Oh, my God.
My names might -- maybe I can catch it right away
in the back here. Bob Lattimer. Bob Lattimer, he
was our representative and he also was a president
of CSEA.

These are members of Erie Chapter
and some statewide members. In the far corner is
Ted Wenzel, who was the president, and Bob was
president of our Erie Unit, New York.

These are all pictures of
negotiations and meetings, really too numerous to
go into detail.

MS. ASENCIO: M-m h-m-m.

MR. MOGAVERO: Another seating.

This was a commendation that we gave to the field
staff man and I was in the process of raising a
beard for the bicentennial. That is Joe Dolan, Bob Young who is deceased.

MS. ASENCIO: Is that you in the beard?

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes. Incidentally, I won first prize.

MS. ASENCIO: M-m-m-m.

MR. MOGAVERO: And this is a Chapter meeting. We were Chapters in those days, and again we have field staff members. Bob Young, who was our field man. This is also part of that particular meeting. Again --

MS. ASENCIO: So what are you thinking? How do you feel when you look through this album?

MR. MOGAVERO: I feel extra gifted that the good Lord has still given me days in this world because so many of these people have passed away, including my beautiful wife who put up with all my disappearances on weekends.

MS. ASENCIO: But as you reflect on this do you think it was all worthwhile?

MR. MOGAVERO: Definitely. I definitely -- I feel that I think I have served a little bit of what the good Lord wanted me to do. Again I refer to my old saying, do good and forget
These are meetings, different
meetings, installation dinners.

MS. ASENCIO: So if you had to pass
on some bit of knowledge to upcoming activists
from all the time that you spent with CSEA, what
would you want them to know? What do you think is
most important from moving the union to the
future?

MR. MOGAVERO: Always try to find
something that you can make better that
probably no one has ever noticed or looked or
tried to find. Search. Again my old saying, do
good and forget it. Never stop trying to do good.

MS. ASENCIO: M-m h-m-m.

MR. MOGAVERO: I think the good
Lord --

MS. ASENCIO: So what would you say?

What would you say to the young activists who say
I don't have time? What would you say to them
about what you've learned?

MR. MOGAVERO: They don't have time.

Just for a moment hesitate and think of some of
the non-really essential things that you're doing
or have done, that maybe you could have done
something to help someone who didn't have enough
MR. MOGAVERO: I do. I try very hard and I still -- and I honestly believe and I thank the good Lord, you know. I'm a great believer that as long as I keep doing that he will possibly give me the help to continue.

MS. ASENCIO: As a retiree -- what
changed when you became a retiree from when you were doing this while you were working and while you were a member? What was the difference between being a member, being a retiree?

MR. MOGAVERO: Upon retiring I thought that I would lessen my activities in CSEA but it seems as though the desire to help someone still exists in me, perhaps not as strong, but I feel that I have to do something to keep myself going and that is to try to help and that's what makes me active in CSEA and the fire company --

MS. ASENCIO: So you care --

MR. MOGAVERO: -- as well as my church.

MS. ASENCIO: So you care about the future of the union.

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes, that's right.

MS. ASENCIO: What would you say about how you care about the future of the union? What are your hopes for the future of the union?

MR. MOGAVERO: Knowing the benefits that I derived by originally joining CSEA and, in turn, passing that desire on to someone else by recruiting them that I have been somewhat responsible in the growth and permanence of CSEA and the original Retiree Local.

MS. ASENCIO: And what are your hopes for the future? Do you hope that continues?
MOGAVERO

MR. MOGAVERO: I hope and pray that it does not become too commercialized, that the welfare and the needs of the individual member is never cast aside because the individuality is the mainstay of the union.

MS. ASENCIO: What makes CSEA unique? Actually, keep looking through. Let's look at some more of those pictures and maybe you can answer -- as you're looking through, why don't you answer what makes CSEA --

MR. MOGAVERO: Looking at the photos, there is so much generalization in the activity of the average member that it is unique that CSEA has grown with a less militant officer jurisdiction.

MS. ASENCIO: So can you talk a little bit about the growth of CSEA? I mean you've -- you were there from the fifties and you've seen a lot of growth over time. I mean how did that happen? How did it grow? What do you attribute the success of CSEA's growth to?

MR. MOGAVERO: I think that CSEA's growth -- I attribute it to the fact that it kept setting an example for people that felt that they were nonexistent in their particular field of work and there was someone at some place that they could turn to for some salvation and help and betterment of their daily life in their work.

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MS. ASENCIO: And that was the common theme throughout the history?

MR. MOGAVERO: That's right, and the continuance of that feeling if it's kept alive will be the perpetual root for CSEA.

MS. ASENCIO: And the security of the future?

MR. MOGAVERO: That's right. Definitely, definitely. They will be able to. Being as Government has decided that they are going to shrink the number of personnel conducting their business, it's very important that CSEA remains active and fertile.

MS. ASENCIO: So are you speaking about the -- I mean I'm sure that this happened over many times in history, but --

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes.

MS. ASENCIO: -- the recent events of the lay-off threat --

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes.

MS. ASENCIO: -- and the proposals, what are your thoughts on that and do you -- I mean you just spoke of the persistence of CSEA and the need for it and the -- these are the tough times, right?

MR. MOGAVERO: Without members seeing to it that the continuance of CSEA be one of their prime goals is the only way that there is
the possibility that their income and their livelihood will be protected. Changing times are very, very rash.

MS. ASENCIO: M-m h-m-m. Changing times can be rough.

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes.

MS. ASENCIO: And that's what gets you through it.

MR. MOGAVERO: That's right. In fact --

MS. ASENCIO: What did you say gets you through it?

MR. MOGAVERO: What gets you through it is the fact that you have the brotherhood and the number of people and you're not one. You're one of many.

MS. ASENCIO: It's the strength?

MR. MOGAVERO: Yeah.

MS. ASENCIO: And CSEA has shown strength throughout the years?

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes.

MS. ASENCIO: Amazing strength, right?

MR. MOGAVERO: They have.

MS. ASENCIO: M-m h-m-m.

MR. MOGAVERO: They have. Time and time again in memory when we were first growing, I believe that few of us ever dreamed that it would...
attain national recognition. Yeah. We started up in New York State and we're throughout the entire United States --

MS. ASENCIO: With the AFSCME affiliation.

MR. MOGAVERO: -- with AFSCME affiliate, yes, and our officers are officers -- I feel so proud that I was an officer when Mary Sullivan, Danny Donohue -- oh, my God -- Maureen Malone, all became officers in the national AFSCME union board.

MS. ASENCIO: M-m h-m-m.

MR. MOGAVERO: I recruited them.

MS. ASENCIO: That's an amazing thing.

MR. MOGAVERO: Yep. I remember when Danny Donohue came from -- the girls. If Mary Sullivan was sittin' here right now she would tell you, time and again, that she remembers the first time she attended one of my meetings, yeah. Yeah, all lovely people, lovely people.

MS. ASENCIO: My last question to you as we wrap this up is actually how did the times end up shaping CSEA? How did that -- is it -- did the times actually shape CSEA or would you say it was more the people? Do you think it's
very much -- I mean how do you think the times now
shape CSEA as opposed to how they shaped CSEA in
the past?

MR. MOGAVERO: The only thing that
at times is questionable in my mind is the
possibility of the growth of CSEA might be
overtaken so that the thought of protecting
individuals may possibly be erased with the
thought of generalization protection.

In other words --

MS. ASENCIO: Business type.

MR. MOGAVERO: -- that CSEA should
not make it possible for the organization to
become commercialized and not really responsible
individually for the good and welfare of the
general and individual membership.

MS. ASENCIO: But back then did
certain events in U.S. history shape the CSEA or
affect CSEA in any way? Political climate, you
know, things that were going on, wars, just an
overall sense of either openness or --

MR. MOGAVERO: Well, in that
particular field relative to possible
certifications of benefits was that being a member

of CSEA and being called to serve in the war
service was one of the items, the main item, that
protected your position if the good Lord willing
that you came back able to work and go back on your job. It was protected because of the fact that you were a member and that was part of the contracts, that you --

MS. ASENCIO: Oh. So during war time --

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes. You had --

MS. ASENCIO: So, for example, what kind of war did you witness? Did you witness that as being a benefit?

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes, I did. I was --

MS. ASENCIO: And was that -- did you serve in any?

MR. MOGAVERO: World War II. World War II, that was prior to me being --

MS. ASENCIO: In the union?

MR. MOGAVERO: -- in the union, yes.

MS. ASENCIO: But you did serve in a war so you --

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes.

MS. ASENCIO: -- connected to that.

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes. World War II, I did, yes.

MS. ASENCIO: But from there forward --

MR. MOGAVERO: There was no holding as far as your job was concerned. You left and if they wanted you when you came back, all well and
good, but you had no security, where membership in
the union did certify the fact that you had a job
to come back to. Seniority accumulated while you
were gone.

MS. ASENCIO: And that was all in
your contract?

MR. MOGAVERO: Yeah. Military leave
kept your job open for you when you came back.

MS. ASENCIO: Wow.

MR. MOGAVERO: Yeah.

MS. ASENCIO: That was wonderful to
know. That was -- especially during the
tumultuous times, you know, the Korean War, the
Viet Nam War. And did you know people? Did you
have friends who benefited from that and it saved
their families or did you know people, any of
those wars that --

MR. MOGAVERO: Yes. Some of the
local residents that were working in the steel
plant that had also some connection with the union
because they had dual employment had some
protection from it.

MS. ASENCIO: Okay. Great. Well, I
think that's my last question and we're actually
running out of battery power.

(At this time the interview of
Retiree Sam Mogavero was concluded.)