

CurziEmelioChico_19920706

RICHARD SHARPLESS: This is an interview with Emilio "Chico" Curzi of RD4, Creekview Road, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. It is Monday, July 6, and it's two o'clock in the afternoon. Okay, Mr. Curzi, first of all, where are you from?

EMILIO CHICO CURZI: Originally born and raised in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

RS: Born and raised. Spent your whole life here?

ECC: All my life.

RS: Okay, and you went to school here?

ECC: Went to school here. Didn't graduate, I quit my twelfth year, got a job in a factory. Matter of fact I was 16 when I got my job in the factory. Surefit, making slipcovers. Stood there for two years.

RS: What year was that?

ECC: That was 1948.

RS: '48, okay. And how old were you then?

ECC: I was 16 years old. I quit school and then my father [00:01:00] -- not denial. How should I say it? He didn't want me to quit school. He advised me to go to school and I quit without him knowing it. A couple months later, he found out. He was a little disturbed, but he says, "If that's the life you want to lead, you know, go your way."

You try it. You'll be sorry someday." Not to get ahead of myself, but I'm not sorry. Because I think I made a living, a good living. I have no regrets at this time.

RS: Okay, so you were in the factory then for two years.

ECC: Two years. That was two years in a garment factory. In 1950, I quit that at 18 years old. In fact, I quit at the advice of my father who says he'd get me the steel company that worked for more money. He said, "Why work for, you know, 35 cents an hour when I can get 75 cents an hour?" Or whatever.

RS: So he actually -

ECC: He actually talked to a superintendent and sped the process up with me being hired. [00:02:000] That was in 1950. October 13th of '50.

RS: And when you went into the mill, where did you go first of all? Where'd you work?

ECC: My first job was in the Lehigh division, and it was in a place called tool steel. They specialize in making special tools, and my first job was as a laborer. I swept floors for one day. The next day, I went to learn the crane. After two weeks -- after 80 hours of crane-learning, I became a crane man. I stood in that job until 1953, when I was drafted in the Army. I was in the Army for almost two years, and when I was discharged, I came back to the

Bethlehem plant and I was laid off. I was laid off for about maybe two or three months. When I came back, they sent me to the beam yard. [00:03:00] Structural steel division. I was there for about six months. They called me back to tool steel, but I was advised by the general foreman to stay in structural steel because of the fact when there's layoffs, at least I'd be working two or three days a week. But if I went back to tool steel, I'd be laid off and maybe work, if I recall right, maybe six, seven months, you know. I'd be out on the street maybe six, seven months. So I signed off. I stood in the beam yards. I was in the beam yards from '53 until the present time.

RS: And that's how many years?

ECC: All told, it's 42 and 1/2 years.

RS: So you originally went to Bethlehem Steel because at that time, you felt it offered a better living, right?

ECC: It offered a better living, it offered more money. There were some sacrifices. I went from a steady day job to days, middle of the nights. You know, swing shifts. But I have no regrets. And at the time that I went to Bethlehem Steel, they were hiring from all over. I mean, they were really hiring people from Hazleton, Easton --

RS: That was the beginning of the Korean War, I guess.

[00:04:00]

ECC: That was, yeah, the beginning of the Korean War. The Korean War started June 27th, 1950. So I guess they had orders. I guess Truman sped things up. You know, more orders for the government.

RS: When did you become interested in the union?

ECC: I was, in fact, involved with the union, I think my second day in the Steel, when I was approached by two gentlemen and asked me if I'd like to join the union. In fact, it was like a scare tactic, but they were only joking. And I said, "You don't have to fool around with me. Because I'm joining because my father was a union man all these years." And I says, "I remember in 1941, I was nine years old. But my father took me down to the main gate and there were pickets down there." I said, "My father was hit in the head by a club, and he was peaceful." And I hated the company at the time. I hated the militia and I hated the police at the [00:05:00] time because I thought they were hurting people.

RS: Did your father work at Bethlehem Steel?

ECC: Yes, he did.

RS: So he was part of when they brought --

ECC: Yeah, he was an organizer. No, he wasn't on the organizing committee, but he was instrumental in having people sign up. He didn't want to be known as an organizer, you know.

RS: So you had some tradition.

ECC: Tradition, yes. My father -- we were kids -- he says, "We need the union because when," he says, "I go to work," he says, "if I don't know the foreman," he says, "and he don't like me, I don't go in that gate." He says, "He picks his people he likes. If you don't bring him chickens," he says, "you don't work, you maybe work one day a week or so." That's how bad it was prior to union. That's why he wanted the union in.

RS: So it was personal favoritism and bribes and things like that.

ECC: Right. That got you the job. And scheduling. "You could be working seven o'clock to three o'clock," he says, "and then you gotta look at the schedule before you went home and you could be scheduled eleven to seven the next night." [00:06:00] Or you might be scheduled to work the same. You know, a double shift. "You weren't compensated for it," he says. That's why he said that, when they talked union, he listened. And he says, "People talk about communism." He said, "union wasn't communism." He came from a country

that was fascist. He says, "You know how it is. They were looking out for the working people, the union."

RS: Mm-hmm. Okay. So how did you move through the union ranks, then?

ECC: Well, like I said, the second day, they signed me up. I was young and I was what you called maybe brave or something. I would do anything people tell me. You have old-timers down there that were afraid to enforce anything. They would do what the foreman told them. You had guys that would say, "Hey," and they called me Blackie at the time. I had black hair, you know. They'd say, "Hey, Blackie, why don't you go there and work Article 14? Pull that crane down, the hooks." And I would do what they tell me to do. Not because I was brave, but because first I say [00:07:00], "Is that crane unsafe? Is that hook bad?" They said, "Look at it." And they wouldn't. Then I'd invoke Article 14 and I would have a shutdown and they would settle the matter in maybe an hour or two because they didn't want no trouble. But that's when I knew how much power the union had. Even if we weren't respected, they would abide or they would try to work with us. I learned later on in life, when I became the leader, that the company needs the union to keep the men in line. In fact, you'd only do your jobs for the company -- for the

union -- but we'd keep the men in line. If the company can't handle the men, we can handle the men. The men will listen to union. So I think in any industry, there should be a union, because of the fact that I think things would run smooth.

RS: Okay, okay. So you got active at the beginning.

ECC: I got active at the beginning. In fact, they wanted me to be a shop steward in the beginning and I says, "No." I says, "I don't want to tie my hands. I'm only 18 years old and I like to go out and all, I don't like to [00:08:00] be tied up." I said, "I'll handle stuff in the mill here. I'll do my job as best as I could in the mill to help you guys." But I says, "I'll help sign up new members, new employees that come in our department. I'll go to the cards and sign them up. I'll even collect if I have to." I says, "But I won't become a shop steward. I don't want to, you know, have to handle grievances or nothing at the time." Then, like I said, I was wrapped in the Army and I come out. I guess my first couple years were in the beam yard. I'd say from '55 to about '60, about five years, I was active with the union, but I was no shop steward. Then finally, I seen things weren't going right and some of our shops which they had down there were company men, and I thought some of them -- not all of them -- they were in it

for themselves, their own benefit. By getting better positions or being treated better, I says, "Maybe I should run for shop steward." I had a petition, I went out and around, the guys signed a petition. I became a shop steward in '60. I was very [00:09:00] active as a shop steward. Then in '67, I ran for my first office. I ran for trustee and I was elected. And for 24 consecutive years, I was an officer. From trustee to guard to vice president, acting (inaudible) committee man, to vice president to president for nine years.

RS: How long were you president?

ECC: Nine years.

RS: Okay, and this was from what years to what years?

ECC: From '82 until '92. Or maybe '91. Ninety-one.

RS: What were the locals now?

ECC: The large local. Local 2599. I was elected, and I always say to myself that one of the worse times, you know, in history, because when I was elected in my local, we had 4,400 employees and as of now, we're down to about 1,900. I lost about 2,000 employees in the first three years. Not personally me. But the company, they curtailed, they shut the departments down. As I say, I was under fire those first three years. [00:10:00] I'll tell you, sometimes I said to myself, "Why did I run for this job? It's so

hard." But I says, "Hey, at least I'm here and the company's surviving" and think, along with the help from myself and my union brothers and being able to talk to people, and I was trying to preserve as many jobs as I could. I was concerned about the younger employees at all times, because I knew the older employees, they were safeguarded somehow. They had a pension or they had seniority. My concern, and until today, it was younger employees. After the first three years -- after that -- it seemed to slide in to that where the company would talk to me, I could talk to them. I was tough when I had to be tough, and I got respect from the company. That's what counts: the respect. Because I had learned to respect the company, too. Because I learned if you talk, they'll listen. If you're right [00:11:00], they'll understand. And if you're wrong, put your tail between your legs and admit it. You understand my point. But I understand that, in prior years -- and if I'm talking too long or too much, please stop me - in prior years, the company were fat cats. They were all big shots. They all had big money. You know, they wouldn't invest in the plant.

RS: Well that was my next question. Bethlehem Steel had a reputation for having insufferable management.

ECC: Okay, just say in the beam yards alone, we had close to 2,000 men one time, in one department alone. If they had too many employees, I don't blame the union for that. I don't blame the men for that. I blame the company. They were fat, they had money to throw away. They just threw it anyway. They'd put anybody to work, put it that way. And when they were told to modernize, they laughed. And what disturbed me about the company, and those fat cats who aren't there no more, was we told them. "Hey, if there's a mini mill, build it here, why not compete with him? Why do you shut down [00:12:00] the department?" Like the merchant mills they had down there. They had the best thing going with tool steel. They had the best bar mills. Yet they sold the business. Today, you know what they says? "We're sorry we sold the business. We should've kept it." In fact, I don't know if he'll admit it, but [redacted] said to me one time -- he was chairman of the board -- he said, "Well I made one mistake in my life," he says. He said, "My mistake was selling tool steel." He says, "Because we didn't want to make 10 cents on the dollar." He says, "But that is a gold mine today."

RS: This started to happen in the '70s, right?

ECC: Oh yeah, they were told in the early '70s by a man named -- you probably heard of him -- Juran. He had the Juran

Tapes. He told them in 1960 that they were going to run into trouble. He says he wants to educate the workers. They told him, "Go to Hell," you know? "We don't need you. We know how to run our businesses." In fact, he was in Japan. He educated people in Japan. He made them smart people. Okay, well [00:13:00] in the '60s, it started. When the imports start slowly infiltrating our country, right? And if they would hurt one-sixth of our mill, the company didn't say, "Hey, we're going to fight them son-of-a-guns." We got this to fall back on. We'll shut this one down. We don't need it. And they kept doing it. They kept doing it until the mini-mills came into effect.

RS: Did they ever explain why they did that?

ECC: They were making money hand over fist. They weren't concerned. They were pocketing their money and they were running. They didn't want to invest no money because they all had stuff to fall back on. They had a bar mill. So they had something else to fall back on. They kept going, they kept going until all they have now is a cold [quartz?]. They had the structural steel division. They had Beth Forge, who has a problem. They're always in trouble. They're not making no money. And the people that took over today -- the supervisors they have today -- they're trying hard. They're a new generation. You can't

blame them. It's late and they're trying like Hell and it's so hard. And we're going to have to sacrifice. You [00:14:00] understand my point. Somebody wanted to close the place down, there's no threats no more. If they say, "We're going to shut you down," they shut you down. If you tell them two days later, "Hey, we'll take a 30 percent cut," they'll say, "Hey, we made a decision. You're shut down." It happened in Johnstown. It was Johnstown against Bethlehem. Bethlehem agreed. I wasn't there. I'm out. But somebody at the union -- they had to do it -- agreed that we'll work together. We'll demand. We'll get early buyouts, early pensions. You know, we'll do it through attrition. We'll do it through attrition. We'll try to save jobs that way, we'll try to save as many jobs as we could. And then what happened was that Johnstown wouldn't do it. It was too late to say, "Yes, we'll do it." But they made the commitment to shut them down, and Bethlehem says, "We'll keep the Bethel plant open." Now the union has to come through with their promise. They have to do something. If not, I still feel Bethlehem will shut this place down. They got five years, if they're lucky.

RS: So you feel that people like yourself [00:15:00] -- the men in the mills -- saw what was happening?

ECC: Right, right. It was the older people I see. The younger generation and the younger men - they come in there and they made money, they didn't know what a strike was like. Them guys had it good. So they did that. They went in and did their work, you know, but they didn't believe that things would happen. They were the guys that were hurt most, and when they came to the steel company in '64, they were getting good money. They were getting overtime and all. They bought a house. They bought a boat. They bought a car. And when that big layoff comes, it hurt every one of them. But them guys had never seen a strike. They'd never seen a layoff. They thought everybody was bluffing, you know.

RS: So it was really the older people like yourself who saw --

ECC: We saw, yes. We knew it. When I'm in a department with 2,000 people and I can see what's happening, and when I see that they hired a firm called [Waylon Nelson?]. They're a consulting firm. When they come in, I told the guys, "Don't even talk to those rear ends." I said, "Don't talk to them people. They're here to take your job." [00:16:00]. They says, "Oh, no, we called them. They're seeing how to run the place better. They're at the supervisions job." Bullshit. When they got done, we went from 2,000 people to, round up, I think 535 people right

now. So they did their job. They seen, "Sure, sure. A lot of people are sitting around." But the company hired us. We didn't put out the applications.

RS: Well that's been one of the accusations about the steel industry, that there was a lot of featherbedding, there were excess employees.

ECC: I'll put it this way. I hate to agree with what they said, but if you can run a yard with 530 employees, when you needed 2,000 before, and always ship the same amount of steel, something's wrong. So you improve your workforce, you might educate people more. Incentives come in. And that's another thing that showed the company -- and I used to tell the guys [00:17:00], "Incentive's going to destroy your job." And they said, "We're making money." I said, "Incentives will destroy your job." You have five men, now you have four men. That's what happens. I get old again. You have maybe 12 men on the saws. Now you've got eight men. Because the incentives show you how to make money and get rid of people.

RS: What you're saying then is actually that people were working harder than they did.

ECC: Yes. Yeah, you work for that bonus. You work for that bonus, yes. Yes.

RS: You think other things like safety has decreased as a result of this sort of thing?

ECC: Safety was on a downswing right when the layoffs started. Nineteen eighty-two. But the union and management got together and we said, "We've got to talk," you know. We formed safety teams, and thank God I was one of them. Instrumental, and more of a safety team. They call them safety involvement teams. The company got rid of their safety people. They used to have maybe a safety man for two [00:18:00] men, three men on each (inaudible) for every department. All four of them, they had. Two off the plant. We had safety involvement teams in the yards, in the departments that are actually workingmen, actually our employees, that maybe one day a week would sit down with supervision and talk about safety problems. And they'd watch out for each other. It's working out good. So safety, right now, I think is at a good standpoint, you know?

RS: So you don't think that's been affected that much?

ECC: No, no. In the beginning, it was bad. When they first started laying off safety people, it was bad. People were getting hurt left and right. But now, like I say, because union's involved is, I think, safety's a pretty safe factor. A pretty good factor right now, you know.

RS: Now, '82, when you first got elected, was the really the beginning of--

ECC: Yep. Yep. I'll tell you, when I got elected, I was sorry I even ran. When you get elected to something and you have people threatening to blow your brains out [00:19:00] -- this, it was done by people that were laid off, by wives.

RS: In other words, they were blaming you.

ECC: They were blaming me because I wouldn't take concessions. Because we had a contract talk and I voted against concessions. You know, because of the fact their top cats are retiring with big bonuses and they want us to take the concessions. You know, like [name redacted]. Right before [name redacted] took over and right before the layoffs, [name redacted] took his pension. [Name redacted] got a \$2 million-dollar buyout. We had superintendents that got \$250,000 buyouts. Before long, they were in good health, their wives were in good health, and they invested their money. They were allowed to take so much out for the first year, but they had to invest their money into something. Not in a steel company; anything you want. As long as they invested and didn't blow it. They got a big buyout. And we got crap. You know, I said, "Why should we give them concessions? Why should we pay for their buyouts?"

RS: And this is in, around '80, '82.

ECC: Yeah, and then they start laying off mad. Like I says, [00:20:00], I asked my wife. I used to come home crying sometimes. I used to feel so hurt. I said, "Jeez, what did I do wrong?" I says, "They threaten my life. A woman called me up and told me I'm a no-good bastard," you know? I said, "I don't want to hurt nobody. I'm trying to fight for these jobs. It's not my fault." I start blaming myself. I says, "Maybe it is my fault. Maybe I'm jinxed." And that was bad.

RS: Did the company come to you at that time and explain what they were going to do?

ECC: They came to us. They called us and they're telling us we had to do this and had to do that. You know, they're losing money and can't afford to go on, and all we says to them is "Hey, we don't believe you. Open your books up. Show us what you have."

RS: Did they do that?

ECC: They finally did. The Union -- the International forced them. They got some firm in the International -- I can't think of their names. The firm come in. They work for the International right now. When they opened the books up, that's when we get the concession. They told us and they convinced us. In fact, I still lobbied for no concessions.

And I was turned [00:21:00] down by other local unions, you know? But I lobbied for no concessions.

RS: Now, this same thing was happening out in--

ECC: Johnstown. They were all there. In fact, in '82, I think we still had about six or seven major steel industries, you know, and they start breaking apart. In '82, that's when they start negotiating the Bethlehem contract, the Lackawanna contract--

RS: Separate contracts.

ECC: Bethlehem contract, U.S. Steel contract, you know. That's when they were separate contracts.

RS: How did you feel about this, instead of an industry-wide contract?

ECC: I felt that was gonna weaken us. And not only us, but every other industry that was banded together. We were stronger before. Even today, like the automobile industry. What good is it if Chrysler goes out and Ford works? Ford sells more cars. So these guys suffer here, hey, we don't have to give nothing away. These guys are going to suffer.

RS: This was the position of the International too, right?

ECC: Right, right. Well, the International [00:22:00], they felt the same way -- that we shouldn't split up. But when the International has close to 15, 1 million, 600,000 union

members, and at that time, they lost about \$600,000 to a million, willing to lose more, they're going to buy into almost anything. As long as they can save the International, and save some plants. Their ballgame was after a while, "Hey, we can't solve the problem. The companies are going to shut the plants down. We can't keep calling their bluffs. We've got to work together to try and save some of these plants and, you know, preserve some of these jobs." Now if you went to Monessen -- if you went out west and see all those poor people, you've got to feel sorry for them. You know, they took the brunt of the attack. We're survivors so far. We're lucky. And that's what hurts, when you pit one mill against the other. That hurts. The guys say, "Hooray for me, screw the other guy." But that hurts me. That hurts me.

RS: It hurts the whole movement.

ECC: That's right. And that's what happened with Johnstown and Bethlehem. That's what happened [00:22:59] with Lackawanna. Lackawanna, and I'll tell you when they did this. They did this in 1977 or '78. They come into the Bethlehem plant. We had a 42-inch mill, and they says, "Either you guys produce or we're going to shut you down and operate Lackawanna." They told Lackawanna the same thing: "Either you produce or we'll shut you down and

operate the 42 in Bethlehem." You know what happened? Forty-two produced. They shut Lackawanna down. You know what happened, see, four years later? They shut the 42 down. You know why? Because they weren't spending the money and they were all small sections there. They didn't wanna compete with the mini mill. That's what I keep telling you. They would not compete with the mini mills. They had the big mills going. They had the 48, "Hey, shut them down." They had the 12 and 18. I tell you all the mills they had. A 12- and 18-inch mill. What do you call it? Angles and channels and I-beams. The small I-beams. That section. A general foreman came in one day and says, "You know, Chico," he says, "We're going to shut the 12-inch mill off." [00:24:00] And I was just a shop steward then. I says, "Why, Stan?" He says, "Because the mill down the road," he says, (inaudible). "Rolls at \$10 a ton cheaper." He says, "I told them, the big shots." Jesus Christ, give it to them for \$10 a ton less. You know, until we can get on our feet. Maybe we can get paid. Why shut this down? You know, the company says, "We're not going to compete with nobody. We got enough. We'll work with the 18-inch mill." And the 18-inch mill made a little bigger angles. "Well they shut that down, too!" You understand my point? We'll start rolling that there stuff.

RS: What the hell were they thinking up at Martin Tower?

ECC: I'll tell you, it was money that ruined them. Them guys made the money, they ran. There was so much money. They had so many supervisors. You had big shots. I'm not talking about the lower level. And they had a lot on the lower level. But the big shots, they had them all over the place like rats. They didn't need them. They had everybody, you know? And they all made money. They all made big money. Like rats. That's true. [00:25:00]. They ran away from a sinking ship. You know rats abandon a sinking ship, and that's what they did. The people today, they had to struggle and try to survive it and make the place go.

RS: And they took their big pensions and--

ECC: Big pensions, and they ran. Bonuses and they ran. They had no interest in the people. They had no mercy. You put that down. That's how I feel. That's my feelings. I'm allowed to have that feeling.

MARTIN DESHT: I worked for -- I was in 2598. [Name redacted].

ECC: That's the bastard that got me beat. He's a son of a gun. He apologized to me, you know. But that's how politics--

MD: I left in '78. That was the end of me.

ECC: Put it this way--

MD: Seventy-three to seventy-eight. I was laid off one year and I was never called back. And they called the bulldozers back instead. Thirty-five-inch mill? Then you know what I'm talking about.

ECC: Yep. Yep. What he's talking about on this end, they employed over [00:26:00] 3,000, 4,000 people in the mills alone. I remember, I used to drive by there when I was a kid. I used to eat steaks out of-- I worked at tools. I used to walk down to the restaurants. They had a restaurant across the street from the mill, you know. And them guys would hang out the window. We used to bring them steak sandwiches, bring them beer. A cold beer, you know. They'd be like, "Come on," you know? But that place, that made everything that is imported right now. They made all them bars, you know. They made everything and they made it fast. But as a company, that's the fault. They wouldn't compete. They had something else to fall back on.

MD: When I worked at the 35-inch mill, that mill must have been pre-World War II when I worked there.

ECC: It was. It was. It was.

MD: It was 40 years old when I was there.

ECC: Yes, yes, yes.

MD: I was working on trains and EFM that were 1906.

ECC: And EFM is still pieced together like that. They just put a little money on now and then.

Q2: I worked with tool steel once in a while, too. [00:27:00].
The old part--

ECC: Yeah, the old part. In the back. In the back.

MD: The old steel buildings. Are they still there?

ECC: Yeah, they're there. But they're empty. All the machines are off.

MD: They had a hand mill.

ECC: That's where I started. Right in there.

MD: They were running the hand mill when I was there in the mid-'70s.

ECC: Yep. Yep.

MD: A hand-operated mill.

RS: So it was started in the early -- built in the early century.

ECC: They had the facilities. They had the territory to modernize.

RS: The technology was available.

ECC: They had it. They had research on it. Did you know they had the first caster in this country? Do you know that?

RS: No.

ECC: They built it right down at the research center. And they tore it apart, and they sold it. They had the first caster.

MD: I remember going through that. It was an abandoned plant.

ECC: They had the first caster. That's what hurt--

RS: And they got rid of it.

MD: Continuous caster.

ECC: Continuous caster. First one. They had tool steel, which today, is the bestselling steel in the world. It pays good money. They got rid of that. [00:28:00] They had that galvalume or something. They paint their steel. Galvalume, they call it. They sold the patent on that! Anything they had. All they were interested in the end was buying real estate. They owned almost all of Bethlehem property. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) They had everything over there. Hotel Bethlehem. They have property all over the section there. They own the research center. The stupid son-of-a-guns, it cost them, I think it was \$40 million dollars to built it and they sold it for about \$17 to \$22 to Lehigh, who I think is worth about \$100 million.

MD: After all that research.

ECC: Yeah, all that property! That's how s-- oh, I can't understand it.

MD: So you think they sold their future.

ECC: Yeah.

MD: Today's--

ECC: Today, well, I think the stock report-- Williams said that--

MD: Walter Williams?

ECC: Yeah. He said that we've got at least five years. What's he telling us? There's only five years? [00:29:00]

RS: Five years left.

ECC: Yeah. At least five years. That's the way the paper stated it. That's what I read in the paper. That we would be here five more years. You know, structural mills. What did they tell us? More, and only for five years. Modernize! Let's be here for another 25 or 30 years.

MD: I think he's telling you to start looking for jobs now.

RS: Was it stupidity or just willfulness? In other words, they didn't care.

ECC: Like I said before, I can't say stupidity, I can't say willfulness. I just say money meant more to them. There was more money being made that was put in their pockets, you know, or being spent in other than the plant. In other. Like I said, maybe real estate or whatever. When the money should've went in--

RS: They needed to invest in modernization.

ECC: Today, the 48-inch mill, you've got a new mill stand.

Okay. They spent \$50 million dollars, I think, to put that in. But that's in the middle of the plant. [00:30:01] On this end's the Volkswagen. On this end's the Volkswagen. We're trying to pull a Cadillac. You understand my point? You've got to invest.

RS: Okay, so the mill is put together with band-aids.

ECC: The mill today is being repaired, and I call it band-aids. They only repair what they have to repair. They ought to spend necessary money to modernize. The only way to modernize is if they get some kind of demanding agreement, and they have that. Now, as a union representative, as an employee, I have to see if this here realignment, or this here demanding with the union, will the company keep their promise to remodel? And how long will it be here after remodeling? Are you remodeling the whole plant or are you just going to remodel parts of the plant and shut the rest down? Are we going to be here in five years [00:31:00], 10 years, 20 years? Or are we going to be down in five years? Kaput? What are we going to do? I don't know. That's to see. That's in the future. In fact, I trust some of the people that are management. They're not new, but they're wise. They're people that inherit something. I feel for them. They inherit.

RS: They survived.

ECC: Yeah. They inherit and they're surviving and their jobs are on the line, too. They have to make this work, this agreement that the union and the company have made. If they don't work together and they don't keep the faith or if they don't speak the truth, then they're going to shut this place down sooner than expected.

RS: Alright, so you had to deal with all this starting in '82.

ECC: Up until, I think, May 27th of '91. I was left (inaudible) thinking of all this.

RS: Now, you already mentioned some of the reactions of the workers to the layoffs. [00:32:00] What other kinds of problems occurred with that? You mentioned they blamed you.

ECC: That was the beginning, and that was people being hurt, and we were made to look like the bad guys. And the company had their way of doing it. I mean, people that were there before, they had their way of, I guess telling people that if the union would only give us this and that, you'd probably be working or something. Things like that come out. And the people that made them statements aren't here no more because the company found out if there was a troublemaker working for the company, they got rid of them, you know? After a while, it eased up and I got the

confidence of the workers that anything I said, that they would believe. And whatever I said to them, it was the truth because I would never hide nothing from them. I would never hurt them. Because like I said, my main concern was -- and today, still is -- was that younger man because I always had my pension. There's a 30-year-and-get-out no matter what age. So I had my 30 years and I was president, you know? [00:33:00] So I could say to hell with everything and just get out of there and not take the abuse. But I took the abuse and after a while it settled down, and then the people started believing in me. In their eyes, I was a good leader, you know? And I led them through three contracts. The first one was concessions. The second one, we got some money back to throw. The third one we got more money back.

RS: What kind of concessions were there that you had to make initially?

ECC: It was mostly monetary and there was some holidays we gave back, you know, which we received now. We get them back. The reason I lobbied against the concessions and the biggest reason I lobbied against the concessions -- we had something called 13 weeks' vacation. When they told them they wanted that back, I fought. I said, "We don't want to give that back." I said, "We fought years to get that."

That's something that we should have." And this is from people from International, some people saying, "We always get it back." I said, "Hey, once you lose that, you'll never get it back." [00:34:00] And that's why I lobbied hard against that contract, that concession. In fact, it wasn't because of getting the money back. I knew we'd get the money back. It wasn't because of giving the holiday up. I knew we'd get the holiday back. But I knew we'd never get the 13 weeks back, and believe me, we'll never see the 13 weeks again.

RS: What did you back down to?

ECC: Five weeks after 25 years. Five weeks.

RS: That's quite a concession.

ECC: That hurt because I had it three times. I knew what it was like. And a lot of these young guys were ready to get it. He's 64, going to fall into it. I figured a lot of the guys are going to lose it. Like I says, once you lose it, the company will never make that mistake again. Never. I don't care where you're going to work. They're not going to be there to give you 13 weeks' vacation to pay you. At least, up until this day, if you even mention that in your contract talks, the company laughs at you. They won't even look at you. You'll never see that again.

RS: What was the attitude of the company as things began to get bad? In other words, was it easier for you to work with them or were they more conciliatory? (voices overlapping)

ECC: They were scared. I think the company [00:35:00], the management on there -- and we went through five or six general pipe managers in my time, in my nine years. I think they were more scared and more concerned for their own safety, for their own job. Because it was tough because they had to sell something and they had to do something. And like I said, when you work with management, when you work with line people, line foremen all these years and you get to know them like they're your brothers, they go up through the ranks, you know, and they're afraid of their jobs, they start doing things that they never did before. Like they intimidate you or, threaten you, or, you know, running scared. So they were all scared. I think management was more scared. After the first three years -- after the concessions -- we'd start working, and I think management was more afraid of their positions than you had union people. We knew if we'd get laid off, we'd get laid off. Well, management, they knew if they couldn't come back into the bargaining unit, they'd hit the street. Top management that would never work in the plant knew there was no place for them to go here. They'd go out in the

streets. [00:36:00] And they changed a lot of plant managers, like I said. Maybe five or six, because one plant manager, I guess he couldn't do the job and they just either transferred him, got rid of him, but he would quit and go somewhere else.

RS: Yeah, well that was unlike Bethlehem Steel. Bethlehem had a reputation of sort of covering over their mistakes and keeping people no matter what they did.

ECC: Yeah, but you went through so many plant managers. Like the one-- I won't mention his name because I'm going to make a statement, that, I don't want him to sue me for it being false. I think he was a contract player, and I accused him of that. But he ended up being one of the best plant managers we had. But what happened after a year-and-a-half and he turned things around a little bit, he was offered a position, plus buy-in to the company in Jersey. CEO, which is bigger than here, and buying into this company. He left us, but he proved to me that he would've been one of the better plant managers that we ever had. He would've really turned things around because he was honest, people listened to him, and when he said something, he meant it, you know? And they were good. It seems that we had to go to a better position or they were transferred to Sparrow's Point or something, you know?

Like you had Jack Roberts, who was my first plant manager that I served under or I worked under, put it that way. He was a take-charge guy and he was doing good here, but had problems at Sparrow's Point, so they took him down there. He couldn't last at Sparrow's Point because they were tough down there. He quit and he went to Copperweld, became a CEO there. And you've got a guy named Black. Black was a friend of mine. He was a good general plant manager, but the same thing happened to him. He took up [over there?] and this was a trouble spot, but that was a hot spot, you know? And he went there and he lost his job there. In fact, he even said to me, "Call me, from Texas because I got a call on the telephone [00:38:00]." He had his resume in, and they hired him because of my recommendations, and he thanked me for it. And he got a good job in Texas. But he was a good man, too, you know? It seems that the good men that they tried, they moved up to Sparrow's Point. They finally got a guy that retired from U.S. Steel. And I hope this don't, well, I don't care. He went to Sparrow's Point and turned things around, but he was a stormtrooper. He was an SS trooper. And his name is-- maybe you ought to go there and talk to their guy because they're good. Whenever you get to Sparrow's Point and you want to talk to somebody, talk to a little guy, they call him Spanky. His

name is Don Knellner. He's the president of the local there. Hell of a good guy. He's a smart guy. Don Knellner.

RS: Is that "K"?

ECC: "K," yeah. K-N-E-L-L-E-R. Knellner, yeah. He's a hell of a nice guy. He'll tell you about the (inaudible) down there. But the guy, he got rid of 500 people. And I'll tell you, he turned things around there. He fired them. Full-sale fired them. Filed a grievance. "You weren't there," he says. "Get rid of them." But we'll talk about our (inaudible).

RS: Okay, sure. [00:39:00] So the attitude did change, then.

ECC: It did. It did. What happened, the union and the company, especially people over there now -- they were under my regime, some of them -- they're working with the company. Not working for the company. Working with the company, to save the plant, save jobs. And they'll save as many jobs as they could and as many people as they could. I think it's a do-or-die situation now.

RS: You feel everybody knows that. Management and labor --

ECC: Yes. You know, get off the pot or whatever.

RS: Would you say the relations between labor and management are better now as a result of what's happened?

ECC: I think they're still fighting, but it's a better relationship. I mean, they still have arguments. The company says, "We'll give you 39 jobs." We'll say, "Hey, we want 58 jobs. We'll get 58 jobs in the department. We want 58 pensions." "We'll give you 58 jobs. Fifty-eight jobs will give you 39 pensions." We'll say, "We want the 58 pensions," [00:40:00] which we're going to get. See if we can get a buyout that way. But I guess they meet maybe once or twice a week now, and they're dealing in good faith. They're having their arguments, things are a little slow right now, but like I say, it's sooner or later. I mean, my feeling, it's got to be done by the end of the year or this plant is finished. That's my feelings.

RS: By the end of 1992?

ECC: Yeah, I think they have to do something because I think that there's no more pulling chain. You've got to make a commitment. You've got to do something right now. Get it done. And I think it'll be done.

RS: They're claiming they're competitive now, in terms of selling.

ECC: The only thing that scares me -- yeah, their man hours -- The reason they're competitive is because of the line of work we do. We cut the order. We've got the best quality, but we cut the order. And I heard somewhere that Nucor's

building a mill that's going to cut the order in two. And if they do that, that'll cut our balls off. I'm serious. [00:41:00] They're going to hurt us because we can't sell steel that's cheap as Nucor. If Nucor can produce steel at \$100, \$140 a ton cheaper than we could -- and they're doing it. They're doing it.

RS: But why are they doing it?

ECC: Because their man-hours per ton. They might have one man-hour per ton.

RS: They're not union, are they?

ECC: No union, and that's what kills you. I was there, and if you believe what you read or what you're told, them guys can make themselves, \$40-, \$50,000 a year if the company makes money. It's a gain-sharing or whatever. Profit-sharing. If I make money, you make money. If I lose money, you lose money. If the work is slow, you work three days a week. If the work is good, you work six days a week. They claim they never have layoffs. They never laid nobody off. But I went down there, a lot of guys says, "No, that's true." Now they don't like to talk to union guys [00:42:00], but some guys will talk to us. But General Motors has a plant down there in Texas. They say, "When General Motors hires, their guys quit, because of the air-conditioned plant," and a steel mill is not

air-conditioned, you know. But I think they say that their safety records are good, but I can't believe that. I've seen how they work. I've seen how they work. They must hide a lot of things from OSHA because I've seen guys that should have lost work. I've seen guys work with his arm in a sling. Between Nucor and Chaparral, Chaparral's a cleaner place. But Nucor -- he's the guy that I resent. He's a CEO. You've got to give the guy a pat on the back. He might be getting \$400, \$500,000 a year. He's not getting a million dollars or 2 million or 4 million dollars a year. I mean, if things are bad, it's \$150,000 a year. He worked with the people. He has a plant with 500, 600 people. He's got four supervisors. He don't have 45 or 50 or 60. [00:43:00]. That's where the cost of making that steel is cheaper, and that's what the company is doing. Right now, the company is limiting supervisors.

MD: Bethlehem.

ECC: Yeah, they're doing it. They're doing it. They want us to a demand. They've got a demand, too. You understand? We say, "You've got 200 people here, but you've got 40 foremen. You want to see demand? You want 20 of our jobs, you better get rid of the 30 foremen. You've got too many foremen in one shop." That's the way we operate. The funniest part is, what hurts, you see the man lose his job.

He's not union. But the other thing that hurts, he may be able to come back in the bargaining unit and he hurts one of our people, they throw our people out on the street and then the guys tell the foreman, "I've got 20 years, 25 years." They say, "Okay, well we're going to take your job away." I have a right to go back in the bargaining unit with 25 years seniority. So I bump a guy out. If I come up to supervision division from a bargaining unit job, I go back. I lose all my seniority [00:44:00]. And I never paid a dime in union dues, except when I was running the union. Otherwise, I paid none. I could come right back. I can take the highest-paid job because my seniority warrants it. Happens many times on there. The guys got sick.

RS: I didn't know that.

ECC: Oh yeah, oh yeah. That's what hurts me inside. You know, I don't want to see anybody lose their job.

RS: Was that the result of negotiations?

ECC: Well it was always like that. It was always like that. A lot of your unions -- even in the agreement somewhere, maybe down the line -- but a lot of your unions have, once you leave the bargaining unit, you don't go back to supervision. You don't go back. If you do, you pay all

back union dues. You go back as a new man. Your seniority starts at day one.

RS: That's what I thought it was.

ECC: No, no, no, not here. That's what hurts my feet. You holler at supervision, but that guy could hurt one of your people that's paid union dues all these years. It's like they say. It hurts both ways.

RS: Now you said you were concerned about the younger workers, but the average age of the worker in the Bethlehem plant's pretty high. It's in the 40s, 50s.

ECC: About 44. Okay, put it this way. The majority of the people in the steel plant started in 1964. Majority. I'd say 85 percent. So you figure about 85 percent, at least 75 are at least 18 years old. Figure it out, you know. So figure out their age. What, 62? I mean, 42, 44, 48? I'll tell you, the average age right now, the average is 44. So that's not an old age. That's a young age. And what could help them -- and that's why I'm afraid of contract talks. What could help them, in two years, they'll have a 30-year service. The contract is a part of that. Could the company afford [00:46:00] to tell the union, "We'll keep that 30-year plan in effect," or do they tell the union, "We can't afford it no more." That's what I'm afraid of, because like I say, 85 percent are '64 guys. They'll be

eligible for a pension in two years. It'll break the company. They can't afford to give all them guys their pensions. It'll be after, probably, whatever you're writing. After the contract. I feel that the negotiations, demanding is something different. We can do that. We have the power to do that, understand. The offices have the power to do that. Negotiations, and we're instrumental in giving the men the right to vote. The first time that happened were two contracts for the last two guys. We gave them the right to vote, and they voted for the contracts twice. [00:47:00] If the company says that you could have your 30 years pension rights, but with the best employee. You can't go [any age?]. If not, we can't give you a contract. Will the men vote for that? If the company says, "Well, we're going to shut you down," we've got no contract. We're going to be a Caterpillar. What good is a company or union without a contract? If there's no contract, there's nothing there. You have nothing. That's what I'm afraid of. Is the company going to play dirt on us this time? It says, "Hey, you give us what we want or we're going to shut you down. We have no contract." We'll be another Caterpillar. We've got other people out in the street that are experienced. And they'll come back to work for \$6, \$7 an hour, \$8 an hour. The

company says, "We can't afford to pay your benefits."

[00:48:00] Why do you think the company's fighting? And the union fighting with the company and the government. You know, give us some healthcare. Because the company says, "We can't afford to pay your benefits no more. You're going to have to pay towards them." I'm afraid, believe me. I'm definitely afraid of at contract time, there'll be a big strike. A hard strike.

RS: And when's your contract come up?

ECC: I think August. Let's see, August '93. Right before the 30-year service. You've got to get a receipt for 30 years. We got off the subject a little bit. Maybe we want to get back to, you know--

RS: No, that's fine.

MD: You said a big strike. What do you think the big strike will be for? Health?

ECC: I think if the company will not give us our contract or if the union will not sign for the offering of the company, it will be because of health benefits, pensions. After all these years, that's how I feel because even as a president -- [00:49:00] when I was the president -- they were screaming about healthcare for the past three contracts. You understand my point. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) And like I say, if you've got 85 percent, 80 or 85 percent

of it -- it's got to be the majority of the guys that have their 30-year service -- I don't know how the company's going to put all that experience down there. Say you want to run this plant, how can all those guys take their pensions?

RS: Has there been any hiring at all over the last several years?

ECC: No. Yes. I'm wrong. In the machine shop, they may have exhausted all their people through layoffs and people that didn't want to come back. Then they might need a class-A machinist or something they would hire off the street.

RS: It's real skilled labor down there.

ECC: It's skilled labor, yes. If we had nobody and they prove to us that they can't get nobody, they could hire a machinist like they hired some machinist from Mack one time. [00:50:00] But they were the first guys to get laid off, too.

RS: What's happened to these people? Hell, I guess in about '79, they had about 14,000 people total at the Bethlehem plant. Now they're down to about what? Four thousand?

ECC: I think about 4,700 altogether. And that's counting, let's see, I think we've got not even 19 no more. I say about 18. Eighteen hundred might all go. You've got 1,300 at

2600. That's 31. And you've got 5. (inaudible) I say
40, 44, 47.

RS: That's everybody.

ECC: Everybody, yeah.

RS: What's happened to these people?

ECC: Where they're at? God knows. God knows. Some guys found
different jobs. Some guys moved out of town. Some guys
got divorces. I mean, [00:51:00] in 1982, them first three
years, marriages broke up. I mean, people went through
Hell. I'm telling you, it's sickening to say, and if you
traveled the states, you've seen it. You went down to the
wrong Pittsburgh area, you know, you've seen what's
happened. No work causes misery. Misery causes divorces.
And you get suicide. You had a couple suicides. You had
different things, and people that survived - they used to
come in and see me, some of the guys. Some guy got a job
with U.S. Steel. They go to Morristown, New Jersey. They
travel back and forth. Them guys come to see me. Some
guys got a job with the ARAR, the truck company, the
express. USPS. Some guys were fortunate to get a job, you
know. But a lot of the guys, they just fell out of sight.
And the reason I say fall out of sight, this is a Bethlehem
plant, but remember, the majority of the workforce isn't
from [00:52:00] Bethlehem. You know, they all says, "Wow,

a lot of you are from Bethlehem." No, how many of the majority people come from Jim Thorpe? Hazleton. They come from all over the place. So whatever happened to them, I don't know. Whether they found jobs or what. But after a while, you come to the hall for a while and the guys come to the meetings and after a while, they had no (inaudible) of getting called back and they faded away. Some guys got called back and they wouldn't come back. They says, "Hey, I'm not making as much, but I know I got a secure job. I'm not quitting." You know, some guys kept quitting their other job and they came back. So whatever happened to the people, I don't know. Like salary employees, they got laid off. Like custodians and all that. Cleaned the main office and all. They got jobs with manpower. They do the same work now.

RS: For much less money.

ECC: Right. Yes. It's no better. That's right.

RS: So you had a lot of real personal problems, then.

ECC: Oh yeah, oh yeah. I'll tell you, my wife used to tell me, "Why do you take this? Why do you come home like this? Why?" You've got to think about your family, you know. [00:53:00] And then you get a phone call, two, three o'clock in the morning, somebody got hurt or there's a disturbance. Can you help out? You know, and you're the

president. You've got to answer the phone. And I said, "Why did God go against me? This is the time I wanted to be there to help these people more." And I said, "Maybe there was a reason for it." And there was a reason for it. I had a blockage. I knew I had blockage. I went back to work for about seven months and got sick, and the doctor told my wife, "I want to operate within three weeks." So maybe there was a reason for it. The guy that replaced me had a heart attack, the poor guy. Young guy. So it's not a time, but I enjoyed it. I even lost money. People don't believe that. I lost money by being a president. I helped in negotiations to get them the 401k plan, which they could never get before. I got it for them, and when I went back to work, and the guy with my -- the guy with my time. I was back seven months, and the guy with my time got \$42,000 in it and I got \$7,000 in it. Something's the matter.

[00:54:00] See, I couldn't use union pay. The government said you can't use union funds. They paid me what the company would've paid me. You understand my point? But I couldn't use union funds. I negotiated that part of the contract. But there's things like that, and I'll never regret being a union man. I'll always be a union man. I'll never regret representing my people. In fact, even

now, they call me. A couple guys, they call me, and right away, I give them advice.

RS: What do you think should be done? Across the whole country, we listen to the same problems.

ECC: I mean, across the whole country, I think we all better sit down and listen and listen to each other, and when we talk, don't tell no policy. You tell the truth, you know? If help is needed, I think that we, as blue collar workers, do all in our power to help to save an industry. But let's hope the industry [00:55:00] or whoever runs the industry won't try to make a fool of us. It's payback time. Pay back the loyal people that helped you. Today's a time that our unions were weakened by the PATCO (inaudible) deal, you know? And Reagan helped that. And right now, we're down. We're not out. We'll come up again. But I think that it's time that we sit down and talk to each other and be honest with each other and not try to be so hard. Because I learned one thing, I was hard one time, but it don't pay. It pays to be honest and work together, and if you can't work together and you can't be honest, then fold up and walk away. That's it.

RS: You think the government should--

ECC: Keep their nose out of our business. I mean, protect our rights and protect your industry rights. But protect us,

[00:56:00] not hurt us. Not interfere in our business.

Protect us. Protect us against the imports. Give us some kind of a leeway to move. You know, stay out of our business, but protect the jobs in this country.

RS: You think the last, say, 12 years, the administrations have been anti-labor?

ECC: They have been anti-labor, and right now, they're trying to say that they're behind labor, but they're not. The election year's here. Like I say, if Bush wanted to be a good president, he would've kept his nose out of our business and protect us. I mean, sure, he signed that there enactment on trade.

RS: The trade agreement, right.

ECC: But it wasn't for long enough. You understand my point? Is it fair for us to sell Japanese cars and sell an abundance? Two, three, four hundred thousand, whatever they sell in a year, which I don't even know, when we can't [00:57:00] even sell 2,000 in their country? Is it fair? It's not fair, you know? And we've got to do something about it.

RS: So you think there ought to be some restrictions on it.

ECC: Either restrictions or, like I say, put two minds together and let's be honest with each other and if you want to sell

cars here, sell cars here. They like our cars. The Japanese will buy our cars. They like American-made cars. They like big cars, you know? They'll buy our cars. So let's have a fair agreement and let the government step in and say, "Hey, we're supporting your country, you know, by letting you sell all that stuff here." You know, treat us right. The government can help us. The government can do a lot for us.

RS: How about a policy that would reinvest in industry?

ECC: Right. The government, reinvestments. But all the infrastructure they have in this country, you have enough work that we could produce enough steel here for the next 50 years. [00:57:00] Roads and bridges. The New York alone, the subway system would take you 25 years to fix.

RS: What do you think of the WPA program?

ECC: I would like that. You mean what happened years and years ago?

RS: Yeah.

ECC: Get people off the street, give them jobs. When paying half-decent wages, yes, I think that would help. Let's clean this country up. There's money in this country that can be spent. They've got a deficit, they say. Sure, they've got it, because they gave that money all away. I see helping foreign countries that are down and out, but

you can't keep helping them at our expense. I mean, we've got poor people here that need a job. There's lots of work here for people, if the government would use their money and pay these people. Lots of places could be cleaned up. (inaudible) like mad. I'm serious. We have beautiful steel around here. A fellow officer of mine went to Mexico with his wife and he stood in a hotel. [00:59:00] An earthquake came. In the hotel he stood and he says, "It was built with steel." It stood up. All the hotels around him went down around him, he said. He got sick and he puked. Then he went, "Concrete." That shows you one thing. That bridge that went down, you've got to build with steel. They know it, and they take the cheapest way out. That's the government's fault. They should make it a standard. "Hey, you can't build a structure without steel. You can't go so many stories high without steel. You can't build a bridge without steel." That would help us.

(inaudible) They need it. I was watching television one time. In New York alone, the subways are falling apart. Twenty-five years of work there.

MD: Well, look at Chicago.

ECC: Yep.

RS: The bridges, everything.

ECC: And I think if they would do it, they would give the company a willingness to invest and modernize.

MD: Besides it being a smart thing to do --

ECC: Right, right, right. [01:00:00] There's enough work here for all of us, but the company says that the man-hours are too great. But the man-hours will be great unless they modernize. That can't be helped. You modernize. That job will be there. You'll work the next 25, 30 years. But if you give it to two people without modernizing, I can't buy that.

RS: What effect has -- you're obviously aware of everything happening in the community. What effect does the decline of Bethlehem Steel have on the community? You mentioned individual workers' lives, but what about the community as a whole?

ECC: As a whole, it affects the school system because of taxation. It puts the burden of taxation on people that are employed, people that are pensioned. They've got to pay more taxes. You know, not only on [01:00:01] school taxes, but any kind of taxes that come up. You lose businesses because they can't afford too many businesses. The businesses can't afford staying power if people aren't spending. So you lose the buying power. So there's all kinds of effects. It's a downward trickle. Then they say,

"Well you've got high-tech jobs." Where are these high-tech jobs? McDonald's? What do they pay? You know, I've got a son that works for Manpower. You can't get a good job nowhere. As a president, I won't get them a good job because I took my membership before I took my family. I obligate to the people. My son says to me, "Can't you get me a better job? You've got a pool." I never use my pool. Who's going to use my pool, my union brothers? That's how I felt. I felt there was an obligation there. Also, put my family in (inaudible). I'll help them if I have to. [01:02:00] He even says today, my brothers. My brothers are out of work. They begged me, "Call the state. Do this." I've got (inaudible) of those guys. I would never do that. I'd sooner get a guy to come over my house [for cheap?]. "I've got five kids in my house. I need a job. Can you call somebody for me?" If I get them a job, I get them a job before I get my family. That's how I felt. I felt an obligation, you know, to these people. They elected me in an office. They gave me this job to represent them and take care of them. That was my job, and I'll always do it. I'll always do it. I can look you right in the eye and tell you. I always felt that way. They were my people, even if they threw me out the last time. But there's no regrets. If I was told to run again,

I'd say, "I'm going to be 62 years old. I'm done. I don't want to run no more." My race is over now. I'll help them as much as I could, just sitting here, if they called me for advice or some kind of help. Even if the company called me [01:03:00] once in a while to see if I could intervene with them, talk to somebody for them, you know. They call me. And I think that's good. I think that's respect. They're not using me. They're asking me, you know. I got a call one day last week of an important matter because this shop's afraid of closing, if I could intervene somewhere. Hey, if I could, I will. I don't want to see no shop shut down if I could help save it, if I could keep my people working. My wife just said to me, "You don't get out of it, do you? You're always in it." I said I'm getting interviewed. "Always into it." I said, "I don't want to turn people out. Maybe if I say something, it might help somebody. I don't know." You know, maybe it'll sell a book or something. (laughter)

RS: Well, we're interested in telling the story.

ECC: I know. I hope I'm helping you. I hope I'm not talking too much --

RS: Oh my God, it's very good. It's a good interview.

ECC: When I start talking [01:04:00], I don't stop. (laughs)

RS: A lot of men told us, people we talk to -- most of the people we talked to are over 40. Many of them are bitter and many of them feel that management was basically at fault for what's happened, for many of the same reasons you were talking about. They're really concerned about where the young people go today when they come out of school. Like yourself, you came out of school, got a job, factory mills.

ECC: That's where I said my concern. Remember, I said to you, my son's got to work for Manpower? I said the younger people, the younger generation, the younger workers, that's my concern for today. Where do they go? [01:05:00] Where do you go when they come out of high school? What does that diploma mean? Diploma meant crap years ago when you got a job in the steel company and made good money. That's why I said, you've got to make good money. Thank God I made good money in the steel company. You got a diploma, you go to college. You see college people on the street right now. You have industry, and the concern is today, where do graduating people go today? They go to college, but where do they go after college? Oh there's a (inaudible) somewhere. There's nothing out there. There's nothing out there. And that's why I say, our concern is, until the day I die, is going to be that younger person. Where's he

going to go? Where's that little girl gonna go, if things don't pick up? Where's her mother, my daughter? She works for the courthouse. She works for a [NASDAQ?] company, you know. They don't make much money. Her son -- my son-in-law -- he works for, I guess, some kind of stationery firm. He delivers the stuff. They don't make no money. They call me. I have to help them out once in a while. [01:06:00] They don't do it all the time, but, "Hey, Pop. Let me call you in an hour." I've bought her diapers since the day she was born. I still buy her -- I buy her the Pull-Ups, right there they are. I'm going to spend \$1,600 a year on her, only on her Pull-Ups, her diapers. That was a year of money. I don't mind that. I'm here to do that for them, but what happens if I'm not here? How do they buy that crap? An extra burden on them. You understand my point. And that's the way it is today if this country, we don't straighten ourselves out. Maybe we'll straighten ourselves out. I don't know. I mean the population or the younger generation that's here. I feel for them. Maybe there's a truth to the Bible. Maybe there is an end of the world somewhere down the pike. I don't know. Maybe that's looking into it and I don't want to believe that way, because I get Hell when I don't. I know people that believe in the Bible, they tell me these

stories and I know that. It might be the end of the world, but I don't believe it right now. [01:06:00] Maybe that's going to solve our problems. That's one way to solve our problems.

RS: I don't think that's going to solve our problems.

(laughter)

ECC: That's my concern. Like you said, the guys in their 40-something years, and then guys that are on the street. You've got guys here that are fortunate and some guys who are working here. But how long? If this don't work out, how long? Sure, we can demand. Are we going to give them what they want? Are they going to threaten us with a contract? Are they going to use that now? You know, when you put plan against plan, you deal with us, we shut you down. Johnstown, (inaudible), we shut you down.

(overlapping dialogue; inaudible) You've got a vice president of operations dropping a penny. He goes to each plant, and he (inaudible) "You've got to deal with us or we're going to shut you down."

RS: And eventually, where are they going to go? [01:08:00]

ECC: That's what happens. They're down. They're down, they're down. Because they're going to be sold, nobody's gonna buy them. They're down. Lackawanna's finished. Their coke

mill's down. They've got to buy coke from us. We've got a coke plant here, but is that good for five years, until they find something else? No one knows. They're spending good money because that's a good solid coke. They'll sell to anybody. That's a good start, invest the money in the pollution. They can help standards, you know? So that might take off and stay good for a while, but how much money are they going to invest in the mills? My guess is they'll invest money and they'll make it into what I consider a mini mill faction. They'll work five days, fire the mill, and shut down. Weekends off, with maybe 1,000 people. They said 2,000 right now. That's my feelings. That's my feelings. Because it has to be operated in a mini mill. We have to build the caster. [01:09:00] We can ask them for everything in this plant. They've got the best workforce in this plant and they blew it.

(overlapping dialogue; inaudible) Shhh, what honey? You can get up but keep your mouth shut. (laughter) The next few years, like I say, if things go right by the end of the year, we can see them demanding if it's going to be done.

RS: You know, the Japanese have claimed the American worker doesn't work very good, doesn't work very well. How would you respond to that?

ECC: He's the best worker. He's a man that can work six hours, get paid eight, and ask to give him 12 hours more. What I'm saying is he'll do more in six hours than an average man will do in eight, in Japan. I'm serious.

RS: So you don't buy this idea.

ECC: I don't buy it, no, because if you call the company, they'll tell you, they have the best worker. [01:10:00] I just said before about, we had 1,700, 2,000 men in the beam yard and they're operating with 535 or 38, producing the same amount of steel that they did in 1975, '76. '77.

RS: You know, this is true across the board in the American industry.

ECC: We take our breaks. We take our breaks, believe me. We take our breaks. But there's an incentive. Like I said, there's an incentive there. So we go out there, we break our humps, and make the money. But there's an incentive, so you're actually working hard. When I became a loader down there, I sold maybe three trucks a shift. When they showed me I could make money, I'd give them 20, 25 trucks a shift. Because you can't help it. Because if you don't want to do it, I'm not going to do it. Boss hollering at me, "Chico, don't be so (inaudible), you're hurting our incentives." Because, you know, you've got about five or six gangs on an incentive program, on the trucks, you know.

So I used to slack off. I told the guys in the range going inside and all, I used to get help from the other guys. "Hey! You're hurting our incentive!" I used to punch that clock. He used to say to me [01:11:00], "You're a 35 percent deficit!" (laughter) I say, "That's why they elected me as president, they told me, to get rid of me." (laughter) I used to be with the guys they were making work when it was real cold out. We worked outside, you know. But the guys wanted to work. They used to holler at me. They wanted to work. "You sit in the shandy. We'll do the work." Yeah, don't worry. Go campaign. But they're good. The Japanese, they're full of shit.

RS: The American workers--

ECC: No, there's some. Some maybe you could stack up against, but these guys? You ask to cover that question and they'll tell you. They feel. They admit it. They have the best workforce in the country. They'll all say that, different companies. But Bethlehem will tell you that. They've got the best workforce, you know. And today, they say their workforce comes back and they tell them how to produce the steel. And that's another thing. Years ago, when you told supervision how to do something, the best way of doing it [01:12:00], the easiest way of doing it, the safest way of doing it, and the less costly way of doing it, they told

you to mind your own business. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) Right. Today, they listen. They're starting to listen. They learned that, hey, the worker might know something. When I used to tell the foreman how to do something, he told me "Hey, you do it my way." It ain't good, I did it his way. So instead of doing it two hours, it took me six hours. But I did it his way. He gave me, you know -- I would go sit on my ass. I do it his way, it takes about (inaudible) I do it my way to get done, but he thought I did it his way, it took me six hours. I had four extra hours I coulda gave him somewhere else. I didn't tell him I did it my way. "I suggested my way, you do it my way." Then when you walk away, I said, "Okay, I did it my way. I slept for four hours somewhere." I did it my way, he thought I did it his way. Never told the company that, but they paid me the six hours for doing it his way where they could've paid me two hours doing it that way and the other four, I did something else for him. That's how stupid they were one time. [01:13:00] But today, they try to educate their people, too. They were told that you listen. You bring suggestions back. If they don't want to listen, you know, we'll find a job for you somewhere else for you where you listen on the street. So they got comfortable with their supervision, too, in that.

RS: Okay. Well, good. I appreciate it. Very good interview.

ECC: I hope you get something out of it.

END OF AUDIO FILE