BOOK 34

M A R I E F E S E
Oral History Interview

with

MARIE FESE

Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks

by

Betty Balanoff

Program on Women and Work
Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations
University of Michigan - Wayne State University
Ann Arbor, Michigan

c Copyright 1978 The University of Michigan
INSTITUTE OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS,
The University of Michigan - Wayne State University

PROJECT ON "The Twentieth Century Trade Union Woman: Vehicle for Social Change"

INTERVIEWEE CONSENT AND RELEASE - RESTRICTED AS TO USES

In consideration of the educational benefits to be obtained by myself and researchers, scholars and others from the above Project, and being aware of the procedures to be used therein and the uses that will be made of my interview information, I hereby consent to participate in the Project by being interviewed according to the instructions of The University of Michigan and/or Wayne State University personnel and/or their authorized agents conducting the interview, such Universities hereinafter individually and collectively called "the Universities".

In particular, I consent to the transcription, recording and/or preservation of my interview by photographs, audio recordings, videotapes, movies, transcripts, or any other writings, recordings or imagery of me. However, I desire that no further use of any kind whatsoever is to be made of any such transcript, recording and/or preservation of the interview without my prior written consent or such
I consent by my heirs or legal representatives if I am deceased or medically unable to give it. I further consent that copies of any transcription, recording and/or preservation of my interview may be retained by the Universities and any authorized agent of the Universities that in fact conducts the interview with me, subject to the same restrictions upon use mentioned above. The consent hereunder shall release the Universities and their employees and agents from any and all liability concerning matters covered by such consent.

This Consent shall be legally binding upon my estate, heirs, and representatives.
I hereby agree to: The University of Michigan
Wayne State University oral history project,
"The Twentieth Century Trade Union Woman:
Vehicle for Social Change" has my permission
to send my oral history interview to Microfilming
Corporation of America. I do so agree with the
understanding that my Restricted Release, which
I signed for the project, will be honored by
Microfilming Corporation of America.)

Signature

Date: April 16, 1979
Marie Fese was born in 1934 in Wilmington, Delaware, but grew up in Illinois. She had a close relationship with her father, who owned a tavern and restaurant business. Her mother helped out in the business and Fese remembers there being a long tradition of working women in her family. When she was 11 she began helping out in the family business; by the time she was 17 she was working for the railroad and the American Can Company, while-managing the family business.

During the 1950s Fese married and had three children. She continued to work full time at the railroad, participated in church activities and helped in the construction of her house.

In 1960 a wildcat strike inspired her involvement in the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks (BRAC) and by 1968, as the first woman officer of her local, she began pushing for women's involvement and recognition within the union. In 1972, after attending unionism classes at the University of Illinois she was elected secretary to the BRAC's International president, began teaching unionism classes for the Job Corps and became involved with the union's District Council.

Fese became increasingly involved with the women's movement, and found herself continually thwarted by men who resented her position in traditionally male jobs. In 1973 she became a union International staff officer, and was appointed assistant to the Director of Research and Education of BRAC. In addition, she was involved in the formation of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), and served as chairwoman of the organization's Outreach Committee.

A visit to Europe in 1973 to study unionism and a trip to the 1975 International Women's Year Conference in Mexico spurred an interest in politics. With virtually no outside funding and little support from BRAC, Fese ran for Congress on a Democratic ticket in primarily Republican DuPage County, Illinois. At the same time that she lost the election in 1976, a turnover in the leadership of BRAC resulted in her being fired with no severance pay from her union position. She failed to find political work in Washington, D.C. because of being put on a blacklist for a period of time.

During a period of depression and illnesses following these setbacks, Fese withdrew from many of her union activities, although she continued to work full time for the railroad. Fese is currently president of her union local, and in 1977 was appointed by President Carter to be a delegate to the International Woman's Year Conference in Houston, Texas.
### Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Family Life</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Work Experience</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating, Marriage and Motherhood.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960 Railroad Strike</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work on the Railroad</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness and Family Problems.</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Activities (BRAC),</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election Loss and Depression.</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's Movement</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work for the Job Cops</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work on Union Staff</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Womens Movement, CLUW and ERA</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and International Women's Year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running for Congress</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Union Job</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back to Work on the Railroad.</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Womens Year</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Du Page Consulting Corporation.</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety on the Railroad</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injury on the Job and Recovery</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Life Experiences</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTERVIEWER: Let's begin at the beginning. I'd like for you to tell me what you can remember about your early life, your family.

FESE: My father was always a very dynamic, enthusiastic person. He came from Rochester, New York, but he travelled all over the country with Nizer Brothers, a five-and-ten cents store. He used to open all their different luncheon counters. I was born in Wilmington, Delaware, which I've never been back to. One brother was born in Chicago, another in Sioux City, Iowa, so that will give you an idea how we really moved. I can remember back quite far. As I was saying, my father was the idol of my eye. I never seemed to get along too good with my mother in the sense of the role-playing kind of thing. My father, through the years, I can't ever remember him treating me as a woman. I mean, that there was never a distinction ever. It didn't bother me until I was about eighteen or nineteen until when I went out into the world I found out that there was a difference. I remember always that there was a burning or a desire things had to be done. He must have taught me these things somewhere along the line. I remember many of the things he told me, you know, that life was a service to the community. You're here because you must give of yourself towards others. It wasn't something that he preached in the sense of preaching it, but something he lived himself. I remember one time when my brothers were younger, he had some friends that their kids didn't have any clothes or shoes. He came in and took my brother's clothes and shoes and gave it to them. We were never really poor; he had a business. After he left Nizer Brothers some time during the war; probably around 1945 or so he went into business with a partner, a tavern and restaurant business on North Avenue in Stone Park, Illinois, and he did excellently. Then he opened another place. It was on Harlem Avenue and North Avenue. Sears owns the property now. He used to call it El Morocco, which was his name Morocco. He had a different partner at that time.
I was eleven years old and began to work with him at that point. I would work on Friday and Saturday nights making hundreds of barbecue beef sandwiches. I remember coming up at that age with an innovative idea of how he could prepare them ahead of time, and they were even more delicious than if they were made at that time. I remember working with him and he was always in praise of me.

Were you the oldest child?

I was the oldest and only girl; there was seven years between each of my brothers and me. There was seven years between me and my next brother and fourteen years between me and the youngest one. So it was really like being an only child. I resented, of course, my second brother, at the same time, at the same time loving him. Of course sibling rivalry was in there.

Did your father come from a business family?

Yes, my father did. My grandfather in Rochester had a farm. He also had a grocery store, and he sold at the market a lot. I remember my father talking about it. He was in business, my grandfather; during the depression he kept a lot of people fed until he lost his own business. You know, he couldn't feed everybody in the world. My father's family always seemed to have money. I'm not going to say we came from money because we didn't, but because of the farm nobody was ever starving. My mother's side was just the opposite. My grandfather was a laborer and he worked very, very hard. Both grandparents were from Italy on both sides. He worked very hard. I remember him vaguely as I was growing up. He had a little house out towards the country and was always scraping. Even things that are holdovers of myself and my mother I see; they were literally hungry during the depression and food means a great deal to her. And as you can tell by looking at me, food was emphasized by her because of the lack of it. She is now in Florida with my father. My father retired in Florida and if you go down there it's ironic, the food is her main thing. It's all she does. She has the hugest freezer I've ever seen full of food, and two refrigerators full of food, also. They are living very modestly but they will never starve. The storing up of food is her whole life.

How did your parents meet? Did they tell you about their courtship or how they met?

Well, just stories I have gathered through the years. This part of the interview I would not want to be repeated at this point with both parents living. Back in those days when society and morals were different, I believe that my father got my mother pregnant and had to marry her.
FESE INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: That's not so different.

FESE: No, but in those days it was like a tragedy. My father idolized me as I was growing up; there was always this great love. But she seemed to always resent me at that point. Not really; she was just a person that couldn't express love. You know women had a different role in those days, and my father was always out working with women and working behind a counter at a dime store. There were always young girls around. She was very jealous of him and I, and how well we got along. She seemed to get better when my brother was born. She kind of took him under her wing and that was her kind of pet. He was very sick when he was born and she nursed him back to health two or three times. He was born with the whooping cough. So I remember during that time her neglecting me more and her whole life was for him. I guess my own leadership began as a way to say to my father, "I will make you proud of me." You just say those things in thoughts, but not in words.

INTERVIEWER: Which town can you remember living in first? You said you moved a lot.

FESE: Oh, I remember Chicago. It was my first time in school. Roosevelt Road and Hulst Street, there was a Nizers down there. I remember that. Sioux City, Iowa was where I made my confirmation. I remember the stage and a play I had done. I remember the street, I remember the houses. I think Sioux City was about the best. Living there the longest, I remember it.

INTERVIEWER: From about what age to what age?

FESE: I had to be seven because when my brother was born we were in Sioux City. I remember having whooping cough there. And we might have stayed there for couple of more years at that point. Like I say, I remember it quite well. I still have--my mother gave me a solid gold cross with my name, Morocco, on it, which was my maiden name. I remember that quite well. I don't wear it.

INTERVIEWER: Did you mostly live among Italian people?

FESE: Never, I never lived among them. I know that I'm Italian but I don't consider myself. I'm American and sometimes I have to question in my own mind when I see Polish groups and such. My mother was born in this country. My father wasn't but he was here at three months.

INTERVIEWER: So he doesn't remember anything else.

FESE: So I'm second generation and my children are third.

INTERVIEWER: So you never got locked into one of those communities where everybody knew everybody?
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: No, never. In fact, Sioux City was German. I remember Hammer
was the name of our landlord.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of house did you live in? Did you live in apartments
or what?

FESE: Mostly, yes. My parents never owned a home until they moved to
Florida. We always were apartment livers.

INTERVIEWER: It wouldn't make much sense when you had to move so often.

FESE: They rented a home in Sioux City. Maybe that's why I remember
it so well. I remember... I think that was the point where I think
I became aware of life. Things in Sioux City are very vivid to
me. My first encounter with a boy where you realize finally
that there's something different. He was much older. He might
have been twelve or thirteen. But I remember my parents began
to say you can't do this or you can't do that.

INTERVIEWER: Were you a tomboy or not?

FESE: No. The equality was always there. I look back now with all
that's happening. It's been there all the time; that I'm just
as good as that man is or that boy is even though I couldn't run
or could not do all the things they could do. I didn't have the
strength, but the fight was always there. I had to be, now
that I think back. In the last year and a half I've taken stock
of my life and I've lived all this over again wondering why.
Why was I chosen to fight battles that I never really wanted to
fight?

INTERVIEWER: But it seems that your early life in a lot of ways prepared you.
Even the moving around required a great deal of stamina and
adjustment.

FESE: And loneliness. One year I was in seven schools, so it was
always that striving to excel in something or be part of some-
thing, whatever it was at that point. Who knows. Maybe to have
someone just to know and like you. I had no friends at that
point, other than my father.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, and it made that much more important then.

FESE: Yes, and my mother really wasn't my friend. You know, I tried,
It wasn't until years later that I realized she just was a woman
who could not express love. She had other ways, you know, by
feeding me. That was an expression of love - eat everything, go
ahead—you must know the type. That was her one way of express-
ing love until I was much older.

INTERVIEWER: Did you go to public schools?
FESE: Yes, I always went to public schools. The next point in my life I remember was Stone Park, Illinois, and we became pretty stable at that time. I went there—it was either the last part of the fifth grade or the first part of the sixth grade—I would have to check school records. But there we settled long enough that I did make some friends and graduate grammar school from there. I was a very big girl. At that point I wasn't heavy but I was taller than all the boys and I was [more] well developed than most girls. About at eleven I developed. And you know, they used to make fun of me constantly.

I loved to read and I remember you had to turn in eight book reports and I turned in fifty-three. Then they would get mad because I would turn in so many, but I thoroughly enjoyed books. At that time I remember that in order to be liked by your friends that's when the parties began, and I began to throw parties, and I have not stopped yet. I still love them and people are, always over at the house. Well, they say that I'm a good cook. I don't emphasize it as much as my mother does.

INTERVIEWER: Your parents were very nice about letting you have a lot of parties, I assume?

FESE: They were gone working most of the time. My mother worked with my father when he got his business. She worked off and on as I was growing up. Once he got his business she was working full time and really put in a very big effort to make the business a success. So I remember my mother was always working. I came from a background of working women. Ironically, my husband came from a background that the mother never worked and it was a slap to his dignity when I continued to work. I'll get into that later on. That's a story all by itself.

INTERVIEWER: Your father didn't feel that way about your mother, did he?

FESE: No, he expected it. My grandmother worked because they had a farm and she manned the store in those days. I'm going back to the depression and before. I don't remember, of course, 'cause I wasn't born until later, but bits and pieces of my life—as you remember as a child going back to see grandma, you know, they had a little store. That didn't last too long. And I know that they had a greenhouse. But my grandmother on my father's side was always working, so my mother then began to work helping him out, although her mother didn't work: We've never talked about it; she's not still one you can really talk to. I think she began to find herself as a woman, too, probably, and enjoyed being out and working. Even to this day she's one of those people like a rock of Gibraltar. I mean, she becomes your friend; there is no friend like her. She is just so steadfast and will do almost anything. People all over the country say, "Oh Kay, we remember your mother." And she is still taking care of two people in Florida. She is sixty-five herself and takes care of two elderly people. Both the husband and wife
FESE: have cancer and she goes there every day and helps them. In fact, this man loves her so much he just gave her a ten-year-old car, a Chrysler, but a beautiful car. He gave it to her so she would have transportation to get about. She's a rock. This is her way, but she's not one to touch or express love or talk about her emotions.

INTERVIEWER: It's all through work for you that she shows her love.

FESE: Work, yes, or sacrifice for you. Maybe back in those days it was the only way she had of expressing it, as for many women.

INTERVIEWER: When she started working in the business, did you sort of trade places and begin babysitting and housework or what?

FESE: Yes, babysitting and housework and taking over and also helping in the business. They must have gone into business in about '45 or so when they first got to Stone Park and I was in fifth or sixth grade. Then by '48 or '49, when I was going into high school, he bought the business that finally became his/main business. It was on Wolf Road and Lake Street in Northlake, and it was called Pat and Kay's after their first names. It was just a little shack-looking building with a little garage on it. He did through the years turn it into a very large business worth quite a bit of money. We weren't wealthy in the sense that we never had a home and a lot of ready cash. My father turned the garage into a home, a very tiny little thing. He never had cared anything for material things. He never put on a pretentious show of a big house or that kind of thing. Neither one of them were like that. It was service to the community and church that was important. Northlake at that time was not yet a city and the church was an army barrack. I remember him then as I grew up being involved himself in politics and working towards the community, working in the church. We worked at big carnivals and things to raise money. As I began to get older I had to take part in trying to raise money for the church, which is St. John Vian. It's a beautiful church now there, a gorgeous thing. I remember they were just trying to raise money at that point for the school that was there. They got the school and put the church in the basement. I can remember so many of these things. Of course at that point....I was going into high school and my life begins to change. But still at seventeen was the first time I took over his business and managed it. It was the time my grandmother died or somebody passed away and then for four or five days I had to manage it.

INTERVIEWER: You ran the whole thing?

FESE: Yes, and at that time he had about ten or fifteen people working or so. Eventually he had 30 or 40 people, and I would still manage it. But I remember that was the first time he was gone, and I wonder now if I was scared or if I really got sick. It
FESE: was a very warm time of the year, and I got very deathly sick. My knees wouldn't want to work, and I wonder now if I was just frightened. At those stages you don't know what was wrong. I really thought I was sick and I was just scared of handling all that.

INTERVIEWER: How many hours a day did you work? Maybe you were exhausted.

FESE: Oh, I finally put in tremendous amount of hours. But what happened is from eleven to sixteen I worked for my father plus going to school. Then at sixteen I began to work on the railroad. I started at sixteen on the railroad because by this time, now, I didn't want my father dominating my life. Now it was time to break on my own, but even then I can remember I was going to do this and I was going to do that. And I think the union tendencies came at this time because I didn't like the way my father treated his help. Oh, we battled a couple of times.

INTERVIEWER: What was wrong?

FESE: I just felt that he didn't pay them enough, and then he used to say, "Well, they're going to steal from me anyway," and we would argue about that. He belonged to a union. He would pay their dues so that the union would stay out. That's one of those things that happen in life. He was paying their dues although they didn't even know they were members of that union. So now he says to me that I'm wrong in my thinking and I don't remember right, that he was always a staunch union man. But I tend to argue. This part of my life becomes cloudy. I don't know who's right or wrong. At sixteen or seventeen, you know, you begin to find boys and all that other good stuff that goes along with life.

INTERVIEWER: Did your father pay you wages when you worked for him?

FESE: Well, really not wages in a sense. In fact, when I started working on the railroad, he said I had to pay him half my wages. For a while he got half my paycheck, but I kept conning him-out of that. But he was pretty good with money. But if, like two or three o'clock in the morning, if he needed help he'd walk in that door and say, "I need help." And to this day, the training from that, I can wake up, be dressed, and out of the house in ten minutes. I mean, you just did it so you didn't have to listen to it. The training was really good, 'and I did waitress work. Later on and even now I think it helped in my organizing—because you know you've got an order here, an order there, and you have to keep everything going in your mind. Now, today I find that a lot of things that I do I can handle, I really believe it's from that training.

So I still continued to work, and then I needed some money and I worked for the American Can in a factory. And I worked for the railroad.
INTERVIEWER: Now, which one did you do first--can or the railroad?

FESE: Oh, I was doing them both. I was working the midnight shift so I was able to do them both.

INTERVIEWER: You were working two jobs?

FESE: Through my life you'll-find that I was always doing something. I worked the midnight shift for eighteen years So in all those eighteen years I tried everything under the sun. I went to school and had children. But anyway, I think that what happens to a woman if I could only pass this on--I see it changing, which is good, that at that point I knew I wanted to do something in life but I didn't know what. Strange as I was, I had left home. My father and I had a big argument and I left home at seventeen and I got an apartment with a friend of mine who was getting divorced in Melrose Park. I was considered the tramp of the century. My father owned a tavern and now I had my own apartment and I had a boyfriend and that was it. There was no other thing but to be a tramp. Now, you have to remember that this was in the '50's. This was '51, '52, in that area. If I had lived in this day and age no one would give it a second thought. Anyway, I think now I would have wanted to pursue a career. I should have gone to school. I quit school. I was so far advanced in my thinking I quit school at sixteen and I was out one year when I realized that I had to go back. When I was seventeen I tried to go back and I went back six weeks and I think I made the dean's honor roll because it was just so different. In the meantime, when I quit, my mother insisted that I go to business college, Freeman's Business College in Oak Park. Although I took shorthand. I never used it and I don't remember it, but the typing skills was really the basis of me, continuing my own career. It was the foundation. So I went to the railroad and I had typing. I was a fairly decent typist. Ironically, at school I loved typing numbers so when I got to the railroad it just worked out fine.

INTERVIEWER: Most people hate typing numbers.

FESE: Well, the numbers were a challenge, so I learned numbers when nobody else did. Although I was not the greatest typist, because I knew my numbers, which they always threw in the typing test, I did well.

INTERVIEWER: What exactly was your job? You were a typist?

FESE: Well, I started on the midnight shift, which is what they call the car record clerk. Now computers do it all but in those days we had every car that came in; we had to book each car in. Let's see, I worked at sixteen and I must say the next two or three years of my life were just growing up, having a ball. And I had a car, which also put me strange. No girl had a car.
FESE: My father taught me to drive at thirteen because he wanted me to drive in to the bank for him, and I could be an extra set of wheels. He sent me so often.

INTERVIEWER: You couldn't even get a license at that age!

FESE: No, but I lied and said I was sixteen at fifteen, so I had a license when I was fifteen years old. You could do it in those days. I went to Forest Park where the driving school was at that time, told them I was sixteen, and they believed it. I went on my birthday when I was fifteen and got my driver's license. I think twenty or thirty years later I changed it. Now I'm sorry; I should have left it younger. Anyway, then I got to drive, which gave me the freedom that no other girl had in those days. And my father just enjoyed me driving because I took a burden off of him. He'd send me to the bank or to pick up stuff for the restaurant. So that gave me freedom. I had most of the time old junky cars, but I learned a lot about cars and how to fix them, and met more policemen because the old junky cars were usually falling apart. And eighteen girls piled into the car with me.

INTERVIEWER: I bet they were helpful.

FESE: The police were helpful, yes. I thought you meant the girls. Yes, they were very helpful. And the usual teenage things of growing up. At fifteen I had met a young boy who my mother liked very much. By the time I was seventeen I could almost go any place as long as I said I was going with him. At seventeen I realized he was a very domineering German young man, the male chauvanist to the hilt, and I remember one day--my love for reading has always been there one day I was reading a book across the room and he was talking to me. It was the Sunday paper and he came over and he didn't read. He didn't have much schooling. He was from North Dakota and he was working in one of the factories and he figured he had reached the pinnacle at that point in his life. He had come over and he knocked the paper out of my hands and said, "I don't ever want to see you reading again." And I couldn't imagine going through life without reading, and if I had to live with this man. That was almost the beginning of the end at that point. I realized I was beginning to outreach him, to surpass him.

INTERVIEWER: So you and this German were about finished.

FESE: Well, one time I began to venture out driving in this car. I went up to a friend of mine, her husband was up in Minnesota. He was in one of these National Guard camps, and I drove up there. If you ever want to feel like the belle of the ball, go up there. At eighteen, in a camp where there's all men, you've got to feel fantastic. He was up there, too, this young fellow that I was going with. He was up there and that was one of the
FESE interviewed

FESE: reasons I went. I told him at that time, "If you don't marry me now, we'll never get married." And we never got married. The Lord was looking over my shoulder.

Around this time, too, I met—and why I have to tell you this is because it led to my meeting my own husband. My father had this tavern and he had this trailer court in the back. A young couple that had been married several years with two small children had gotten divorced. This young fellow came in. I knew him well. He was good looking and I liked him, but divorce in those days, too—you have to remember this was 25 or 26 years ago that I'm talking about. Divorce in those days was quite strange. He had come in one night and was sitting at the bar. His wife had left him; they had gotten a divorce. She had gone to California to another man, and that's another story, that isn't my story. Anyway, he was sitting there and he was very lonely. I had come in from a date or something, and I had sat next to him at the bar. Now, I didn't like to date these kind of men. I always went with the ones that were from school or a little bit more intelligent. I didn't want the local bum type of young man. Anyway, we had a code. I'd say, "Well, I have to ask my father." And my father would say, "No, I need you to work." That meant that I could get out of anything 'cause I didn't want to date the men who had come into the bar. So this one time, like I said, I had come in and Bud asked me to go bowling, I think it was. I asked my father. I mean, I liked him, but what the heck, he was a divorce. So I said to my father, "Bud's asked me to go bowling. Will it be alright?" And he said yes. It was a bigger shock to me. Well, after that then I had to go.

INTERVIEWER: Had he forgotten the code?

FESE: No. When I come back then I hollered and I said, "Why'd you do that?" And he said, "I really felt sorry for this young man. He really is taking the loss of his children and his wife badly, and I thought he just needed some company." Well, we had such a good time that night. And another time he asked me out. Whatever happened, I fell in love and I didn't mean to. I think it was a big, traumatic part of my life because now he's a divorce of Catholic faith and I'm Catholic: My parents now are screaming I can't go with him. There was a big confrontation. In fact, that's why I ended up with my own apartment.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, this is when you moved out?

FESE: Yes, I was seventeen when all this was taking, place.

INTERVIEWER: So you moved out and you kept dating him?

FESE: Yes, I kept dating him. Then my mother and father didn't want me to go because they realized something was happening. We had talked about well, maybe I'll go into the Lutheran faith and
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: what did it make any difference? Or maybe something would happen and we could get it annulled. As a young man he had had rheumatic fever. He was not a well man. He didn't look like he was ill, but he was. He had an enlarged heart. He was a carpenter, which he shouldn't have been, and I guess because he looked so healthy he always was out to prove that he was. I went with him all that winter through Christmas and New Year's. I had left the house in November. Christmas and New Year's. I had my own apartment all the way through February. I think what I did is I took some vacation time and went to Florida to see my aunt and uncle at that point, trying to think what I would do, too. And when I came back he was very ill and he asked me to take him to the doctor. Since he didn't have any money he had to go to County Hospital. I remember he died on June 1.

INTERVIEWER: Oh my, and you didn't know he was that sick?

FESE: While he was in the hospital, he was getting sicker and sicker. We made a decision that we had to break up because of the families. I walked in there on June 1. I took one look at him across the room and decided there was no way I could give this man up and I'd find a way. I talked to him. You know, at County Hospital you can only be with them at certain hours. I talked to him for maybe an hour, and all of a sudden he began what now I know is the death rattle, and he died.

INTERVIEWER: Right while you were there?

FESE: While I was there. I always felt guilty. Maybe if I'd decided to give him up. Anyway, he died, and now I know that what I went into was a very bad state of depression. I was nineteen by this time. While he was sick I took over his car payments. That's one of the reasons I was working the two jobs. I went to work at American Can so that I could help pay for his car. I was taking care of his payments. Now I think maybe the Lord said somebody had to care of him at the end. It gave me an insight to death, because at that point his mother was dead, his stepmother really didn't care too much. He was 24, but his father had remarried after his mother died. I remember having to go buy the casket and pick the lot and everything. That's got to be the worst thing a nineteen-year-old can do. I think it just made my awareness of death; for the feelings of the family. And in those days I remember the family stood while they closed the coffin, which they've changed, thank God. He passed away and I figured that chapter of my life had just closed and I forgot it. All my life I've been able to say, "Well, that's over," and try to forget it until as you get older, things change.

Six months passed and Bud had a friend by the name of Frank that worked for the railroad, and everyone knew him. Ironically enough I had known his sister really well, was good friends with his sister; had met her a number of times. He knew my parents, my parents knew him. We went to the same school. He's six
FESE: years older than me, but our paths had constantly crossed and we'd never met. This was in '52 now, and the Korean war was going on. I knew that Bud had talked about his friend Frank. He was his best buddy, stood up for the wedding, baptized one of the children. And I felt that I knew him a little bit but I didn't know his family. I didn't realize that his sister was my friend. I just never put anything, together.

It happened in November, just after Thanksgiving, a friend of ours from the railroad was going to Korea and we were giving him a going-away party. We were going to Palmaré's in Melrose Park for the party. We got off work at ten o'clock and we were all going to meet there to have a going-away party for this young man. I had two dear friends of mine that were with me, and they are still my friends. As we walked in the door someone said to me, "That man sitting at the far end of the bar is Frank Fese." And as I looked across, and my two friends were there to verify it, I looked across the room and I said, "That's the man I'm going to marry." Now I was not in love. I had not even met him. I just knew. It was just something that when I took a look across that room and saw him sitting there, he wasn't even looking at me, but I said, "That's the man I'm going to marry." It was like a bolt hit me. And I said it to these two women and they looked at me like I was a little nuts. They figured I'd been drinking. I didn't know him, so now I said I got to meet him. The first thing I do, a very good friend of mine is over there—a sexy little blond—and I go worming my way in. I said, "I'm the girl that went with Bud. Would you like to go out some day to see his grave?" That's how I got my husband out. So that's why I had to tell the story of the first young man.

Somehow or other, I don't think the beginning of our relationship was a mad, wild love that was there with the first one. We got married in June, but for seven or eight months before marriage was a time I guess girls today don't have to go through it. I knew that I didn't want to get married, yet I wanted to get married, yet I wanted a career. I wanted to do something with my life, but society says you do nothing but get married. I had gone to Florida in January and February of '53. I had an opportunity back when I was seventeen to work for the Miami Daily News. My parents said, "No, girls don't do that. You come home." Back home I went. I could have bought a home at that time. Girls didn't buy homes. Now, as I'm older I see that you went along as a young girl. I saw that other girls bought homes. Nobody else left their parents and went to work on a Miami newspaper. So I must be strange. Now the strangeness that I felt for many years began to really hit me. That I went in to work on the railroad and although I was fortunate that any job I ever worked I did get paid the same as any man. Fortunately, I worked for a union that did that. I went into the union a few months after I started working. I knew there was something; what it was, at this point you're a little too young to know, especially
FESE: coming from a background that wasn't unionized. I loved working on the railroad. I enjoyed it immensely, but I could see that without some joining together that they would just discard you as a dead body. At that point in time you didn't have to join the union. I joined at that point. There was later court action where you had to join the railroad unions because you couldn't strike anymore. That's something maybe as we go on I can repeat.

When the time came my husband and I were married in June. We got married only because I felt that I had to marry him or lose him, but I really wasn't ready. I told my father I was married. He would not let me live with him till we got married in the church, which was on October 10.

INTERVIEWER: You had a civil ceremony first?

FESE: We had a civil ceremony. You could go down to Crown Point, Indiana. Anyway, then afterwards someplace in August or September I realized I was pregnant. Well, now we had to tell his parents.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't even tell them?

FESE: No, at the same time his sister was getting married in October and he didn't want to spoil any of that. And his parents didn't want him to marry me because of my background. I had a bad background. I had a tavern and was so independent. I had my own apartment and how could he possibly? In fact, it was thirteen years later; one day I was sitting there with my three kids and I said something to my mother-in-law about the day Frank asked me to marry him. I thought she was going to faint. She said, "Frank asked you to marry him? I thought you two were drunk and you got married one night." In her mind for thirteen years she was so sure that it was just a quirk of fate that we met.

Anyway, I knew that there was something that I still wanted to do. I wanted to go back to school. The things that I wanted to do, society said no. I wanted a business but what business? I wanted to go into the restaurant business 'cause that, of course, is what I knew. And at every turn I see now that society dictated to me, not only me but it dictated to many of my friends. I see my friends that married and we talk now about it. What else was there for us? On the railroad, like I said, I got paid for it, but there were still a lot of limitations. We couldn't work seven days a week; the men could. We couldn't work a double; the men could. But at that point I think now all these feelings inside me must be Mother Nature saying I must get married and have children. What else could there be for me? For generations that's what you did. When I got married, I thought then, now you're at peace with yourself. And it didn't happen. And as the years progressed I could see that more and more the frustration became a part of my life. We moved
FESE: to a small apartment in Chicago, my husband and I; lived there just for a short time. We worked afternoons and we had friends over at midnight and the landlord didn't like that too much. We moved out and what we did, we moved in with my mother-in-law shortly after we married. I knew that that was the wrong thing to do, but my husband liked the openness and he didn't want to live in the apartment. He had never lived in an apartment. He had always lived in the wide open spaces, and at that time it was suburbia, lots all over. His parents had built this house in Stone Park and there was nobody around it. It's not that way today, but it was in those days. So he couldn't adjust to the life, so we went back there. When he had gone into the Army his parents had built a garage in the back to house his car, and they had gotten a house permit instead of a garage permit and built it a little bigger. So we made the decision that we would turn this little garage into a home.

INTERVIEWER: So you at least had a separate house.

FESE: So we'd have a separate house. Now, I'm pregnant of course, and we're working like crazy now building a home. And I loved it!

INTERVIEWER: I assume you gave up your job at Can at least?

FESE: Yes, I did.

INTERVIEWER: When you got married or before?

FESE: Before. I didn't have that car payment; I had given that up. In fact, I literally was fired. It was one of the few times I was fired. I didn't care. I found out factory work was not for me; standing there watching those little cans go off the line just wasn't for me. That wasn't my career. So when I got married we built this house and I thoroughly enjoyed it. For the first time my talent just went wild building this house. I was dealing with men building, the lumber, everything. I got so good I could argue with any carpenter, and I did my share: Even pregnant I was carrying things and designing houses and everything, and just had a ball at it.

Of course at that time at the railroad—now these are things that later played into my own union career. We worked for the railroad, and under the Railroad Retirement Act they had put in a clause that if you were pregnant you could continue your job and receive sick benefits. It had been a new thing in the last few years prior to my having children. There were some women that had to quit to have their babies, but that was changed because we had a gentleman that was just so far-reaching. His name was C. L. Dennis. He just was so far-reaching in his thoughts on unionism. Maybe because he had six sisters working on the railroad or what I don't know, but a lot of that stuff came into play. Of course, he alone can't take the credit for
FESE INTERVIEW

Permission required from interviewee for any quotes, citations, and/or utilization of material (see legal side)

FESE: those things, but he was innovative in trying to get these changes made. Whoever did it, I was able to now keep my job, have my baby and then in six months go back to work. And that's just exactly what I did. Two months before the baby was born I went off work and was able to collect twelve dollars a day all the time. Now, for some reason, two weeks before the baby was born and two weeks after the baby was born you were to collect time and a half or something. You got eighteen dollars a day. Anyway, in those years it was good. So I had the baby, and we made arrangements that I went back to work. Now at that point I didn't realize it, but my husband and I began at this point to now to disagree. He figured I was going to collect that money and quit. He was going to be macho man and support me for the rest of my life. We had now moved into this little house. All the time we were living with my mother-in-law she would tell me, 'Frank doesn't like this and Frank doesn't like that.' And I used to bite my tongue. In fact I remember going back to my father and I was big with child, and I said, 'That's it. I'm giving up.' He said, 'You made your bed, you go back and lie in it. You aren't coming home no more.' So back home I went to my husband. I figured nobody wanted me. I had to stick with this man that I had married. We've always gotten along good, but the circumstances always seemed to be rotten around us. So my mother-in-law gave me a very rough road. But once my baby was born she let my husband go. She grabbed ahold of my baby, and unfortunately I let her.

INTERVIEWER: She became mama?

FESE: Well, you're a young girl and you got this teeny tiny baby in your hands, and what do you do? It's crying. It needs a bath, you put it in the water, and it screams. Well, she knew how to take care of it. She'd never worked and she just adored my daughter, Patricia. It was her baby, not mine., after awhile, I made the mistake at this point to let my baby go so I could have a husband, and in that period of time, for the next year or so, my husband and I did everything. It was like newlyweds then. We worked together afternoons. She took the baby. Sometimes we left the baby at her house all night. We lived next door to each other.

INTERVIEWER: So you were really free for a new mother?

FESE: Yes, and she took care of the baby and I just had to thoroughly enjoy myself.

INTERVIEWER: Well, why was it so bad? Did it turn out later to be a mistake?

FESE: Yes, it turned out that I shouldn't have done that. I should have taken over my own child's life. As things came to pass--now I've been the world's worst housekeeper. I don't profess to be a good housekeeper. My mother wasn't, I wasn't, Grandma wasn't. I never got married and said I was going to keep the
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: Where everything was clean—you know, white glove test daily. She had lived a life of Monday you wash clothes, Tuesday you iron, Wednesday you sewed, Thursday you had—the day off, Friday you cleaned house, Saturday you baked bread and made tomato sauce, Sunday at two o'clock you ate spaghetti. I mean, every week.

INTERVIEWER: Was she locked into an Italian community where the whole community was like that?

FESE: Oh yes! At least she had been. Now when she moved to Stone Park she wasn't, but she always felt unhappy because now she wasn't locked into it.

INTERVIEWER: But she had the same habits?

FESE: Yes. She was 30 when my husband was born, so she was older than most women. But she talks English very well. She had been over here when she was a young girl, and then her parents went back to Italy. She said she would not get married until some man would take her to America. She didn't want to stay in Italy, she knew that. My father-in-law had married, once before. His first wife had died in childbirth. He then went back and married her. Now she's not a beautiful woman, but as she's grown older—she's 82 now—now she's beautiful. In those days—I've seen pictures—she wasn't an attractive woman.

So anyway, like I said, she wasn't a beautiful woman at that time but he took her to this country and she got married.

INTERVIEWER: And you said she took care of the baby and you had a year when you and your husband were like newlyweds.

FESE: Then I wanted my child back. Now I want my baby. You see, I could not do anything right at this point, you understand. A very bad case of inferiority complex began to set in. The other thing is I was a rotten housekeeper. That's where it started. Not to the point that I'm dirty, but if it's straightened up it's fine with me. Kick the garbage to the side or something. Then it was always, "You should do this and you should do that." I worked every day and I was always condemned for working. Her daughter didn't work. She had a baby and she quit when she got the baby and why was I continuing to work and all this stuff. I can't say I didn't quite feel secure with my husband. I could see he had no ambition. I thought when I married him he had. My husband has a fantastic brain, just the best ideas in the world. He never had the get-up-and-go to do them. And when I saw the ideas and the intelligence of this man I thought we would conquer the universe. The only thing is I find as I go through life that a lot of people are like that: that they don't have the get-up-and-go to accomplish their dreams. His dreams...
FESE INTERVIEW

Permission required from interviewee for any quotes, citations and/or utilization of material (see legal release)

FESE: were so much more in detail. Mine, I didn't know what I wanted. So many women make the mistake of pushing their husbands. I think they were achieving through their husbands. And I, in a sense, was trying at that point in my life to achieve through my own husband.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of dreams did he have?

FESE: Oh, he was going to get a trailer camp and he wanted a store to go with it. He wanted this and he was going to do that. But I'd say, "Let's buy this piece of property." "Well, we'd better wait till we get a little more money." At first I said well, he's right, but then after a while, through the years I found that I was always the gambler. And because I was a woman sometimes I would have gone and done the thing myself and taken the chances and at that point you could not do it. Once you were married you had to have your husband's signature.

As the years progressed I became pregnant again. And finally he knew that life between my mother-in-law and myself just was not working. We were [from] so completely different worlds it was a shame. And what got me the most,...Ironically, I let my housework go to read. She knew this and he would holler at me, too. Not that he wanted to, but I guess it's a hangover of his own childhood and they actually condemned my reading. I began to hide while I'd read. I would hide in the washroom to read, and, if someone came to the door while I was reading I would hide the book under the cushions. I never told anybody I'd read. My in-laws have no books in their house. I can't imagine a house without books. I've got thousands and thousands of dollars worth of books. My husband teases me now, "You want to leave me. Take your books. You can't leave unless you take your books." He knows I'd need a ship to load all those books. I can't imagine life without reading. This was my life. And at the same time I had these feelings of wanting to accomplish something, wanting to excel at doing something. I began to get mixed up in people's lives, people that were down on their luck; a crisis here and a crisis there and I got involved. Finally in '56 my second daughter was born, Joanne, and that year we bought the property that our house now sits on. We finally found a place and we finally bought two lots. Now it's Elmhurst; at that point it was unincorporated. We built one house, why couldn't we do it again? So in '56, we purchased this piece of property. Well, now we built this house ourselves, from digging the hole to putting on the roof. I mean everything, we did the whole thing. We contracted it. I was the general contractor and absolutely adored it again.

INTERVIEWER: You had quit work now?

FESE: No, I still worked. Now, while I was at my mother-in-law's, for extra money I went with Fuller Brush. No, Stanley Home Products,
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: that's what it was; not Fuller Brush. And I began to sell. You know how they had parties at home? Well, I was like $100 parties when nobody was making $50 parties. I was making $100 parties and they kept wanting me to do more and more and more. I wanted to do it just for the heck of it, to see if I could do it, for a challenge again. And I set it up in the basement of the little garage that we lived in. It was a foundation. It was only about five and a half feet high. No one could fit in the basement but me— I was the shortest. So I had set up a little office down there and I was selling Stanley Home Products. I was doing really well. Trouble is I got to be too good at it, and it was interfering with my job and my raising children. And my mother-in-law is ticked off, and everybody is hollering why am I doing this. At the same time we were there—and it's strange now, my husband and I think about it. It was a sad part, and I still didn't realize it as a young woman. IBM was coming in and I know how intelligent my husband was and he had the kind of brain that could do this, but he was never given that kind of opportunity. He was never encouraged. I begged him, I said, "Frank, I've got a good job. Go to school. Go to college. I can support this family and you can go to IBM."

Well, we had a little bit of a fight. He said, "Absolutely no, I'm not doing that," but he never told me why. It wasn't till years later I found out; but he was so upset with me at the thought of being supported by a woman. And as I grew older I realized how many points in our lives changed and were not good because he had this male ego. He's a very quiet man and I never knew. He never went around playing macho man or anything, but when he was mad, you'd know. I realize now his own upbringing, what his own parents did to him at that point.

Now, my father-in-law was hurt on the railroad and he was 56. His father changed and he went on a disability pension. He was a man that always went to work and did this and did this. Everybody was so afraid that my father-in-law would die the minute he was off work because he was so used to working. Ironically, somewhere along the line he took over the role. He now washes dishes and does the ironing and fixes the yard and paints. He's 85 and I should be like him at 85. I should be like him at 45. But he took over this role which my husband couldn't imagine his father doing. It didn't happen right at that point, do you understand? But somewhere along the line. My mother-in-law had gotten a little sick afterwards and he started doing dishes for her and cooking; make her breakfast. One day my husband walked in from our house and he was ironing, and my husband yelled, "Put that away. I don't want Marie to see you doing that." He just could not accept—he accepted me doing his work, but not a man doing a woman's work. In other words, when we were building we were a team and he accepted that, but he would never accept him doing my work. It was a long time, and I think how foolish I was. I wanted to work. I knew that somewhere along the line I wanted to work. I did not want to give up this last vestige of freedom that I had, and I made excellent
FESE: money. I made as much as he did, so I didn't want to give this up. What I did is I raised a family, I went to work midnight to eight in the morning. I pretended like I didn't work. Dumb, dumb! I mean, I think now.

INTERVIEWER: Killing yourself and trying not to let it show, huh?

FESE: Yeah, and I went days with two or three hours sleep, 24 or 48 hours without sleep. He got home at four o'clock and dinner would be home on the table. The kids got home at three thirty from school, and I would be there for when they got there. He was supposed to have gotten them off, in the morning, but he's not a morning person. They got themselves off in the morning. When they were first starting school, they took the bus, and my daughters and my son right from the beginning were capable of doing anything. They took care of their father for years instead of the other way around. They're still doing it. And I think how different and how much better the quality of life at that point would have been if we could have talked and understood how he felt about me working, but he never talked to me about it.

INTERVIEWER: What would you have told your husband?

FESE: I think what I would have explained more to him is that what I wanted him to do is make so much money that I could quit. And I didn't explain that to him; that the better he got the better I had it. I think somewhere along the line the lack of communication in those years hurt us very much.

INTERVIEWER: If he'd made twice what he did, would you have been happy to stay home while your children were little?

FESE: Probably not, but I think maybe: you know there are things in life that you would always like to do. I would like to work at Marshall Fields and decorate windows for a couple of weeks and then, not do that anymore but do other things.

INTERVIEWER: You'd switch around more then?

FESE: Do a lot of things, but maybe God puts our paths there whether we're going to fight it or not, who knows? I believe sometimes that our fates are here and we have two paths. We can follow this one or that one, and then we hit another crossroad and follow one or the other. Whether I always took the right path or not I have to wonder. But I think that those things happen. I wonder if they still happen as much as they used to; probably not to the degree that they once did, but I think they still happen. And we were right on the verge of changing. And there were a lot of me out there, I know now. But we didn't know. Betty Freidan I think maybe was the woman that brought it out in the open.
FESE: On top of everything else, for nigh onto eighteen-years I went to church every morning.

INTERVIEWER: Every morning?

FESE: Every morning after work I went to church.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you find the strength?

FESE: That's what gave me the strength.

INTERVIEWER: Had you done that before you were married?

FESE: I'd been going to church quite a bit, but then I could come off work at eight o'clock, go right to mass, and go on home.

INTERVIEWER: Religion is a very important part in your life?

FESE: It was. It was a very important part of my life.

INTERVIEWER: Was this something you got from your family? Or was it partly a personal choice as well?

FESE: It became part of me to go. I knew at those times that I was so different than everybody else around me. I needed to pray. I needed to talk to somebody and that was all there was. I kept saying, "Why do I want to go?" I used to call it the burning in the pit of my stomach. My husband used to say, "You need a kick in your ass. You should clean house." And I'd be out there doing something, involved in some challenge along the way. And once the kids started to go to school we'd be involved in the church activities. But never the satisfaction of knowing.

Somewhere along the line we had just moved into our house. This was in '60. There was a wildcat strike at the railroad, which was illegal. You could not wildcat. What led to it was the fact that the railroad was beginning to change. Heineman had come in and taken over the railroad and he had time studies made. Well, the people on the railroad had a 100 years of tradition and in come these people. It just wasn't working and there was a big confrontation. Twenty-one people were told by the union leader to walk out. Okay, they walked out on the say-so of the union grievery, their head union grievery, which is called the Chairman of the local Protective Committee, on the railroads. He told them to walk out. He, to save his own job, went upstairs. We don't know if this was fixed; we'll never know. He went upstairs and stayed in one of the offices upstairs while everybody walked out, and then turned everybody in and was the company witness against them. So there was a wildcat strike that night, and as I pulled in, there were pickets and everything and I turned around and went out. They were calling up saying you've got to come in because it's a wildcat, and I wasn't about ready
FESE INTERVIEW

Permission required from interviewee for any quotes, citations and/or utilization of material (see legal release)

21.

FESE: I mean, I knew about unions and I went to a few meetings and different things, but not really into it as much as I now wish I had been. I just knew that I wasn't about ready to cross a picket line. Anyway, these people met in a tavern--a bowling alley or a tavern. I can't remember right now where they were meeting. Or they met at my father's tavern. I can't remember at this point. I remember saying to them at the time, "Listen, we may have done something that's wrong, but if we're going to make it look good we can't be meeting in a tavern. They're just going to say that we're a bunch of drunken bums, and that's it. I've got a big basement and we'll all meet there. We can meet in my house."

INTERVIEWER: Boy, that really puts you on a limb then, doesn't it?

FESE: Yes, and my husband, too. fly husband said, "Well, okay."

INTERVIEWER: Did he work on the same railroad, too?

FESE: Yes, we both worked at the same place. So, now my husband's involved in this thing, too, and this is both our livelihoods gone down the drain. There were six married couples among those that were on strike. The strike lasted a long time, and the details my husband remembers better than me. All I know is that I was handling people and involved. I mean, cooking for people and taking care of people and trying to calm people down and all this other stuff. And taking care of my kids in the meantime.

So they met every morning at my house and I had to have coffee and rolls for everybody, and they'd plan what they were going to do. Then the day it was eventually going to be settled, they had a big investigation, a big trial for everybody at the railroad. Now, Frank acted as a company witness and the trial was all day long so I got to stay home and cook. I wasn't allowed to go to the meeting. I had to stay home and cook spaghetti for 45 people. The witnesses would come out and eat and then they'd go back. I mean, it lasted all day long. And my husband was the one that really got involved in that trial. He was not a company man; he was testifying for these people. Years later he testified against a Mr. Burril who was the efficiency expert. And how fate had it, Mr. Burril became our boss eventually and life was never pleasant after that. But my husband had an opportunity to become an assistant agent, and he ended up not being it because Burril never forgave him for that time. I'll get into those things later. But at that time we became very much involved in union activities. It finally was settled and we went back to work. I was too young to hold grudges and I didn't realize at that time that the whole world did. But there were a lot of grudges held on us, and we were just earmarked "union" from then on. I was fighting for somebody's rights, not so much union, as I think of it at this time.
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: I was fighting for those people's rights, that they had been told to walk out and then they were fired outright because of it.

INTERVIEWER: It sounds like they got a raw deal from their union leaders.

FESE: So I wasn't even fighting in the name of unions. But anyway, I guess at that point when it came to unions, Marie was the one that everybody said would do anything. And I began to fight other people's battles at that point, never for myself. In fact, I always felt that to fight people's battles I must be better. I'm a very hard taskmaster to myself, but realizing not everybody feels that way. I'd see some little old lady that couldn't open her mouth and the window was open and she'd be freezing to death, and I'd go over to the boss and say, "Get that window closed. That poor woman's going "What's it your business?" "Just close it." And I did these things, not being union ever. What happened is I began somewhere along the line saying to my husband, 'I'm going to attend these union meetings. I pay four dollars a month and I'm going to find out what it's about.'

INTERVIEWER: Did your husband go to union meetings?

FESE: No, he said they were nothing but drunken brawls. "You don't need it. They're a bunch of drunken sailors and all that other stuff." So he wouldn't go with me. He fought me not to watch the children, and I couldn't go until they were in bed. I would drive down way in the city. I didn't know; I was never a city girl. Down there I'd go and I'd sit in those meetings. For a couple of years I sat never saying a word; and it bothered the guys that I was there 'cause it was a huge hall.

INTERVIEWER: You were the only woman?

FESE: Most of the time, yeah. I was the only woman. And then I'd go to a couple of meetings and then I wouldn't go and I'd go to a couple more meetings. I had kids and it was difficult. About this time also what was happening, I began to expand and to grow, knowing that there was something that had to be done with my life. I was very very.... Now, I know now that it was a case of depression. Not being satisfied with the job, I wanted to move ahead, knowing that there was no place for me to go on the railroad. The union activity had killed that. Still not being involved in the union but knowing that I could never get a company job because there was no place for women. It was traditionally men. I asked to work one job. I'd been on a job that all males always worked. They trained me for two weeks. I worked there for one day and they disqualified me. And they told me right out they were going to do it. I still went up there and I fought that battle because it was a good paying job. It had good days off and I wanted it, but that didn't make any difference. They set me up so beautifully.

INTERVIEWER: How did they disqualify you?
FESE: What it was was a crew caller, and what they did is they said—
that was naive, too. I think back how dumb and naive I was, how fast they could set you up. I didn't think they would do it that
fast, you know; the first night,

INTERVIEWER: You thought they'd give you a little chance and then try to mess you up?

FESE: I just don't know what I thought. Anyway I went—what it was
they were complaining about a woman calling the midnight shift,
calling these men up. Their wives got all uptight. "Who the hell's this woman?" All that sort of thing. Well, today there's
women on those jobs. I fought that disqualification to this
day. I still have that disqualification on and that was fifteen
or sixteen years ago. I've been trying to fight that disqualifi-
cation for at least fifteen years. I was going to bid on the
job and they said well, you were disqualified umpteen years ago.

There was another time when I tried to work an outside job and
they wouldn't let me take the job. Another time I went out to
work a job, a couple of times. There's a lot of office work
where you had to go out and check the yard. This time the fellow
that was the boss came up to me and said, "Marie, I don't want
to disqualify you, but please try to get off the job or I'm
going to have to. I need a man; they want a man on this job."
Those were the things, 'and it was always this subtle. It was
always fighting that made me work in this man's world. So more
and more for the things that were happening on the railroad I
began to turn toward the union. I became active in the union
slowly. In the meantime, now, I knew that there was more I
wanted, so I went and took GED tests. I laughed because I
used to think I was such a smart cookie and I took the GED test
and found out I was a C student. That scared the hell out of
me. But I didn't pass the Illinois State Constitution test.
So I went back to Willow Brook High School [it] was the only one in
the area—just to take the Illinois Constitution test. I took
it and there was all teachers in there taking it, and I come
out with a D or a C even after taking the course. And I thought
Oh, my God, are you dumb! So now I had my high school diploma.
Then IBM was coming in so I decided we should go to York High
School. We went to school and took some of these 10-week courses.
I don't know how many. We just decided to take a course. So
we took those, courses and I got this little piece of paper. I
was so proud of this thing and I wanted it put in my record and
everything. Now you could wipe your nose with it.

INTERVIEWER: Why, wasn't it worth anything?

FESE: Now I can say I have a certificate from York High School, but
it took me a few courses to realize that it was useless. I
learned a lot, but I thought what the heck; if I can do this, I
can go to college. So now I'm getting involved in union and I'm
FESE: working these jobs. Somewhere along the line, what I did, I kept trying to work some outside jobs and helping people and doing this and doing that, still working at the railroad and raising a family. Now I decide to go to school, and like a dummy I took nine hours a week. I mean, it doesn't sound like much.

INTERVIEWER: When you're working and raising a family it sounds terrible:

FESE: I went to Triton College in River Grove; I looked around and it dawned on me I didn't know what I wanted to do, and I took a course in business management. But I want to back up just a short time. When I was taking these courses at the high school, there was a course on aptitude tests or something--five weeks. I took this series of tests. It was four weeks of tests and then the fifth night you got interviewed. I was going through a very bad time. My self esteem was I figured I couldn't do anything at this point, that there was just nothing in my life. Just go to work and come home, go to work and come home. You know, raising kids; every woman's going through this when their children are little, anyway. -But yet the feeling of wanting, always saying something's out there. I was always out there fighting for somebody's rights. I was always getting my butt in trouble. Everybody was down on me all day. "What are you getting involved for? What is wrong?" So I took those tests and I think at that point I was married thirteen years. The tests were the biggest shock of my life. They literally changed my life.

INTERVIEWER: What did they show?

FESE: My ability was fantastic, and I was very mechanically inclined, and all kinds of things. I got 98 percent on persuasion. Politics is your natural calling, then.

FESE: So they told me if I had had the education, I could do 'this, this or this, and because I didn't have the education, I could be this, this or this--a saleswoman or something. But the thing that shocked them, I took something called the California Kueter test. I think it's a personality test. I believe that's the name of it, I recall. It may be Kruger or something like that. Anyway, it was just a personality test of what you thought of yourself. And as they told me later, that part of the test is the only part that can change. In other words, what you might think of yourself today, you might feel better tomorrow. So I took this and she said it just doesn't match your ability. My self worth test is what it is. It was absolutely zero.

INTERVIEWER: Oh really? You had a low opinion of yourself in spite of all your abilities.

FESE: She said it just doesn't make any sense, this test. The tests,
FESE INTERVIEW

I kept looking at them. I brought them home and I'd look at them and I'd say, "Why don't I feel like this? Why are these feelings inside me? Why am I so different?" and on my knees every morning praying, "Take away these feelings. Let my husband have these feelings of ambition. Let him. Let me wash my dishes, let me be happy washing dishes. Let me be happy taking care of children." But it never satisfied me. And then the zero self esteem was because my mother-in-law was down on me. And what happened in the meantime is I came down and was off a year with rheumatic fever. The doctor said I was over-exhausted and anything that came along I caught it. I was off a year with it. I helped my mother a little bit in the tavern towards the end. I was literally crippled for a year. I couldn't walk; it had hit me in the legs. My husband wouldn't so much as wash a floor for me because that was not part of his ritual. He figured I was home so--and I never looked sick. I have never looked sick. Never in my life have I looked sick. I mean, I was on the verge of dying and I don't look sick. I'll make the best looking corpse you ever saw. And then I hired a woman. I paid my sick benefits, as little as they were I gave it away to this woman to come in and help me with the kids because I was off work for eleven months. I couldn't do anything.

INTERVIEWER: You weren't supposed to do anything, were you?

FESE: I wasn't supposed to do anything.

INTERVIEWER: How old were your kids then?

FESE: My son was six months old. My daughter was three or four and the other one was five, was going into school, when all this came on. But this took place prior to the Kueter test and all this schooling. So this also brought me down. And then I could never seem to kind of get healthy after that.

INTERVIEWER: Have you never felt that well again?

FESE: Well, it took a long time, plus discouragement at not having somebody to help you when you were so sick. And then for him to scream and holler and carry on because I had somebody else come in to do my work.

INTERVIEWER: He objected to that?

FESE: Oh, he objected! One day the house was an absolute disaster and the queen of the family came over. Every family has one. Auntie Mame and Uncle Tony came over because they knew I was sick. The kids had just tore the house up. I could not do anything. It took them 20 years to come back to my house, and it was a pigsty then; it was an absolute pigsty. There was nobody cleaning. You can imagine what three children could do.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, but when the mother's sick the relatives usually come help clean up.
FESE INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: You were obviously overdoing.

FESE: But you know, I would bounce back. I can say that till recently. That will be a later part of it. But I was never sick.

INTERVIEWER: You mean you didn't think you were sick.

FESE: I can only tell you I was on a 43-year high. Life itself kept me going. But self opinion of myself! You know I had all this boundless energy tied up in me, and every time I went to do something, it held me back. And now I know it was because I was a woman that held me back. Because the wild things that I wanted to do, only men would do those things.

INTERVIEWER: You wouldn't have been disapproved of if you'd been a man.

FESE: Yes, and I guess society is still dictating to you at those points in your life. The change hadn't come. It wasn't the late sixties. There were some small subtle changes, but not really big ones. I looked at my other friends and I said well, they're raising a family and they just go to work. Why do they seem to be content? And the self-esteem part of it; I just couldn't believe that I felt that low, had that low an opinion of myself. And it was at the end of all that sickness and a couple of miscarriages; I had four altogether. I had two, and then my son, and then two more. As I'm talking now it all runs together. I can't remember what year what happened. There were times when my husband was absolutely no help. His attitude was if you want to work, you do everything in this house. But he never said it; I just knew it. Do you understand? There were some confrontations and some arguments over it. He was always hollering, always hollering about how dirty the house was. And when I felt like straightening it, he'd say, "I'm sick and tired of you straightening it. Why don't you clean it once in a while?" How he has grown and how he has developed, too, has been a fantastic thing. But I knew that this was here, and I kept plodding along like a dummy. Now I would just say, "Leave, go your own way and I'll go mine." These kind of things were just devastating to him to have a wife like me, too.

INTERVIEWER: It's amazing. You seem so fond of him and obviously have a strong marriage, and yet you're so different.

FESE: Well, communication finally breaks the barriers after years. But it's society in a sense, too, and maybe my sense of not wanting to fail at marriage. I wanted to make it work in spite of him. I think now with the job I had and everything I could have easily
FESE: raised those kids and done things on my own. But I enjoy being married, and that's what today I can't get across to anybody. You can be so knee deep into the women's movement, all involved in unionism, and still want to be married, but they don't take that. And in a sense it's bad because when I begin to tell you about my union activities, they've put my husband down and made him like a namby-pamby. He's far from that because he would begin to allow me to grow; At this point when I realized the esteem of myself and things that were beginning to happen, I realize that now I'd say, "Frank, let's go to a show." "I don't want to." Okay, then we'd stay home. And we're going to my mother's every Sunday. Every Sunday to the mother-in-law's, and I worked all week. I'd get home at eight a.m. Sunday morning. I think of things that society does and I never fought back at them. I went to my mother-in-law's every Sunday, but I had worked from midnight to eight. I went home, slept a half hour, took the family to church, then over to my mother-in-law's, Then Thanksgiving; I'd work every holiday. You do when you work on the railroad. I'd get off at eight a.m. and try to catch two hours sleep before we had to go over there and she'd say, "The boys worked hard all week, girls. Now, we'll get up and clean up." My mind wouldn't even be working because of being so tired. A couple of time I'd say, "Well, I worked all week, too. Quietly, 'cause I didn't want to--well, it was just like I didn't say a word. You do it anyway. My husband with a full meal is sleepy. My father-in-law and my brother-in-law are out sleeping, and I'm like a Trojan horse working. 'Then, "Why are you leaving so early?" I'd stay maybe till five or six till the eyeballs wouldn't work anymore. And I had to go to work yet that same night. Years of this kind of thing, years that I was dumb! 'Cause that was what everybody around me was doing. I wanted to work so I could punish no one but myself. And always being put down by my in-laws'cause I worked, always being put down, constantly! Fights, big confrontations, how bad I was raising my children. I had rheumatic fever and a year later my daughter came down with rheumatic fever, ironically, a very mild case. Because of my own case I was able to spot it right away and we got her taken care of. I said, "It doesn't sound good." I got her in there and it was a very mild case, no complications. But I had a two year old son at that time which was a holy terror. I mean, a boy's a boy. I put him into a nursery school for a while because I couldn't take it. I was lifting a five year old child and doing all these things to them. And all of a sudden my in-laws wanted to take my children away from me. They wanted to have me condemned as an unfit mother because I put my Joey in a nursery school.

INTERVIEWER: Did they seriously?

FESE: Oh, they were serious. It was a big confrontation. And one of those times, shortly after this I took that Reuter test. These were the things that led up to this self of nothingness.
INTERVIEWER: What was your husband's reaction to that?

FESE: He agreed with them almost. He didn't and he did. But he was a part of society growing up, too, and "I got a weird wife. Maybe we'd better put her away. She's better off being put away." I mean, because of all these involvements and things I kept doing---you, know--because I kept trying to get a little schooling and trying to go to union meetings and trying to work and building a house, still. 'Cause the house was all . . .

INTERVIEWER: What did they want to do--hospitalize you and then take the children?

FESE: I don't know how they'd do it, but they were really just--it was a big confrontation. And then my kids, in a sense, suffered because grandma, when they went, "Oh, your mother doesn't feed you" I mean, the kids began. That's why I said I made the mistake of giving them my kids at the beginning., and the kids stayed against me. Then Joanne was able to stay with my mother-in-law.

INTERVIEWER: Is that the oldest one?

FESE: The middle one. She went to this Catholic school which was an excellent school. It screwed up her life because she figured that we didn't want her. But I couldn't explain to a five year old that I was sick for that year. Now she understands, but she got a screwed up life over it and all these confrontations that we got in at that time. She figured that we were dumping her. She didn't like it there and she didn't want to be there. She wanted to know what the family was doing. I was sick as a dog. I mean, I couldn't have handled her plus the kids and plus everything else. I was just too sick. I mean, I was coming out of it, but in the meantime, you know. Like I said, my own self esteem; I figured I wasn't good for anything in this world and what was I here for? Yet my abilities--I remember for weeks I kept looking at the results of those tests. I'd just sit there and study them. I mean, I couldn't read them; they just gave you numbers. They just represented something at the lowest point in my life. I realized that my husband wasn't going to go anywhere and there was no sense trying to push him. And then at some point I'd say, "It's what I want to do and I don't give a shit anymore. I'm going to do what I want to do. I've got to make me happy. I'm not happy. I'm out there trying to make everybody else happy. Everybody seems miserable around me. Now it's time that I become happy."

It started and it was confrontations at the beginning with my husband. I'd say to him, "You want to go to the show?" "No." "Well, I'm going," and. I'd go out without him. I'd be miserable, but I'd go. I don't care what—it was; I would go. I'd come home. I remember the first time I went someplace--I can't remember where I went--it was like a test. All the lights in the house
FESE: were darkened. I had been out extremely late, We've talked about this since, my husband and I, and it was in a sense the turning point for both of us. He had seen marriages where the woman went out; she was out fooling around. My going out had nothing to do with that. I was just interested in what was going on in the world. So I joined a Bunco party or whatever I had done just to get out. I came home and I'll never forget, I thought he was asleep and everybody was asleep. It was about one in the morning or something. I was trying to be real quiet. And as I walked into the hall I saw the glow of his cigarette. He was sitting up in the dark smoking. I laugh now because that was probably his body glowing, not his cigarette, because he was sitting up there wanting to kill me. He was ready for an argument. I walked in that bedroom and I could feel the argument coming. And it was at one of the crisis points of my life. I could either fight back with him or just play it lightly, you know, and I said I'm not going to fight. I had a good, evening; I don't want to fight with this man. I said to myself I didn't do a thing wrong, and why should I feel guilty? And at that point is when I became a woman in my life. I saw the cigarette and I pretended like I didn't. I went in and I start taking my clothes off and I'm tiptoeing around real quiet. And as I turn, "Oh hon, are you up?" As if I didn't know. He shouldn't read this. "Oh, we had a real good time. I'm sorry I'm so late but we got talking, and I just, et cetera." Finally I could feel in the air the animosity gone because he's not going to argue with me now. He was all set' for this big fight--what a tramp I was, et cetera. And I just went on and told him exactly what had happened, told the absolute truth. He couldn't deal with it. So it was, the beginning, a turning point, and we never talked about it for years. I thought about it often but he saw Bud's marriage, how bad it was. And she did run around a lot. And he thought all marriages were going to be like that. That's why he never wanted to marry.

INTERVIEWER: Be like that or else like his mother's?

FESE: Like his mother's, yeah. One way or the other, but in between couldn't happen. So it was a beginning and it was a slow thing and I knew that I couldn't rush it. I was intelligent enough to know that I wanted this marriage and I wanted it to work. I wanted it to work on my terms because they were good terms. It wasn't that I wanted to be spoiled. I wanted to share, but in a way, I can only say that I became more pleased with myself, and I don't want to say that I don't give a damn about anybody else, but more pleased with the things that I have done. People around me seemed nicer. I don't know. I mean they might have been nice all the time, but I was just so miserable that I couldn't notice it, one of the two. Things began to be more pleasant around me--and I took no fear--and my involvement in the union heavier and heavier. Now that I'm getting more and more into it, these men are really laying it in to me. God, the things they did to me
FESE INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: He did give you a chance, at least.

FESE: He did give me a chance. I think he began to realize that when I went out I did not go out to be fooling around with these guys at the union hall. I didn't drink and I would tell him everything that happened. I think that he must have checked on me; I'm not sure. I mean, I was only dealing with the truth and once I said, "I'm not doing anything wrong. I have nothing to feel guilty about." When I dealt with it on that level then things began to change. So I was going to school more and I really wanted to get involved in union affairs.

INTERVIEWER: Does he start to get involved more, too?

FESE: Later on. It's ironic. So now I'm really getting hot into this union stuff. I pestered and badgered them. I laugh now about how dumb I was—oh, how naive I was. They made me assistant to the Entertainment Committee, which there was no job like that, and they gave me six dollars a month and they thought they had gotten rid of me. Except that you would have no idea what I did. I kept telling them I was a committee person. Well, now you have to know that in the railroad to be a committee person means that you're a griever. But I was a committee person. I didn't tell them that I was an assistant to the whatever, so I began to get more and more involved in union politics and really began to fight for people. We have no griever on the evening shift and I wanted that job. The fellow that's now Assistant to the General Chairman, Jim Reardon, for some reason he just—he was from the same school as my husband where women just did not become aggressive. He wanted no women on his committee. He didn't want me. And I started studying and I learned everything I could about unions, because I thought if I got so good he'd just have to take me. Wrong! The better I got, the more they went after me. I did things and stood up for people's rights on that railroad and did so many things. When things would go wrong I'd go up to the boss like a little banty rooster and say, "This is wrong. You shouldn't do this and this and this." The bosses didn't know it either. They figured I was so involved in the union that they couldn't harm me, but I found out I was so illegal.

INTERVIEWER: Did the bosses think you had a real position?

FESE: I guess they knew that I was part of the union, but they didn't realize that legally I had the right to say that. They could have got me for insubordination. I was a duly accredited union
representative, So I fought and fought and somewhere along the line there was an election, just one of those routine elections--a unanimous vote for the people who were in. And I didn't know about working in politics in unions at that time. I just thought the whole world was just straight and upright. Oh, my God, we women are dumb! Dumb, dumb, dumb! I mean, who knows about all that? What woman is involved in parliamentary procedure and all that? I mean, we're just not! That's why I'm out there fighting to learn these things 'cause you just--they can wipe you out. I got six dollars a month and I was on that committee; and I'd set up the sandwiches and I'd lug all this stuff. Well, I kept saying that we had to leave that hall in Chicago; we had to leave, the hall in Chicago because I wanted more women to come to the meetings. For two or three years I kept on. Then one night there was a gang of boys outside the hall and I acted frightened when I came in. I have to admit, now that they're all gone, I faked it a bit. I was beginning to learn a little bit about men in those days. They had to protect women. Whether they liked me or not, they had to protect me. So they finally made a decision to move out to the suburbs. I finally got them out to the suburbs. Once I got them out to the suburbs a lot more women began to participate in the union meetings--not participate, but they showed up. I'd have sandwiches and stuff and I'd break my tail. I'd make the food so the people would come out to the meetings. They knew what job to give you alright.

That was my in, you know. So anyway, we got them to move out of Chicago, but they would go to my husband and threaten him: "Get your wife...." 'Cause then I began to say at meetings, "Would you read that bill over again? Why is that written? When I was here two months ago...." etcetera. They didn't like it because they had this set little thing that they didn't want the people even to attend the meetings--a cut and dry kind of thing. And I went for a number of years just listening. I didn't make waves, but I kept saying I want something, I want something. In 1967 or '68 a fellow by the name of Corky Santore was the head of the Protective Committee. He passed away. And that's just at this time that I really became more involved. And I was always out, there fighting with the women, "Come on, we need more women at the meetings." Nobody wanted to go, and I couldn't understand. Nobody is interested but me. I kept thinking I'm strange.

When I got them out in the suburbs, and no one got them out there at that point but me, the meetings got a little better. More people including women began to show up, and it began to be more of a meeting. The old-timers resented this, and they hated me. Oh, my God! The fellow had eventually retired that was chairman of the Entertainment Committee, so they gave that title to me to shut me up. Well now, I'm going to have a dance. So I go out there and I beat the bushes and I have a dance. In the meantime, I have to go back in history, which is strange. 23 years
ago or so C. L. Dennis's son began to work on the railroad, and it bothered me. Just because he was his son, he didn't have to be put down. He was a young man and he wasn't really that involved in unions either at that time. He didn't resent the union, but it always seemed to take his father away. His father was, when I started at the railroad, General Chairman of the Chicago Northwestern System. He was a top man in the union. L. E. Dennis started working and he had just been married to his wife. Nobody would go in and help his wife. He wasn't my chairman. His father was my chairman, but I really didn't have too much to do with him. C. L. was like the big god in the sky who came down every once in a while and screamed at the railroad for something. He had a lot of sisters working there and a whole bunch of family was working there, also, so I knew about him. L. E., or Little Les or whatever they called him, came to Proviso with his wife. We sat and we would talk many times—he was really intelligent. My God, what a young man and he was just all brains! His wife was working the switchboard. She hadn't had much training, and nobody went in to help her. Sometimes I'd take my lunch hour and go in and help her. I'd go in there sometimes and give her a hand 'cause it could be confusing. So I went in there to help her, and she appreciated it. I mean, I was just kind to them for no reason. He was a school teacher at the time. Well, strange things happen. I always kept in touch. I'd see him; we had some meetings from time to time. He testified for the union at this trial that I didn't get to attend. And he came to my house and ate spaghetti dinner and everything. I just liked him as a person and occasionally our paths would cross, but very rarely. But I always wondered what had happened to him. He only worked summertime there. They always thought how nice I was because I helped them and everything. His wife thought I was a doll, the only one that ever came in and helped. Who knew that some years later he would be vice president of my union? They wouldn't let me break into my own local. To keep beating your head against the wall is stupid. I thought there's got to be another way around, right? So I began to find another way around. What began to happen is that I began to climb. I became active in the Brotherhood's Chicago District Council. And through the Council I began to work closely with L. E. Dennis and really began to climb.

INTERVIEWER: Over and around?

FESE: Over. That tiny local union job opened new horizons in unionism for me.

INTERVIEWER: The last time we were together you were just about to start on a new point in your union career. Do you want to pick it up there?
FESE: Well, what I began to tell you was a point in my life I had been about 20 when I met L.E. I told you what I did to help them because they were people and not because of any particular reason. As I mentioned, they were just one of those people in your life that just stand out in your own personal life and [you] feel drawn to them. I helped his wife out when she needed help and this has to go back into the middle fifties that this all took place. He had gone down; I guess he worked downtown in Chicago at the railroad during the summer and really wasn't involved too much in union work at that point. We talked many times but his education was so far above mine that I knew that we weren't in the same circles. We did some talking from time to time about unions, but he was just going to be a school teacher, and he'd known how his father's career had taken him away from the family. He didn't think he wanted that. This young man was in his early twenties. As I said before, we kept in touch from time to time and then through his family I'd ask about him. As I became more and more involved in union work it was just the interest in helping people, I think, that spurred me on. There were many times when I would go in and do battle for some of these women and maybe I did feel I was my sister's keeper, but I would continue to do these things. And then I would begin to see that maybe through the union I could even do more good. And as I said, in 1968 Corky Santore had died and Jim Reardon had taken over. I thought maybe this had to be the time to get involved. This has to be 10 years ago. I had been bothering Corky before that so it goes back a number of years, but ten years ago my son would have been nine. My children were at an age where they didn't need that constant watching, so I thought it was time for me to get-involved. I always said if I'm going to do anything with myself it would be by the time I was forty years old. The kids would be old enough and I would be off and running. And I didn't know where I was going or what I was going to do at that point. When Jim took over I thought maybe I could-become a griever but he just would have no part of me. That's when I began to study more. I went to the University of Illinois; I had some classes at that time and began meeting people. Finally somewhere along there the lodge made me committeewoman to shut me up. I was assistant to the Entertainment Committee. Then the gentleman retired that was on that job and they finally said I could have it make coffee and bring in the cakes and do all that--but I would do so many things from this job. I began to attend seminars on railroad retirement and all the Lodge officers wanted to kill me. I think back now how they would go to my husband and tell him to try to control me. They would do all types of things to me to keep me [from] finding out what was going on.

I'd like to backtrack here. In 1971 there was a BRAC [Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks] Convention in Miami and I took my own time-and money and went to this convention, a most interesting convention. In the meantime, somewhere between 1950 and 1971, L.E. Dennis had gotten very involved in Washington in our union. In 1971 he tried to run
FESE: for vice president and was defeated because he was the boss's son more or less. He was our president's son. And unions are funny; they're not like Ford Motor. They don't want dynasties; they want different people. I guess no one really realized that he did come from the railroad, that he had worked for a number of years on the railroad. I had seen L. E. prior to that at a BRAG District Council dinner in 1969 here at the Pick Congress, and I had said that I'd love to go as a guest to the convention. Well, I was able to go at a room rate. That was one thing he did. I didn't receive any money from anybody, but he made sure I got a room rate down there at the Fountainbleu. It was my first convention. I must have been around 33, 34 years old. Anyhow, you hear of all these conventions where everybody goes out and has a gay old time. I had never seen a working convention like that--work, work, work! They looked like they were half dead. I mean, it was quite an experience. I met some very nice people that I kept in contact with after a number of years. But it was really an awakening! And of course because I attended the convention, as the rules would come up in the local lodge, I knew that they were wrong or they were right and began to understand a lot more at that time. Anyway, in the spring of I think it was '70 or it could have been 71--I never thought these things would be changing points in my life so I didn't keep track--anyway, I attended another District Council dinner at the Pick Congress and mentioned to L. E. at that point, "Do you realize that this may be the last District Council dinner there'll be because there's no more money in the treasury?" Attendance and membership had dropped off; So February, just a month and a half later, I got a call from the International Office in Rosemont. Now, BRAC moved from Cincinatti to Rosemont in late '69. I got a call from L. E.'s office and they wanted me to come down to the District Council meeting. He was innovating a new program because of me and what I had told him about the Council. Someone from the BRAC staff would always be at a monthly meeting and they would try to build the District Council back up. I was very happy about this. District Councils in our union were a little bit different than councils in unions like the carpenters. Our Council was very important during the early days of our union. In fact, I have the history of the Council that I've been trying to put together. George M. Harrison, who was the president at that time, had a confrontation with the Chicago District Council. From that point on, he felt that all councils should go, and they began to lose their strength at that point. They used to have general chairmen come and a lot of influential people used to show up at these meetings, and a lot of things could be said and done. But after '39 it all went down the hill; we just completely seemed to phase out. Well, all during the war it was still fairly strong but I guess by the time I got myself involved it was just holding a dinner once a year and honoring the president, and he'd have to come in from Cincinatti to Chicago. Well, in '69 when they moved here, of course, C. L. Dennis was here so they could honor him. More staff members
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: showed up and it got to be a very big expense because now it wasn't just a matter of bringing in a president and one man. It involved bringing everyone down and had to give them all tickets.

So the council had been losing money, but I wanted to see it built back up because I thought it was a good thing. I seem to have been alone, even in the last eight years I've been alone in my thinking. They tried and tried and tried, and no way would the Council--it just would not revive. Anyway, the woman that was secretary-treasurer was L. E.'s secretary. When she got a promotion to be the International President's secretary she gave up the job. Somewhere in early 1972 she gave up the job and I was elected for that position. In my own local I had become more of a voice but still didn't hold any position. I had attended seminars and all kinds of things that were happening in Chicago with the union scene. A lot of times people would ask me what position I held with my local and I'd say, "Just don't ask." I didn't want them to know that I really didn't hold a position of any importance in my local other than this Chairwoman of the Entertainment Committee.

About this time, too, I became interested in the Women's Movement. Well, where does a movement start or where does the interest come from?. I had been maybe so tied up in my own union, my own life and my children's lives, that I never really thought about it. I had thought it was strange that there weren't any more like me out there. Maybe it was going to school and meeting the women there who were reading. Who knows where it starts?

INTERVIEWER: Did you have contact with any women's organizations?

FESE: Not really. Between home, union, and work I had no time. I did know that I had to make a decision about my life soon. I had made a decision--I got involved in going to school. What started it out is that I went to York High School to get my GED.

INTERVIEWER: You told me about York High School and all the testing.

FESE: But I began to go to classes at York and I ended up with nothing but a piece of paper at the end. I decided I might as well go to college and make my time worthwhile.

Well then, from these little pieces of paper I got all puffed up. I had attended ten weeks and I gave them to my boss to put in my record. And he said more or less, "What's this garbage?" And I got to thinking well, if I'm going to devote ten weeks to that maybe I could go on to college. It's funny how smart we think we are--until we find out how smart we aren't. I went back to college--Triton-- and that first year I just was walking on air at the fact that I could go and understand things, that it wasn't some realm out there in the great beyond. But I soon began to
FESE: discover how really dumb I was, The spelling wasn't there; the sentence structure of English was gone; I didn't remember any of this, Well then, I took the basic law the first year and I had to take volleyball 'cause I wanted a degree... There was nothing on unions at Triton so I decided to take business management. I thought from that if I could learn the other side it would help me with the part I wanted. So I began to go to college and met fascinating teachers, and it was just like a world opening up, going to college. I had a little bit of problems with my family--a woman my age trying to go back to school with children, working midnights. It just didn't make any sense to them and my husband was a little irritated with me, too, I went three nights a week. I went to law and volleyball and I had one other class. It might have been an English class or math class. I can't remember right now but as I say, it was like reaching for a star and catching one when I began to go to school. But then I realized how inadequate I was to go to college. So the second semester I went back and all the classes I began to take was like starting over again. I had to go to Basic English, Basic Math, Basic living I think I had to take basic learning. I mean, I had to take reading classes. You think you're so smart and you find out you're so dumb. Learning became a disease. I could never get enough of it now, that's what happened. But then as I got more involved in that, then of course the evolving of my union work and the District Council came in here.

INTERVIEWER: Were you reading about the Women's Movement about this time?

FESE: Yes, I would read about it and was -becoming aware. And things that happened like getting money for having my children, et cetera. My union was so far ahead of so many unions I couldn't believe it. You know, you're in a world--the railroad union and the railroad itself is a world unbeknownst to anybody unless you are in it. You can't go from the railroad to another industry just because it's that different, I guess as I began to read and understand I saw the difficulties they had. But at that point in my life I think I felt well, if they wanted it they could get it, those dreams that any woman can get whatever she wants. Questions were beginning to come up and doubts maybe in my own life, but I was still young enough and strong enough and had enough drive to say well, hard work can conquer all.

Anyway, the District Council began to grow and I became more prominent in the District Council. I held my first dinner dance.

INTERVIEWER: Now were you the head of it?

FESE: When the other woman gave it up in 1972 I became the Secretary-Treasurer: That was the main office of the Council. I remember some things that we women fall into the same pattern that the men do. It angers me now. I remember having to have a business
FESE: card and attaching importance to it. We women don't have mentors, unfortunately. There's no one out there for women my age. Maybe the younger ones can attach to women my age or older, but we didn't have any. There were none. So stupidly enough, at least I did, and I suppose many other women did the same—we attached ourselves to men and started to fall into those patterns. And I think somewhere along the line I lost my femininity. I did, I did! You give so much because you want to do so much. And you're willing to give up whatever belongs to you—to give this up to follow some ass, now that I think of it. Because men play these little games and they're not going to let us in anyway, That's the sad part about women like myself and these young women, too. They're playing the game and they're pledging themselves to the man's game— I see this better now— yet men aren't about to let us into their world. Maybe 25 years from now it will be different, but older men are still patronizing. As I was coming up they weren't even patronizing. The Women's Movement really hadn't started. I guess Betty Friedan had just written her first book and I didn't even read it, I didn't even take time to read it; I didn't read it until last year. But these women rebels were becoming evident. I guess I always enjoyed being married to Frank. My husband and I were beginning to evolve and grow. After I went to college he figured if his dumb wife could go, maybe he could go, too, so he began to go to college, which to me was like reaching for one of the planets and catching one. My husband and I were going to college. It was just fantastic!

INTERVIEWER: He was sympathetic to your going, then.

FESE: Well, he was frightened and I know now men get very frightened, too, In no way did he want to fail, but he knew that I wasn't the most intelligent woman walking the face of the earth. I could make it and get C's and D's, so he went. Some classes we took together, which was good, and it was fun to take them together. He's much more astute than I am. I've got the big mouth and I've got the drive and all the other, but he had the analytic mind to figure these things out. So between the two of us we managed to struggle through. New math we took together, maybe to help our kids; and I still came out with better scores than he did but yet he probably retained better and was more analytical about it than I was. I just did work; put myself to doing this and get it done, not with the retention it should have been. So a lot of my life was beginning to have a purpose, and then I started also attending union classes at the University of Illinois. And that was just another world! It was what I really wanted instead of these classes at Triton. The last year I took courses at Triton I went to journalism and I wrote some articles which was a new world to me. I couldn't even spell my own name. To be able to write articles was a labor of love; I had to look up every thirteenth word in the dictionary, I used to tease everybody and say, "This is written in red; it's my blood."
Then I got those published and that of course I was proud of, it was funny at this point: I thought my family and my husband's family was going to be so proud of what I'd done, and I sent off articles to relatives and made the same silly mistake I'd made when I was young, thinking they would be proud. But you're never a hero in your own home-town, never. There was nothing on God's earth that I could have ever done to gain the respect of my husband's family. What happened, unfortunately, at this point when I wrote these articles. One of them was about facilities for the blind they had at Triton, which I was very excited about. I sent these articles out and unbeknownst to me one of these relatives, that dominated my mother-in-law's life, her daughter is declared legally blind but this mother won't accept it. So when I sent those articles, all I did was add fuel to the fire. Then I was a complete outcast because they took it as though I was showing them that there was a place for the blind and they were saying that their daughter wasn't blind. She, was just a young teenager at that time, or just a young woman of maybe 20 at that point in her life. She wasn't blind. She does things and she's gotten some fantastic jobs; but I guess there is a certain kind that they become legally blind. I didn't even know it; they had kept it such a secret. And here I am trying to help people and I had found out about these facilities and wrote this article, I know now that a lot of it was jealousy, but the fact that I worked, was involved in my union, and going to school was hard for the family to accept—that Frank had married a strange woman.

At the 1971 convention in May, Jerry Toppen, who was our General Chairman on the Chicago Northwestern System Board, was elected vice president. His assistant vice chairman, Bill Van Kleck, was elected General Chairman, and Jim Reardon, who had been local chairman of Lodge 679 since 1968, was promoted to assistant general chairman. I know this is all Greek to you because it's a different union type structure, but when Jim moved up to officer's position in our System Board that left his job open. What happened—he was a man of considerable knowledge who had been in the local and had done fantastic things. You could always go to him and he could quote the rule book and he could quote the contract, so everybody just naturally thought he was going to be the greatest leader we ever had. Anyway, Arlie Hartung became Local chairman in this interim period and I had someone nominate me for Recording Secretary. Now remember, this is in May or somewhere around the middle of June of 1971. There were three other gentlemen also nominated. I won that election by one vote. I became, at that point, the first woman officer of Local 679. I mean, this little lady was walking on air. I just thought this was it. I had done it and I was going to be part of the gang. Not so! Those bastards! Now I get so angry when I think of what they did, I didn't know it—at the time, but you could send in to the Grand Lodge and tell them that you wanted no information from the Grand Lodge, that you wanted no information sent to your house. As recording secretary I was supposed to get a copy of everything
FESE: that took place. These bastards wrote a letter and made sure
that I got nothing. Nothing from the Grand Lodge, so I wouldn't
know what the hell was going on! I didn't find out for two or
three years when I finally got a staff position that there was
a red dot after my name, Somebody had gotten something and I
didn't, and I asked, "How come I didn't get anything?" Every-
boby should have had one, So they told me at that time, "Well,
there's a red dot after your name." I said, "Well, what the
hell does that mean?" "Well, you sent a letter saying you didn't
want any information."

INTERVIEWER: They literally forged that letter?

FESE: They literally forged a letter.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever know who did that?

FESE: Well.

INTERVIEWER: I mean, I know you could guess, but did you find out for sure?

FESE: I could guess. No, I never knew who did it. By the time I found
out the gang was gone. I had already overstepped them in a sense.
Anyway, so here I am sitting. The recording secretary before me
had taken care of the death benefits, had done this, had done
that, What they did to me-- 1 was just allowed to take the min-
utes--that's all I was alloyed to do.

INTERVIEWER: They took over all your other duties?

FESE: They took over all my other duties and they would not let me in
yet. I had the job for six months. In November 1971 there was
nominations. I went up for nominations and they put a fellow
by the name of George Brinkworth up against me. George had nomi-
nated me for the interim period but he wanted to run or they
talked him into running in December of '71. And someone put my
husband's name up for vice president. Now you've got to know
how ironic this becomes because my husband never gave a damn
about the union. I mean, he did give a damn about the union
but as far as going to meetings, he said it was nothing but a
clique and they were drunks and he'd just really rather not have
anything to do with them unless for some reason I would drag him
off to a union meeting occasionally. He did not attend and didn't
care one way or the other. What happened in December with the
election: Frank was running for vice president and I was running
for recording secretary. They brought in men by buses from king-
dom come and I lost that election by 30 or 40 votes. Now we don't
have a lot of votes so that's not a close vote. They couldn't
even count right. The vote wouldn't tally and they called my
husband, in fact, to do the recount. When he recounted I came
out with the loss of more than before. But the ironic part is
the bastards knew they had done wrong. They knew I was a union
FESE: person; they knew how much I had given already to that Local, I had held dances and raised money and was always involved in it. My husband won as vice president. In other words they felt guilty enough that they gave him my vote rather than give it to me. And it was just something that to this day I couldn't believe it had happened. Anyway I sat there really stunned.

INTERVIEWER: I bet he felt bad, too. Did he realize what had happened?

FESE: Yeah, he knew but I don't think anyone knows how another individual feels. Even if you love somebody, if you win and they lose it's really the winning that counts. Self-preservation is the main thing in life. I was happy he won and yet I knew what they had done. Rather than give me the vote, someone that was really interested and really wanted the well being of that local, they gave it to my husband who could care less at that point. A lot of things were riding on that election. It wasn't only the fact of that election. L. E. had told me at this point that the Job Corps was coming into Chicago. He said, "If you win the election I can get you down there and teach one day a week." When I lost that election the world just seemed to open up and swallow me. I mean, the one thing I wanted was to go down there and teach. I was going to be able to teach unionism and railroading, which were the two things I knew best at that point in my life. And the concept was exciting to me. I had heard about it for a year through the District Council in 1969 and '70. They had talked about the Job Corps. They finally got it going. People that worked for the railroads would come down and teach the girls just one day a week. They had regular teachers but people in the industry came in once a week. In the meantime, now, I started taking classes at Roosevelt University, the union classes. No, not yet, that was later. In the fall of '72 I was going to take the first one. What took place then is when I lost that election I was absolutely broken up. I never cried so much in my life. It was such a cruel blow and crushing. In January I said, "Them son-of-a-bitches aren't going to get me down," and I went back. They all figured they had gotten rid of me, okay? They all figured we have wiped her out. But I said, "You son-of-bitches, I'll be there yet." Anyway I went back and the hardest thing to do was to go back to a union meeting. Now my mentor in a sense, L. E., had lost his election, his bid for vice president in May of '71. I saw how well L. E. handled what had been done and I thought well if he can do it then I can do it. I went back and swallowed my pride and sat there. I didn't know it at the time but I had been used to taking notes and I didn't smoke at that time. Instead of smoking I had begun to doodle. So I had a little--you know these lawyer pads, but the half sizes. I used to have one in my purse and I would doodle. And I'd write down words that they would say sometimes. But I wasn't secretary anymore. I didn't realize it until three or four years later--it drove those men out of their minds. Somewhere along the line they said something years later. They said,
"She writes down everything we do and say." And it wasn't the truth. That's because they were so worried about me; but all I was really doing is I doodled. Or if they'd say on the 25th we're going to do this, you'd write down the date, you know. But they didn't have enough guts to come over and find out what I was doing. But they figured because I took the minutes before that I had'still taken the minutes and was checking up on them, which was the farthest thing from my mind. I laugh today, if I only knew I could frighten those men at that time I would have really, really given them a rough time.

So Frank became involved as vice president. Now in January--of course now I'd lost the election and I figured that all my future was gone. I mean, the Job Corps job was gone. What had happened then is that L. E. could not ask me, evidently. He asked Artie Hartung, who was Local Chairman, and he asked a number of the men that were now officers if they wanted to go downtown. I guess he even asked some of his relatives that were out there if they wanted to go down. And no one wanted to come into the city of Chicago and work with the Blacks and the Hispanics. Anyway, then he asked me after everyone refused. He called me down and asked me to teach one day a week, and I used to teach on Monday. Well, from February to September I was like walking on air. When they called me down there that was the greatest thing and I adored the girls. It was just like a fulfillment of everything. And this is all of '72. In the meantime, the gentleman they had, Earl Wilson, was the head of that division, Although he was a good man, some men aren't leaders. The Chicago Job Corps was falling in disarray I guess. It really got bad out there--no organization at all. It was really bad news. So I would go early in the morning and I'd be out of there by three o'clock and home. It wasn't so bad and I was tickled to death. I got a day's pay for it plus five dollars expenses so I was just absolutely in my utter glory and would spend time preparing lessons and everything. Somewhere in that summer they told Earl that he wasn't hacking the mustard and they brought in a guy named Raleigh Forbes and he kind of curtailed me going down there because he wanted to do some reevaluation. I guess when he reorganized this thing he just didn't like what was going on so much. It was September now of that year and the AFL-CIO convention was on. At the same time BRAC was starting a big drive called SOS (Save Our System), the railroad retirement system, and they had a big doings at the Midland Hotel. Sometimes in your life you know that things are going to break; you just feel that they're going to happen. You know, you don't know what it's going to be, but you know. Some of the things that we'd fought for as women on the railroad were coming to pass and one of them is that we could work doubles and we could work seven days a week if we so desired. At the point we had a law where you couldn't, but it's changed. And this is the beginning of the Women's Movement; it had come in. Somewhere in 1971 I had found out that if you go to work at the Grand Lodge for any reason, what they do is take your salary plus ten percent.
FESE: That is your starting salary. In the year of '72 I worked—in fact to go downtown I changed my days and got Sunday and Monday off or Monday, Tuesday—I don't remember now. So I would work my five days. Chances of working overtime days were very slim, so I could come down here and work. Then I could get back home by four o'clock and double. You have to remember at this point in my life I began to work something like seven days a week a year. I was still going to school at Roosevelt University. I had gone to summer school that year and I was still taking care of a family.

INTERVIEWER: I don't know why you didn't drop dead!

FESE: I don't either. The thing is....I think back and it was stupid of me to do it that way, because I still played that stupid game that we women play with my husband: that I didn't work and everything, you know, the house still had to be taken care of; the kids still had to be taken care of. And I pushed myself beyond capacity, which was stupidity. It's stupid for any woman to do what I did. I think at points I've ruined my health quite a bit by doing all that. In the meantime, somewhere in that period, I also had a couple of miscarriages and at one point I was damn near dead through that time. That's when I gave up cigarettes and kind of went on a little health kick to kind of get myself back. But I think now of the stupid things we do; women are brought up thinking that to accomplish what they want is alright, but don't let it interfere with your life at this home and raising these children. My children at that age, I guess, they began to resent it because I was more and more out doing things. I had teenage daughters: at that time which were getting into a lot of trouble. And you question yourself as a mother because I did work and because I was out. I said it and other people said it to me, "You can go out and take care of the whole world. You can't take care of your own family," and I wonder. The only thing that saved me is that sometime I looked around and saw women who stayed home and still had these problems. So as I grew older I say, hey, I didn't neglect these kids. Maybe they got more of my time because it was so precious to be with them. Really, when I was with them I was with them and not half-hearted-ly. And a lot of times I'd go into my bedroom at night...in fact it's still the same; I'd go in my bedroom and think I was going to study or get a little extra sleep before I went off to work and they would just-pile in and the kids would be on the bed and we'd have these big rap sessions. I'd get maybe three minutes before I'd have to get up and I'd have to chase them on. But they remember those rap sessions. Even as much trouble as went on in our house with these kids growing up I was able to always communicate with them. This is getting off the subject.

INTERVIEWER: It's all on the subject.

FESE: It is on the subject in a sense because of this awareness of being
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE:

a woman and why did we have to do these things? And why did I?
And an awareness of the Women's Movement became more prevalent, I agreed with it and I didn't agree with it because I said I don't want to get rid of my husband and my family, I want to do all the things I want to do, but I don't see why I have to give up having someone that I love. I mean, there was no hatred; I didn't resent my husband in the sense of what these women were talking about in the things that I began to read in the very beginning. But as I became more involved, as unions became more involved, at this point--I guess at that point the Equal Rights Amendment was coming into its own and when it started George Meany of the AFL-CIO was saying no to the amendment, I think that union women were the first to get involved in ERA. We were doing work with it because we were thinking of the work place. We wanted that equality there, maybe not so much at home, we thought. That was a private matter at home, but we wanted equality. In September of 1972 the State AFL-CIO had their convention here in Chicago. I called work and asked whether I could please get a week of my vacation. My vacation was moved up. I needed this week's vacation; things were beginning to break for me. I had worked so much on the railroad my salary was fantastic in 1971 and '72. It was a really good salary; I'd outdrawn my husband at this point. So what happened is that one of the nights when the convention was here they had this big rally for the Save Our System at the Midland. I went to the AFL-CIO convention in the daytime and at night to the Midland.

And at that point L. E. Dennis asked me that night if I would like to teach full time at the Job Corps. One of the teachers had left and they went through all the people that had been down there and asked the girls themselves who was the best teacher that they had, and the girls picked me. There were a number of men that absolutely didn't want me, and one of them was a man by the name of Bob Mayberry. Anyway, he did not want me. He had been nice to me when he thought I was just a union member somewhere out there with a vote or two. But when he saw me closing in to go to the Grand Lodge I could feel the hatred when I'd get near him. And he was one of these fellows always smiling and happy-go-lucky and "darling" to everybody, just a mushy kind of man. When I got close to him, at the beginning I didn't feel that, but as I got more involved in union work and such, I felt the animosity and it lasted for a long time. But that's a later part of the history. Anyway I went there that night and we negotiated price, and I came up with the highest I could make it at that point was $14,400 which was a very good salary without working all the overtime and everything. That was in September of '72 and I would be starting October 1. Now I knew that it was coming and I felt that it was beginning to happen. I talked to my husband and this was part that was later to be brought up in our life. We discussed it: what if I'm sent here, what if I'm sent there? Well, we'll cross that bridge later. Will you mind that I make more money? I guess I took my theme from what they used to say when the astronauts went up--the think tank. I brought
FESE: up everything possible that could go wrong and what would happen. And we seemed to be able to work it out. I don't know if I mentioned this before but a young man at that point was living with us that I loved dearly and I just had the greatest respect for. I knew he was a kind of domineering type. He'd become one of the bosses at work, minor boss or middle management, and was caught up in his own importance, but I didn't really think that it was that male chauvinist type stuff. People had warned me but I guess he didn't show it to me. He had lived with us eight months and we had known him some time before.

One day he was out in the garage with my husband working and when he found out that I was going to take this job and I was going to be making that big money, he said to my husband, "Well, now you've got to work another job. You've got to work a lot of overtime." My husband said, "What for?" And he said, "Well, you're not going to let your wife make more money than you are, are you?" Frank said, "Well, the only one problem is she's not making enough so I can quit." My husband said it as a joke, but this young man got so upset with him that Frank just went down in his eyes. He just lost stature. And he didn't talk to us again. He didn't talk to us again for years.

INTERVIEWER: Did he move out?

FESE: He moved out right after that and just would have nothing to do with us because he just couldn't imagine a woman making more money than he. Ironically he went with a number of women around here, but he went to Rochester, New York where he was from. And maybe that's why, 'cause he was from my father's home town, that I kind of took a liking to him. Anyway he went back there and eventually did marry. About a year and a half ago he was through with his wife on their way to California. They were throwing up everything and moving. It turned out that at some point in his life his wife was supporting him and had the better job. Because he had been in the swimming pool business and during that, recession in 1974/75--I guess they couldn't make it--and so there was months where she was literally supporting him and I thought how the Lord does even things up. My mother used to say, "Every dog has his day." But I kind of rubbed it in, the fact that she had a good job. In fact, when they went to California, she had a job to go to and he didn't.

Anyway, to go back, as I went to the Job Corps I have to say I was walking on air. In September of 1972 I had started at Roosevelt. I was going to take that four year course that they have plus I was going to finish up, take my credits and my CLEP from here, and get my 'degree. I went also in '72, '73 and '74 and I may as well say this now so it will be in here: I should have finished up. In '75 I should have come back and finished up. It was my fourth year, but in the fall of '75 was when I decided to run for Congress so I didn't get back. So I finished only
three years. Then in '72 the Women's Movement really began to burst into things. Once I had gotten that job a lot of things began to open. You know, you wonder how these men, the chairman of the Grand Central Station, may become chairman of the Community Drive. They're all the same people on these things and there's a lot more capable people out there. Anyway, once I went to BRAC things began to open up--different committees and different jobs. And I went through that period of yes, yes, yes. I served on everything that I was asked to serve on, and unfortunately I'm one of these people that if I serve I give it all. I worked. Now you have to remember that no one from my Local wanted to come downtown to the Job Corps. When I was working down there my husband was apprehensive but nothing was going to deter me. I was going. If I had to go walking over dead bodies I'd push them out of the way. I went down and it was really rough because I had to drive a long distance, I had only been about three miles away from work; it took about seven minutes to get there. Now I had to drive two and three hours to come downtown every day. I kept my pass with the railroad, but if I took the pass, going to work was fine but in the wintertime. at night i didn't want to walk in that area. So I'd drive the car down and coming home I wouldn't get home; I wouldn't get home till seven or eight because you couldn't leave till five. When I was just teaching there one day a week I could just leave at three and be home right away. But the government says you have to stay till five if you're full time and by the time we'd get out into this blocked traffic out of the Loop, I never got home till 7:15 or later. In fact; as time went on, I found the longer I stayed at work the quicker I got home, But I wasn't getting home till seven o'clock every night now, Now the fun started at home because Papa, who Mama had always played these little games with, had always had supper ready for him. The resentment was beginning to set in because I would find him sitting with his arms crossed in the chair. At seven o'clock he hadn't eaten yet. He had never taken the initiative to feed himself ever. Thank God I had a fantastic son that was able to cook and did those kind of things. And my daughters were taking over at the beginning. Now in '72 I still had two of them home yet. One wasn't a cook, but the other one didn't mind. If I had things ready she would prepare dinner. The only thing was she wouldn't clean.

You've got to remember I was gone from six thirty in the morning till seven at night and still trying to go to college. Some nights I got so tired that I would just stay downtown on the night that I had to go to school. And my house began to show bad signs of neglect there for the first few months.

In January of '73 I was busy doing the District Council annual dinner plus the Job Corps. In February my father became sick and I went to Florida. I walked in the door one day and they said he had a massive heart attack and they didn't expect him to live, so I went to him. I was gone a few days and he began
to recover. While there I became sick; I had evidently got the
Asian flu. Anyway, when I came back at the end of February, I
found that Nixon was closing the center in April, I tried to
rally from the flu at that same time, but I think I must have at
that same point been exhausted from having this 1,000 plate
dinner for the Council that I had handled. It was the first
time I had handled this dinner by myself. I had become Secretary
in May of '72, but January '73 was the first dinner I had done.
I had been behind in the District Council books because of every-
thing that happened—the job, my father, and the dinner. I think
I must have been depressed over the fact that I would lose the
job that I had just gotten started in. I got very sick in late
February and March; I could hardly keep myself going. They were
going to close the center in April. I was off a couple of weeks
and I came back. I drove downtown, damn near fainted when I got
there. I just was very ill, but that was the flu that sticks
with you. I couldn't rally and I think now it was because I was
depressed, now that I know more about depression. That probably
was taking place, and then the books were getting behind and I
was all uptight with that. And people that had not wanted me
to go down there and succeed were laughing and teasing me about
already losing my job. But somewhere along the way there were
changes being made in the headquarters of the Grand Lodge. I'm
trying to put these things in chronological order which sometimes
I haven't done.

But L. E. didn't have a job for me at the time and when the Job
Corps ended he said to me, "Would you like to come work for the
union? I can get you in the file room." And I said, "No, I'll
go back to the railroad." I mean, I wanted a job but I didn't
need a job that bad that I would go back to being a file clerk.
I just felt that nothing was worth that. Maybe in five years I
was to be sorry, but at that point I said no. I said, "The
money's the same and I'll be with my husband closer and I can
make overtime," I thanked him for thinking of me, but I just
didn't feel that that was what I wanted to do. But then some-
where along the line there was a big changeover and I was asked
to work at the Job Corps as a data analyst. Well, of course I
wasn't the chosen one that these gentlemen wanted, but L. E.,
being the boss's son, was able to pull this off. And I guess
sometimes you're not aware—I knew that some changes had been
made but I didn't realize that there was any special animosity
that I was there. They were still doing that SOS, Save Our
System, and when the Job Corps closed they asked me to go to the
Grand Lodge and work for a short time, working with the system
answering letters and things. I had asked to go to Washington
for a seminar on the SOS. I was one of the people that were
chosen, again causing a lot of hatred among people that didn't
go. I'm over zealous in my work, I guess—I stepped on some toes
when I shouldn't have. Everybody was afraid I was going to take,
over their job evidently. I was just so enthusiastic about
union work at this point, so involved in it and so starry-eyed
about it that I couldn't see the politics of it yet. You
FESE INTERVIEW

Permission required from interviewee for any quotes, citations and/or utilization of material (see Begal release)

FESE: understand? So I went there with all this enthusiasm and they just cut me off curtly. They would do things to me,

Still, I couldn't imagine these men that had risen in the union from rank and file not being men of brotherly love. I couldn't! I thought when you got to that point that's how you got there, because you believed in unionism. That's such bunk! There's more politics there; I mean, not any more or any less, it's just the same as if you were in business. It was dog-eat-dog and who was taking care of the president this week and who was out this week and who wasn't in.

Anyway, I worked on the SOS when they took me from the Job Corps. They said there was nothing for me to do and the students were beginning to disappear, so they took me in early spring after I got to feeling better and they sent me to the Grand Lodge in Rosement and I was doing this extra work on SOS. They were just killing time with me until the Center closed because they had to pay me anyway. I think in May we went to Washington in 1973 and as soon as that was over I figured I would be going back to the railroad and I was resigned to do so. I knew that I would get out of the railroad and was going to be doing something--whatever it was I didn't know. I got more and more involved with other unions and the Women's Movement.

There are three or four different types of leaders. I've found, since that time, I'm more of an organizational leader, but not a leader of people, and there's a difference. Some people can just rally groups around them and charge ahead. As far as running meetings and handling that type of thing, yes, I probably am a leader in that respect. But to gather many people and start some kind of an organization; I have discovered that's not me. It would be nice to think that it was, but.... At one point I think people say you're a leader and you're not. You are but you aren't; there's a lot of ways to lead. Maybe I can lead in ideas or be a second or third in command to help a leader and to accomplish the things that that person wants to do, but to lead people, no, I don't think that I was. So I found at that point that I couldn't gather the women that I wanted to kind of get involved in the Women's Movement as it was beginning to evolve. Anyway, I just went out there and worked, met a lot of the women who were on the road in our own union, and got very enthusiastic about it. I had confrontations in Washington with some railroad women. They were right and I was wrong, at that point, but I was still under the illusion that everyone who was anyone in our union was dedicated beyond belief to the union cause. One of the women said more or less that I was in shit up to my eyebrows, (laughs) I couldn't see what was happening.

Anyway, L. E. in his own way was able to get some women on the union staff but he still had his own battles to fight. He did get many women on staff, but when the new president came in he got rid of almost every one of them. That comes later on in the story.
INTERVIEWER: Why do you think that the women you tried to rally couldn't be rallied? You sort of said you think you weren't the right person, but there must have been more to it than that?

FESE: No, I know now why. I understand why, because the women I gathered were busy working eight hours a day trying to take care of a family. Sure they were interested. They really were interested and if I wanted to be the one to go fight the boss for them they'd pat me on the back, but don't ask them to do it. I found out later that many women didn't have the energy that I had. I'd see women at work efficient and all not knowing that when she went home she'd collapse. She barely got through her supper. Men do this, too, but I didn't realize that. I was one of these people that could just--I wasn't maybe always up high like everybody, but I was like a turtle--I could just keep right on plodding along. And when everybody else was dropping by the wayside I'd still be up at two or three in the morning and get back up again early in the morning to continue. I could go without sleep. Either it was training or it was my own personality, who knows. But I could do this, I could get along on five hours sleep for two or three days. Maybe my brain didn't function as fast as it should, but I could get things done.

INTERVIEWER: So basically they approved of what you were doing.

FESE: Yeah, I don't think women had the energy; the job and their home take most of it. I mean, some women had Monday and Tuesday off, some women worked midnights, and I guess it takes a certain something. Some women I see at work and they gather a little clique around them, and I could never do that. I couldn't do that because I always wanted people around me with good ideas, and if they could--exceed over me, fantastic! So if I would get somebody in and they would kind of rise maybe in their own direction doing things, as I look back now I see many things. I look at many men and the people they gather around them are the 'yes' people. And I feel sorry for them because in my campaign I gathered fantastic women and young people around me. I had to do it once to know that it could be done. At the same time so many things were happening. My life was so full at that point.

Artie Hartung, who had gotten this job from Jim Reardon in Illinois, turned out to be a rotten leader. He was a good second man, but he could not be the principle; he just could not hack it. Somewhere in the late fall of '73, in August or so, they had a meeting. I met with some of the women from my Local. They called me and they said he's such a rotten leader, what could they do? So we got together, just women of the Local, and we wanted to show him our support for him so we got badges and we were wearing these badges all over. Now I wasn't working at the railroad anymore but at the Job Corps in Rosemont. These women wanted my help in showing their strength in unionism, I guess I did too much; he took it wrong. He was a very, very heavy male chauvinist. He took it wrong, what the women were doing, and there was a big
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: The women who finally got together with the General Chairman and the Assistant General Chairman which was Jim Reardon and Bill Van Klech, asked for a special meeting. They went there and even that was misinterpreted—what I was trying to do. I was not trying to get this man out. I was trying to show this man that we women, if he wanted to walk out, would do anything he wanted to do for the union. There was about ten or fifteen of us, and it began to snowball at this point. I thought we could show Artie that he could ask the company for something and we would back him. But he would just say, "Well, if I had a gun I'd go in and shoot them for you," Well, we don't want that; we wanted action. Even lie to us, do something, but don't give us those kinds of answers.

My husband at this point was on a fishing trip so it had to be either July or August that this was taking place. My own life at the Grand Lodge was beginning to change. What had happened earlier in June was that somehow a job opened up as a data analyst at the Job Corps Headquarters so I was staying with the union. I had told L. E. that I had plans with the University of Illinois and Michigan and Wisconsin; they were putting together this European trip and it was to leave September 7 or 8 for a tour to study the unions in the different countries. Anyway, I had made plans because I didn't think I was going to have a job, so I made plans to go those three and a half weeks, and I put the money up. What happened then was that the job opened up in June for this data analyst thing. I think now that L. E. made some moves for me possibly to get in, so there are a few men out there that help women. I became data analyst in June of that year. I only had the job a short time. Anyway, somewhere in July while this is all happening with this Artie Hartung thing, our local chairman, at the same time L. E. told me that a Japanese fellow he had fired more or less—he wasn't working out; he had the library upstairs—and that on September 1, I would be going in as a staff officer and I would be an International staff officer and would be Assistant to the Director of Research and Education. My world was absolutely complete, because all my life I think I said, "Out there there's a job for me somewhere with books." And being able to read all I want—because you're not allowed to read on the railroad and not being able to read at my mother-in-law's; wanting always to have the time to read things in the papers and all the things that were going on in the world. I had always said somewhere out there there's a job for me like this. And there was! This was the ultimate in jobs. I have to say in 1973 I was literally walking on air. I was 38 years old or 39 by this time; had been a little ahead. I had thought by 40 I would make a move, but it was happening now. I was having a lot of problems with my daughters at this point in their own growing up. Everybody was growing up at this point. My husband at this point, like I said, was out of town and I was there at that confrontation without him. Artie resigned from the job as Local Chairman and left that job open. There had to be an
FESE: election and my husband was vice president, as you remember, at that point. He said one of the fellows that was going to run was really only interested in himself; had never really attended the union meetings. The other man had attended union meetings. He was a young man, would probably have been good, but he was the boss's son. And another one had scabbed in one of the elections and he was going to run.

Well, Frank got all hopped up and he said, "I'll be damned, Maybe I'm not the greatest union person in the world, but I'm not going to see this union go down the drain." He said, "I'm running." I said, "Don't you dare!" I begged him then not to run, and this time the tables were turned, because I was always begging him to get involved in the union. "You know what they'll think. They'll think that the Grand Lodge..."--I had just gotten my own job--"They'll think that the Grand Lodge put you up to it." I said, "Jimmy Reardon and VanKlech will think you're a spy," and I begged him. He said, "I don't care what you say, Marie. This thing I cannot let go. I have to run." And he was the only older man with enough union knowledge. I mean, he was the best choice but I begged him not to run. Nobody knows and nobody would ever believe it, but may God strike me, it was the truth. I did not want him to run because I knew what people would say, and they did.

But anyway, he ran for that election and won. So now here we are in 1973 with problems with our kids, more money than we had ever made before in our lives, me going into the Grand Lodge and becoming an International staff officer. As Erma Bombeck puts it, "Life is just a bowl of cherries. Why is she getting the pits?" Well, for the first time, I'd gotten the cherries, and it was just beautiful! I really got involved in the Italian-American Labor Council. All kinds of things were coming my way. And the Women's Movement was really moving along in these years. I think I'll stop before we get to '74. '74 was the year I got involved in politics.

In '73 I went to Europe, in September. A lot of things really, in a sense, changed my life. It was the first time in my life that I had known no responsibility for three weeks in my life. Someone else told me when to get up, when to eat, when to go to sleep, when to do anything. And at first I remember resenting it. I felt, "Hey, I've been doing all this for everybody else. What are you telling me?" But after the end of the three weeks I adored it; I didn't want to come home. I didn't know life could be so great.

I became very ill while I was over there. No one knew it, though, but I'd gotten a rash and I was in pain towards the end. I saw a world that was--you know you read about it, and it just opened up to me. I met some fantastic people over there and began to see the importance of politics. I guess I knew it here, but you really didn't know it. I mean, things go into your mind and
FESE: your brain, but the awareness wasn't really there; how important it was. In 1972 I had become a little bit aware also. I had just gotten my job back, but with everything else I was doing I did donate some time to the Democratic Party for the McGovern Campaign in '72. People weren't aware of it, but I sat one night a week with a telephone in some corner office somewhere and I was able to do my homework so it was not a big thing. But 'it was really in '72 that I became involved. And everything that happens in your life does have roots. Unfortunately I went with McGovern and not with the other Democratic faction, and so this was later to hurt me in a few things, because I had worked in headquarters during the McGovern campaign. I met no one else, but the fact that I had done it was later to be not so good anyway.

Anyway, I had gone to Europe; I came back in October. I remember being very ill for a few weeks after I came back. I went to work, but a little bit of depression set in and I really didn't know that was what was happening. It had happened once before at the District Council when I thought I was going to lose that job, but there again I thought I was sick. It was a combination of being sick and a change of life style. Now I think what happened was.... I think I had to question whether I could cut the mustard or not. It wasn't a matter of climbing anymore: in my mind I was on top of the mountain. But now I knew that people were looking to me to take on a leadership role, because by this time the Women's Movement was beginning to grow, and I have to say maybe I did advance because of that Women's Movement beginning at that time. At that time I wouldn't have said so. I thought it was only because of me and the things that I had done, but I question it now. L. E. was a farsighted person, maybe, to see what was happening and took a woman like myself and brought them through this kind of era. I was and I believe I'm still the only woman from the rank and file who had ever got to this point in our union. Most of the women had come in as specialists in their own field, or they were employees of the Grand Lodge. They came in, hired to the Grand Lodge, and then moved up. But as far as I am aware I am the only one that came from a railroad job. So I came back with an awareness of women. I'd asked a lot of questions in Europe about women at work and learned some things from the English women. You'd think that they were so much ahead of us and they weren't at all, especially in the work place. Of course I didn't get an in-depth study, but I asked a lot of questions there, and this led me to questions of my own ability.

What was I going to do now? I had reached the top and now was I capable of staying there? There is a saying that a person could get there but he didn't have the moxie to stay, and yet now I, as a woman, was in this position.

I think I suffered a short depression in that time; I think a little loss of self-confidence in yourself when you get to where you want to go. But then I began to get it back and dig in,
and I had a major project. I had to take a library that was in complete disarray and begin to build it and clean it up and catalogue it, and that was a big challenge. Of course this began in 1974, that I started that, because by the time I came back in October I was just kind of getting myself familiar with my new duties. I can only say that by the end of '73 I probably was at the pinnacle as far as things go. There was a slight depression, but I didn't realize what it was. But I was really pleased with my life and myself and figured that the kids would work out, and I was happy that Frank had come around since he had his union job. It was a bond now between us that was even more so when you began to work together in the same area, although I wouldn't help him on his job. I thought that it was wrong for me to help him. At this point in my life I was getting so much unionism that I had to have a point of refuge where there wasn't, any, and so I wouldn't help him when I was at home.

INTERVIEWER: Did he want you to do things for him?

FESE: Yeah, he wanted me to continue his typing and doing all these things, but I was in so much union myself that I couldn't really give to him at that point in my life, and he was struggling with an area that he didn't know anything about so he was going through probably the same crisis at that time that I was going through. I'm saying that I'm going to have to devote so much time to this job and I did. I began to really put in a lot of hours and a lot of work, and it's funny, when I think back now, at five o'clock all the men went home and all the women were the ones that were left. I laugh when I think of it now. At first it was hard and nobody accepted me. I tried to become part of the women. At break time they went to an office, and I followed them and I started talking one day. And then the next day they were there; I went and talked again. The third day they had moved down to the basement so I looked around and found them down there, Pretty soon--it took me awhile--I'm a dumb broad, but then they were behind closed doors, and I got the message that they didn't want me around, that I was considered a misfit. I found out later that this Mayberry had a lot to do with it because he didn't want me. He said that I would hurt L. E.'s chances of becoming vice president because I was from the Chicago Northwestern Railroad, the same as L. E. Why he didn't care for me at that point I'm not sure. I guess he figured another lazy bum, coming in, and he didn't want no more hangers-on from the Dennis family. Who knows what he felt, but it was a lot of animosity there. I took many years to prove myself to him, but that's another story.

I think I don't want to go beyond 1973 at this point, but I just want to add a couple of things. I think the Women's Movement will never go backwards, we could never. It was a catalyst for me, in a sense, I happened to be at the right time at the right place. I don't think I have any more than any other woman has. But the mistakes we made before that point God, what dummies! There was just no buddy system for us, no mentors, no nothing.
FESE: Even now they're trying to get us back in the history books. We didn't even have—you know they talk about Susan B. Anthony slightly, in some of the books, but as an evil rebel. They don't even express what those women went through. It has not been until the last two years that I've more or less read and saw the struggles those women made. And yet to be knocked out of the history books: How do the young men even know? How can these young men know? They say, "Well, if no other women before them tried it, how do they think they can?" Eons of centuries have gone by and yet women have never come to the top. Maybe one: Catherine the Great and Helen of Troy, but they don't even really devote a lot of time in the history books to women.

INTERVIEWER: We'll try and remedy that. We'll make sure your struggle gets recorded. That's really why this project was started.

FESE: But you know, even this project being started bothers me, because it's going to sit somewhere. What's going to be done with it? I've even thought about taking what I've said here and maybe even making it into a book. Unless a book like this, of someone's life, can hit the best seller list it's not going to make a difference. There's plenty of books out there; there's plenty of books out there telling the struggles of women. Betty Friedan hit the best seller's list and changed the world. Rachel Carson, she hit the best seller list and changed the world a little bit. The environmental thing came out of her book. Friedan, you might say, was the beginning of the Women's Movement. And these are great, but maybe we need another book on the best seller list to say, "Hey, we need to be in the books. We need these struggles." What happened to the women in the forties that are 40 years old; those women like myself that are struggling between an old society and a new trying to be part of both and yet not knowing what part we want to be. The young girls of today—I see my own daughters—they come from a society that was never before. They had nothing to build on. They're even worse off than we over 40 are. The women my age may be like me and go way off on their own and seem to be a little bit strange, or they could follow the older models that their mothers set.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, let's pick it up where we left off last time—1974.

FESE: I've been thinking a lot since last time about '74 and I think it was about the best year women ever had in the history of the world. So many things happened in '74 that I find it hard to put them in chronological order. I remember at that point that I was attending Roosevelt University labor classes and that at the beginning of the year I got a letter from a number of women whose names didn't mean a thing to me about a meeting that was going to take place at the Pick Congress Hotel, and I believe it was March 24. It was for labor women. Now, in 1972 and '73,
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: I had attended a few AFL-CIO state meetings and I felt that that must be where they got my name. Like I said before, I had done some work and everything. But in '74 I went to this convention and it was the beginning of the Coalition of Labor Union Women, CLUW. I can't think of a moment or a time in my life that was more thrilling than that weekend. It was mobbed! No one knew that it was going to come out that good; that there were that many women in the trade union movement that felt that something had to be done.; that we had to accomplish certain things.

INTERVIEWER: Did your union send you?

FESE: No, I went on my own. It was just a letter I had gotten at my own home to go. I had no idea what it was. They talked about starting chapters and they set up a date. They caucussed a little bit. I ran for an office. I didn't make it but I knew, because the voting was done half-assed; it was very mixed up. Anyway, it was the first time I met Barbara Merrill and a number of women out of the Chicago area. They had set up, at that time, a meeting for Chicago. It was about a month later at the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Hall. We had a meeting there, which was mobbed, and I went into the Outreach Committee. I knew from the minute I walked in the door the first time at the Pick Congress that I was going to be part of this. I didn't know what I was going to do, but if I had to take a bulldozer and knock every woman out; so help me! I just knew. The Lord seemed to say to me this was it! I've got to be part of this. So I became Chairwoman of the Outreach Committee which gave me the editorship.

It was just such a fantastic year, that year, don't even know where to start. I learned so much from CLUW. I need books just to fill what I had learned: parliamentary procedure, how to handle yourself at a union meeting, et cetera. There were other women like myself trying and struggling within their own unions to make life better, and when we came together there was just the sheer magic of it. We were going to accomplish everything. I can't remember if Meany at that time had gone for the Equal Rights Amendment or if it was because of CLUW that he finally changed his mind. I'd have to look back to actually check it out. I became editor and published the newsletter. I have all the original papers from the beginning. In fact, in my will I have told my daughter to make sure that some university gets all that, because it has to be a part of the women's history. It has to be. Probably other people have the first sheets but I have the originals. BRAC was most cooperative -- my union -- with this. Diane Curry was the editor of the union magazine. She was part of the original group in Chicago. She became and still is one of the national officers of CLUW.

INTERVIEWER: Is she from BRAG?
FESE: She's from BRAC. Under the new president, of course, they don't believe in that kind of thing, and it's kind of quieted down, I haven't been to a CLUW meeting in over a year. But anyway, I was part of the beginning, part of knowing that there were women out there just needing so much help. They gave seminars on so many things, especially on parliamentary procedure and how to get things done for women. We just never had that kind of a thing where we could go to a class on parliamentary procedure to learn how to get the floor. I began to practice it in my own lodge after that and began to surprise people. I was just having a ball with all I was learning.

In that same year I just felt my own full potential as a woman. I met some of the most fantastic women: the Olga Madars, the Barbara Merrills, the Mary Anne Collinses, women all over Chicago, Clara Day. All these women and one was more fascinating than the other! Because of CLUW that year I had twelve foreign women at my house that I entertained for two days.

INTERVIEWER: Were they visiting CLUW?

FESE: Yes, they heard about it. They were union people that visited the Amalgamated Meat Cutters; Addie Wyatt's union up on Sheridan Road. She called and they came out to my house and I took them out to Woodfield Shopping Center and after that we just had the most fabulous night of talking about how we women wanted things changed all over the world. The beginning of International Woman's Year was starting in 1974. The rumbles, Bella Abzug. It was just an awakening. It was just like being reborn. I lost touch with my family that year, and they lost touch with me. I also got involved with politics. I had gone to the County Fair in Du Page in July of that year, met a woman by the name of Mary Eleanor Wall. She was running for County Board as a Democrat out there, and I became her Financial Chairperson for her campaign. She won that year, in the fall of that year. Of course a lot of women all over the country were winning. And Watergate! It was the year of Watergate. It was just a great year for women. We just had everything going for us. Unfortunately, we hadn't had the training to know what to do with it. I think I mentioned that to you. Women went down to Springfield and said we have to have this, this and this. They demanded it; they didn't know how to lobby. These state representatives weren't about ready to do what these women said. You know, it's only been four years and yet a lifetime, because we've damn near lost ERA. But Ms. came in then through that era, Betty Freidan, I think NOW had already been started. NOW was already established, but this was even in addition to NOW. CLUW was getting even stronger.

INTERVIEWER: Were you ever involved in NOW?

FESE: No. The Women's Caucus, the political caucus, Independent Women's Caucus, Illinois Women's Caucus; everything I seemed to be involved in was more political. But as I've watched the movement—and it
FESE: happened to me in my own job--for what it was worth, we seem to have got caught up in our own importance and the cause just began going right down the drain.

INTERVIEWER: Now explain in some more detail how this happened in your opinion.

FESE: I don't know how to say it. Well, maybe using your own case as an example.

FESE: As I come to the end of the story I'll tell you what happened to me afterwards when the depression set in: a loss of identity. Somewhere or other I got wrapped up in that job, I wasn't Marie Fese, this person who could do anything she wanted. I was Marie Fese, International Staff Officer of the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks. No distinction. And because of the union, or whatever I'd had, or whatever was going on I and others got caught up in what we could accomplish as individuals like the men do, And the cause: the cause became secondary; Even Bella, instead of staying in Congress where she could have done the most good, she got caught up in her own importance and she figured she could make it to the Senate. She didn't have the right; it wasn't the right time. Everybody told her; we all knew it—that she was making a mistake—but she went for it. But it was too late. NOW she's lost everything; she isn't there to fight for us in Congress. We backslid because of things like that. Play be they came so fast or so—we were just sitting on top of that mountain so high in '74 and '75. The government said, "Hey, you've got to give these women jobs." Everybody got frightened, and then the men were saying, "Well, if we gave it to the black we should give it to our own white women." These are the things that happened. The one woman that I always was teasing was a black woman with a Spanish surname. She had it licked. It was a standard joke with women, no matter what color or creed they were as long as we were women. But this is what seemed to have happened to me. I cry. I feel that we've lost ERA for this reason. We should have stayed dedicated to the cause, and I'm sorry in a sense that we have the continuation. I think we should just let the amendment die a quiet death; just let it die, because out of that will come the Phoenix.

Our daughters—we could only be mentors to this younger generation that's coming in—our daughters and younger women that will pick up this standard of life. They'll never backslide. Women won't backslide. Although I shouldn't say that because they sure did after the Second World War. Although we seem to be going back; I look at the fashions: they've become more feminine and all this, but women aren't going to go back, no way. They are not going to.

INTERVIEWER; Are you convinced that ERA is absolutely lost?

FESE: No, I'm not. I pray daily that I'm wrong. I hope with all my
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: heart that I'm wrong. But I really think that if we would just cool it for a while and then come up. We've got the experience now. Now I think these women know how to lobby; they know how to make deals. They're beginning to learn this. It was only seven years ago that it happened, I guess we have eighteen months more now.

INTERVIEWER: How crucial do you think ERA is compared to the other kinds of gains women have been making? Is that the pivot point or is it not that important?

FESE: No. Oh, it's very important in the sense that other states—you know in Illinois, we get lackadaisical in Illinois, because we have good laws for women in this state. We have good inheritance, fairly decent inheritance laws. That's why Illinois women tend not to understand. But in the South a woman could work all her life on a farm with her husband and her son could be a no-good bum and get everything, and she would get nothing. It could be, there's so many obsolete southern laws. The ERA when we started was not what they turned out to be with the abortions and all this. What we women in the Trade Union Movement wanted; we wanted equality in the jobs. And when I hear some woman say to me, "Well, I love some man opening the door for me," I say good manners are not ERA. Good manners we teach our children. As adults we teach them to open a door for a woman or pull out a chair for somebody or don't slap some man in the face. If you see an old crippled man, get up and give him your seat. There are manners. That has nothing to do with equality, nothing! I get some clowny woman saying, "Oh, I just love some man opening the door for me," and I want to strangle her. My husband carries in my packages, too, for me, but that has nothing to do with equality. I get all bent out of shape when I hear these things.

But like I say, I don't know what the outcome of the Equal Rights Amendment is going to be, and I was pleased to see that there were 10,000 women Marching to extend it and that they couldn't gather that many against it. I really believe that if you do reading—and I'm sure history will prove me out—that Phyllis Schlafly is not a Republican; she's more of the right wing John Birch Society. I'm sure all this will be proved out long after I'm dead, that these were the forces that were working. Insurance companies don't want that Equal Rights Amendment; they're fighting it. We have a lot of insurance men down in our legislature in Illinois, and all over the country, and they don't want this equality. Do you know what that'll do to the insurance companies, what it will cost them? In businesses and everything women are the underdog. They make money off us. They don't want ERA. The insurance companies I swear are the biggest ones that don't want it. I'm not talking about the dyed-in-the-wool person that's 90 years old that doesn't believe in equality. You can't change that person.

INTERVIEWER: You're talking about vested interests.
I'm talking about money. We went to Houston, Texas, to the IWY, and I'll get to that. One thing I couldn't understand when I went down there was the fact that Mississippi had men leaders. I don't know if you're aware of that or not, and I'll get into that later. But they had men leaders, and every thing they voted down, but when it came to giving women equal credit, that thing was voted unanimously and if that didn't tell me something! And I can't believe that things like this didn't come out of that convention: things that said sure the woman could go out and make all kind of debts, and she'd be liable for them, but she can't have equality. Mississippi they sat right across from the Illinois delegation. I was floored that they stood up in a body and that place was unanimous to give women equal credit. That same group would not sit up to give her equality in the work place. Why? It's got to be tied up with money. It's just like we're slaves and they didn't want the slaves because of money. They didn't care about the people; they could have been free as they wanted so long as they did the work-for nothing. That's what it is with women.

I was fortunate I worked on the railroad and I had a good union; and I guess I wanted to share that. As CLUW got into things--I realized that all the women didn't. My daughter is going to be 25 next April. When my daughter was born I collected money for being pregnant and was able to keep my seniority and got maternity benefits to have her 25 years ago in my union. It was so far ahead of the other unions. I just took it for granted everybody had those things 25 years ago. Who knew? I even got extra special benefits to have babies; an extra bonus for having a baby off the railroad. But I was not aware--look at the Supreme Court case that just happened--women could not collect for these things. It was just such a shock when CLUW came along and I found out that in all those unions that wasn't done. And those were the things that I personally went out to say, "You've got to have these things." I know now. I didn't do it with my daughters but my two granddaughters, I say, "What are you going to be when you grow up?" They'd better say lawyers or they're going to be on their butt.

That's the only way women have. We have to sit on the Supreme Court! We have to know what it's like to have a menstrual period, not that it's a miserable time of our life. We can function just as well. So we feel a little uncomfortable, You mean to say no judge ever sat on a bench and felt uncomfortable, had cramps from diarrhea or something? My homesick butt! I mean really! They treat us because we have this menstrual period as though we're some kind of oddity. Men have done this through the years.

Probably by the time we'd be Supreme Court justices we'd be past that age anyway.

That's right, and it's been proven that many men go through menopause maybe worse than that. And if you don't believe it.
FESE: look at the cases of 55 year old men going with 18 year old girls, It's just so prevalent that you know this kind of thing happens. He's going through his own change of life, his own crisis of life, or as Gail Sheehy says, "passages." But these are the things—we put up with that because this has been this man's world for all these years. 1974 was the year that it seemed like maybe there was hope and women came together and we did so many things. I was so active I didn't have one free minute in '74.

Then International Woman's Year was coming in '75. Through '74 I was probably never on such a high in my whole life. I don't remember how old I was in '74. Oh, I was forty; I was forty years old in '74 and I can remember that I said if this was it why was everybody complaining about being forty? It was a little crisis going through forty when forty came in April, but I went through it well because CLUW had been in March and a month later I was forty. I was just buoyed up by what was happening and the camaraderie. I began to give talks and speeches in different places and realize women needed a buddy system. We were using it for a short while, and now it's gone again, Maybe because I'm out of the union game, maybe I've lost track. But still I look for it for other women, recommending other women to do things. Women seem to be jealous of other women. I saw a few people complaining that they had helped with the basic planning of CLUW and yet never got to be in office. But I think the same thing would have happened with any man, I don't think that women realize that men have these same things happen. Until we do; until most women realize that men go through many of the same frustrations in business that women do. Not every man makes it to be president of the corporation. And they have those frustrations, too.

I had gone to Europe the year before, in 1973. I don't know if I mentioned that I went to Europe and that it was really my involvement in politics and then CLUW. I have to say in '74 right at the time of CLUW I met a man who works for the AFL-CIO, George Weaver, a black man. It was just as CLUW was starting and it was in this building Roosevelt U. on the 11th floor. I remember we were staying for coffee it was one of the most vivid things and I had always felt that if I was good enough and you did this right, you just went up the ladder of success. Naive of me but that's the way I was. And yet I found a lot of frustrations along the line; yet I still had begun to rise. We were talking about CLUW that had just started. He's part of the AFL-CIO and he works out of Geneva. I can't think of the name of the conference that he's with. There are three members to this. There is a labor member, a business member and a government member. It's in Geneva and it's still part of the League of Nations that's left over. Anyway, he was giving a talk that night in class and we had a coffee break and we got to talking and I was saying that women you know that men have to realize that women have as much talent and so on. He must have been laughing his
FESE: butt off at me, but he said to me--and I never forgot it and I gave many a speech on it--he said, "Just remember this, Marie: nobody gives up power without being pushed." And at the moment he said that to me, I didn't quite understand what he was saying. But I've milled it around in my mind now for four solid years and really I think even as a mother I never gave up my power to my kids till they started pushing and you didn't either. They'd say, "I'm going, I'm going to go," and they'd walk off; they'd push and we'd relinquish; little by little through the years we'd relinquish our power over them. And that's what the blacks had done. They pushed and pushed, beginning to have the power relinquished to them and brought into that. And now it's begun to happen with women. The men, even black men, had training more than women through the years in a sense. Powerful black men I mean. I don't know how this is going to come out on paper. Sometimes I think it seems flat on paper: without emotion.

INTERVIEWER: Well, the spoken word always carries more than the written word, but I think most of it will come through.

FESE: The thing is these men still were small businessmen or they had power within their own black community, whether it was good power or bad power. The same thing happened to me in 1974 when I realized that you need power for good as well as for evil. That's what politics was. If you wanted to accomplish some good in this world you needed power, too. Also, a dear friend of mine at that time tried to teach me that compromise sometimes had to be, you just can't get everything. And we weren't ready to settle for compromise. It began; in CLUW I saw Addie Wyatt just shoot to the top. A year later she became Woman of the Year; she went high in her own union-- Clara Day--and I believe it was CLUW, the beginning. I mean, these men got frightened. They saw these women coming to prominence within an organization that was world known so they were brought up within their own unions. And I think many young women thought that by joining it too that it would help them. Then something happened: the radicals came into CLUW. It was very touch and go right at the beginning. Some really left wing type of people came in and they wanted the overthrow of the government and the whole bit, and that isn't what the original nucleus of CLUW wanted.

We had a lot of trouble. I remember sitting in CLUW meetings till the vote would go one way or the other by one or two women who weren't really sure what was happening in the meeting. We would sit--I never sat so much in my life-- and it was the greatest lesson I ever learned. I could outsit any man there is for a meeting. I learned you go early and you leave late and most meetings happened before and after the meeting. That means so much, parliamentary procedure, as I said before. It was just a fantastic time. I would see these young girls they couldn't be more than 20 years old come in and make speeches that I would be floored with. How brilliant: Geniuses! And then I began to realize that there's somebody writing this stuff for them in the
FESE: background. I said, dummy you're just as smart as them. The only thing is you don't have a writer; you can do it without them.

I learned so much from these women, but we were able to keep a good democratic balance. I know that in the group there were women that were socialists: that were communists. I was the only Democrat. (laughs) I shouldn't say it that way but I was the only suburban woman from out in the suburbs, and as I look back now I think they kept me there. It wasn't my talent: it was that I might have been a balance between groups. I was the only balance sometimes. Maybe not; I'm joking with myself. I just like to believe that I had something to add to it. The October League was in, there, and the SLD or SDS; women that were from these groups that had people trying to take over.

INTERVIEWER: Did they have that much influence that they could sometimes win a vote?

FESE: They could win a vote. They won some, and yet these women that were running the Chicago CLUW were really sharp, sharp cookies. They knew how to hold those meetings. I would have been petrified. I eventually got elected vice president, and I would have died had I ever had to hold one of those meetings, because I didn't think I had it in me. I'm president of my own local union. It's like child's play up against a CLUW meeting. After a CLUW meeting anything is easy, even my own convention. It was rough down there in Washington in May of 1975; our union convention was rough, but in a sense it was mild after CLUW. I mean, the votes were just back and forth. And like I said, you learn to sit; you wouldn't dare to leave. If you had some friend there and they walked out the door you grabbed them and put them back in the chair because you couldn't leave for fear that the vote would go the other way and you'd lose a very important vote. We had to prove to Meany and to the AFL-CIO and our own unions that we were a group that did not want to work against our unions: we wanted to work in force with our unions; in cooperation with our unions. Many of the women thought CLUW was a separate union that would fight their union. See, some of those women, that's what they wanted and it just couldn't be that way.

INTERVIEWER: Are the radical women still in CLUW or did they mostly drop out?

FESE: Some of the young real radicals did. They couldn't gain grounds. I was the keeper of the newsletter, which was the visual thing of CLUW, and no way would I allow them to put anything in. They couldn't get the mailing list from me. I threw my body across that newsletter more times. No one got that list, no one got access, nothing was put in that newspaper unless I put it in. They were saying, "It is too bland." Maybe it was but it needed to be bland 'cause this was the thing that our union leaders were reading, the AFL was reading. That's what I cared about at that point 'cause I wanted CLUW to survive, and if I had to breathe
FESE: Life into it all by myself I was going to do it. Most of the original members are gone. Heather Booth now, she has a school, the Academy I can't think of the name of it. But she runs this to teach people how to be better union leaders and how to be aggressive within their own ranks. She did a fantastic job of teaching and helping us women, but even Heather in a way, her business got so big. And it was again because of the Women's Movement that we all got recognized. And myself, I got asked to be on more damn boards. All of us were part of something, the Illinois Labor History Society, some kind of labor board for Roosevelt University. I took my boss's place many times for the University of Illinois. I was on the Italian-American Labor Council. Cod, there was one thing after another, and I became part of it.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about the Italian-American Labor Council. You mentioned it once before.

FESE: Oh, it's a group of men that—well, I hope none of them ever get ahold of this tape. But I joined, I thought that most of them were there to promote Italian-American trade unionism. Most Italians don't come from the Mafia and I thought this organization would help show that. Most of us work very hard within our own unions and try to do good things. That's what I thought this organization would do. But what they have is a group of union men that keep wanting to send money to Italy. We've got plenty of poor people in this country.

I was their token woman, that upset me. I did not want to be a token woman. There were plenty of men that worked very hard and got quite involved and I thought that they should be on the board. I still feel that way and I didn't like being the token woman, really, but they wanted participation by my union. They wanted my tokenism so I did join. When they first asked I was pleased, I was so thrilled. Then I found out I was the only woman in the whole organization. That's when I got upset but that took a couple of months for me to realize that I was just a token. I argued continuously with them. 'They raised all kinds of money. They had concerts and picnics and all kinds of things but they sent the money to Italy.' I still feel that way and I didn't like being the token woman, really, but they wanted participation by my union. They wanted my tokenism so I did join. When they first asked I was pleased, I was so thrilled. Then I found out I was the only woman in the whole organization. That's when I got upset but that took a couple of months for me to realize that I was just a token. I argued continuously with them. 'They raised all kinds of money. They had concerts and picnics and all kinds of things but they sent the money to Italy.'

INTERVIEWER: To what kind of things in Italy?

FESE: Oh, like orphanages and different things. The money was well used but I feel that there were Italian old people's homes and Italian orphanages and maybe even union families here that could well use this money that they raised. Because of this I tended to not really be too active in it. I started out being active and then I just gradually dropped out. I found that I was in demand and I'm sure this happened to many of the women—in the movement. So you get caught up, "Oh, I'm so popular, I'm so knowledgeable, I can do anything." I mean now I know that every
FESE:

man that's president of First National must have been on 45 boards, you know, honorary chairman or honorary this or whatever, but that goes along because you are capable of saying for somebody else to do it. You lend prestige; it isn't you they want in a sense. It's the schmuk down at the office that's doing all the work for the head pers. When you wake up and you really take a good hard look at it ad that's what happens.

In 1975 I, I'll probably go back and forth to '74. There were so many things that happened. In '75 I didn't know what I was going to do, whether I was going to use my vacation or take extra time. I didn't know how but I was going, to go to the International Woman's Year Conference in Mexico. A number of circumstances happened at my own union and a number of women were sent. I was one of them who went, all expenses paid, which is a fabulous way to go. I went first class, everything. I never had done anything like that in my life. A lot of trouble in my union over the fact that we went, but we were allowed, to go. That's a story of internal union problems. C. L. Dennis is gone now so there's no sense in bringing that part of it out. Anyway, we went. It was a complete shock to me that I was going to be allowed to go. I went three days after the conference had started, I wasn't there at the start. I met a woman from South America while I was there that had been at 'my own house, so the camaraderie of CLUW came together. There were a number of CLUW women there and many union women were down there. We had meetings with these women from all over the world. People read about all the bad things that happened, but all the good things—I can't understand why there was no book written about Mexico City. There's a book on everything else and yet no one wrote a book on that convention. Being part of it, it would have been hard to write a book because you wanted to be part of it and you didn't know what was going on all over. But I remember meeting some of these women and I found out that women want the same thing all over the world. They want good education for their children, they want health for their children, they want to work in the work place with their men. They don't always want to rise to the top, the women, they just want some equality, good food for their children, good education. That's basically what we all wanted, not only for our children but for the children of all countries of the world. Now isn't that unusual?

I met a woman from Australia that said, "Beware of the Equal Rights Amendment. We have it and so what they did, they lowered all the men's pay rates. Be careful how you word it." That was the first time I had to think about the Equal Rights Amendment because I was at that point so dead sure, so many women were working for it.

Every morning in Mexico we had to be at the American Embassy and there I met Bella Abzug. I just was thrilled. I mean this was a room full of well-known women. I said to myself, "My Cod, what am I doing?" I was just out of their class, I couldn't believe that I was there. Anyway I got to talking to Bella. I was sitting two seats away from her. I said in the course of the conversation
I'd thought about running for office. Every morning we would talk a few minutes before the meeting started and one day she said, "You ought to run for Congress." I said, "Well, if I run it would be only for Congress." My seniority with the railroad can be maintained only if I run for a state or a federal position and being that I was in the research department at BRAC and because I read the Wall Street Journal and the Federal Register and I knew most of all what was going on in Washington. I didn't know what was going on in Illinois but I knew what was going on in Washington.

The CLUW convention had been just before IWY and I decided to run for a national office in CLUW and won. I ran for alternate regional vice president. Things were moving so fast for me. I mean, anything I ran for I won. It was just unbelievable--anything! If I'd put my name for dog catcher I probably would have won. Anyway, in '75 I met Bella down in Mexico and she talked to me and she gave me some encouragement about running for Congress but still I just passed things off. I came back from Mexico in a daze. I was exhausted, we worked from morning to night. I didn't get Montezuma's revenge, but I was a little sick.

You got the political bug there.

That, too. But in Mexico I had a confrontation. They attacked my union down there in one of the large meetings.

Who attacked it? For what?

It was claimed that one of our vice presidents in BRAC was involved in a revolution--not in Cuba or Brazil.

Chile?

Chile, yes, and a lot of prisoners were union people who were jailed and tortured, and that we had helped that government that was in now. I got up there and defended my union and this vice president, and I didn't know what the hell I was talking about. I got up and defended my union in my fiery voice and that's when one of the women from the Latin American country who had been at my house came down and said, "We understand you because you are fiery and you can speak like us." I was using my hands and I was so upset at the attack they put on my union. I can't even remember what I said. Someone said there's a tape somewhere. I was yelling, "This man..."

Oh, it was a man who raised it?

Yes, a man. He brought in all these papers attacking the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks and he was passing them out. And I went after him tooth and nail.

Do you remember where he was from?
I think now that he was one of the men from Chile, I think he was a delegate. Wherever he came from, he was from out of California attacking our union. I tend to wonder. We have a big case called the Allison & Sayles case, and it's a right-to-work case. I tend to put things together later and I have to question some things that happened. Maybe he was part of this right-to-work committee and was trying to prove how our union money was being spent. Like I said there was a lot of internal problems. Anyway, I was not privy to a lot of internal information.

There were seven women who were authorized to go to Mexico. Not all of them went, only four went. I was the only one that stayed the full length of time, the others left early. They couldn't stand it, some of them got very sick, some got very homesick. I was the one that was there at the end and the one thing that bothered me—I went the last day, the 3rd of July I believe it was, or the 2nd. It was only an afternoon session and I wanted to be at the end of it. The thing that floored me is that there were more men than women at that end. All the women had begun to leave the country and a lot of them didn't go back for the last session. There wasn't a big ending to the conference. But I wondered who these men were who were there. Had they been the ones in the background that caused a lot of the problems? During the time I was there I remembered Allende's wife came in and they were throwing roses on her.

The press caused some of the problem. I want you to know that the dias was really high, nobody could have reached those mikes. The press people literally took women and lifted them up to grab the mike. The press caused this kind of problem, they wanted to show that we couldn't get along. They really didn't want to show the truth. You didn't see any press coverage where everything was peaceful and loving and we got along good as women with translators and everything. No-one saw those meetings. No one saw the tiny meetings of ten and twelve. There was no press coverage at the meetings at the embassy where we all met at night a couple of times a week. They didn't see the meetings in the hotel room where we would make plans. On the floor in the basement of the convention hall, union women from all over the world were meeting and planning and building for the future. They were just sitting there and getting together some four or five hundred union women, which wasn't even planned in the agenda of that Woman's Conference.

Politically, I don't know why the president of Mexico wanted it there. It was a bad time. Now when I look back I'm sorry books aren't written about it. They had the Tribune which we were part of that was a nongovernmental organization—and we were at one end of town. And it was about 45 minutes across town where the official government women were meeting. Now the official IWY, that's documented. But the thing that happened 45 minutes away in that Medical Center was not really documented. And maybe that's where more was accomplished: more camaraderie, more understanding was accomplished than over there [in the Tribune] where
FES: The men did all the speaking and the writing and everything for the women. The last afternoon, right around noon, I couldn't believe there were that many men in the Tribune. At that point I met Joan Goodin, who was with the official government observance itself at the International Woman's Year. Jill Rucklehaus, I have met all these women now in a number of different places. Very, very intelligent women. Whatever they could be doing they should be doing it better in the man's world. I've met men that don't even compare with some of these women. They're so sharp, four or five languages and the whole bit, and yet having problems within their own unions or in keeping their own jobs, Joan Goodin was one of the women that was fired from BRAC at the same time I was. She was with my Brotherhood, of course. I was so proud of our union because we became so involved in the Women's Movement. There were a number of women officers, a slow but sure gain. We had 23 percent at the last count, 23 or 24 percent women in our union and we had about percent women on the staff which I felt was fairly good for the time. This was in the middle of '75.

I was standing in the lobby of the Mexico airport ready to go, I was standing in line ready to go home and who do I meet? Bella comes up to me. She says, "Now I want you to run for Congress, and I'm going to come to Chicago to help you." Well, the thrill of my life happened, I was just in shock. Believe it or not that was eventually the deciding factor in changing my life, but that I'll tell you about later.

When I came back I was in a daze. I don't know whether my mind had just taken in more than it was capable of taking in. So many things had happened. I was changing every day of the 12 or 14 days I was there. It was just unbelievable. I remember the Sunday before I had to go to work I got bombed out of my mind and it was only the third time in my whole life I had been drunk. I sat on my back porch and I just got bombed. I mean there were so many things that had happened I had to, just in a sense, maybe forget everything.

INTERVIEWER: Get a rest from it.

FES: Get a rest. And I remember laying on the floor at four o'clock in the morning screaming, "My head's going to fall off my shoulders." And my daughter came through and said, "Dad, what's wrong with Mom?" And he said, "There's nothing I can't stand worse than a drunken woman." It's a family joke now because I'd gotten drunk. I got drunk on my 18th birthday; one time because I hadn't had anything to eat I got a little tipsy, and that time. That was the only time in my life other than my 18th birthday that I went out to get smashed. I don't drink ordinarily. But I knew that I needed to forget what had happened. I had to go. to work the next day. And there was so much animosity at work over the International Woman's Year Conference that I couldn't talk about it with anybody. Two women that were supposed to go, Diane-Curry and Carol Genovese, didn't. They were supposed to and they didn't.
INTERVIEWER: Did they decide not to go because of the hostility?

FESE: I don't know whether that was the reason or they had personal reasons.

INTERVIEWER: Could you tell me a little bit more about the hostility at work, I mean the cause of it? Was it between political factions?

FESE: Yes, it was between political factions.

INTERVIEWER: One was associated with being pro-women and the other had to take the other side?

FESE: Yes, yes. A lot of that was because C. L. Dennis let the women go. Now the ironic part is that the men got to take trips all over-the country. It was never publicized. But one woman, Joan Berta from Detroit went, and her General Chairman—who is now the President of our union, Fred Kroll—got all bent out of shape because he wasn't notified first. He wouldn't have sent her because she was his arch enemy. He wouldn't have sent her, he would have sent another woman. And there was a lot of hell to pay over it. What really happened I wasn't privy to. I know there was all kinds of problems. How it happened, if you want to know the truth, is I had planned on going and taking a week's vacation. I was going to use my own pay, my own money, everything, to go to the Women's Conference. I felt that somehow I had to be part of that. I just had asked Diane Curry, I said, "Diane, do you think if I asked them to just give me a week—I hate to take my week's vacation—just give me the week off even without pay, but would they give me the week to go?" Her and Carol Genovese had talked me out of it. They said, "No, if you want to take your vacation they can't stop you from doing it, but not to just go for a week" So I pretty much decided I wouldn't go to Mexico.

Carol Genovese said to me one day, "Let's go for lunch." We went for lunch and she said, "I've got something to tell you." I was driving the car at the time. She said, "Jean Jordan is going to go for the whole time to Mexico first class. C. L. Dennis has okayed her to go to International Women's Year." I almost tore the wheel off the car. I was like a bear. I said, "You people told me that I shouldn't even ask." I said, "I'm talking to that son-of-a-bitch, I don't give a damn. That bitch, she doesn't even know what the union Women's Movement is." She was just some babe that could get anything she wanted out of him. She had no more interest in the Women's Movement than the man in the moon. I wouldn't even have felt bad if Diane was the only one going or Carol, or somebody that was involved. This woman had never given a damn about the Women's Movement. She had never been involved in anything. I saw red and they knew it. I said, "I give a shit if I lost my job." I was really ticked at that time. Diane Curry went in and spoke to C. L. Dennis and she said to him that there were a number of women that were interested. She got seven women allowed to go, but only four went.
INTERVIEWER: The others were planning to go?

FESE: Judy from California went, myself, Joan Berta and Jean Jordan. We were the only ones that went. Three couldn't go or something. Diane didn't go, Carol didn't go. Joan Goodin went, I guess. She was going anyway, but BRAC wasn't paying for her. It was an international thing from the AFL-CIO. But then we were able to go first class; any time you went out of the country, you could go first class at that time. But there was just an uproar of noise, at that point I didn't care. If Jean Jordan could go, I could go. And we never saw her. She didn't take part in half that stuff down there. She just went shopping.

INTERVIEWER: Sightseeing, maybe?

FESE: A couple of times I saw her at the meetings. I put her down a couple of times. I shouldn't have done it, but I did. I was so angry and it was only because she'd never been involved in the Women's Movement. So when I came back, like I said, I got bombed out of my tree. I had heard rumors of the problems we were having at BRAC and the confrontation down in Mexico. I figured I was in trouble. We were always taught as union people you never represent your union, certain designated people represent your union. Diane Curry, who was the publishing editor of the magazine, would be the one to talk to the press. No staff ever talks to the press, and I'm sure it's the same in all unions. One of the vice presidents is designated, or the president, or one of the top aides or something. But for me to get up there in front of 500 women and defend my union--and the press was around at that time and was asking questions--if they'd gotten hold of it I figured I'd be in trouble.

INTERVIEWER: For defending your union?

FESE: But I didn't know what I was defending. They'd made accusations that I later found in a sense were true because we were involved with the AFL-CIO, and through that there's some kind of Latin organization that was helping--it was like a 15th removed thing--but we were in a sense helping the children government. Not in the sense of directly, you understand, but I didn't find that out until later. I had access to the BRAC library and I knew a little bit of what was going on. I had never heard of any off things with BRAC so I got up and did my first major speech defending my union. But like I said, it could have hit the papers the wrong way. It didn't fortunately, so I was saved. But that worried me, what was going to be said when I went back. I came back and now it was July of '75.

I was thinking about running for Congress when I got back. I got to talking to Jim Wall, state central committeeman. His wife was the one I helped in her campaign. He said, "Well, there's other people that are going to run," and he couldn't get involved. I ran for delegate to the Mid-Term Convention and I won that, which also made me well hated in my union.
INTERVIEWER: Why?

FESE: Because other people lost. I won. Everybody said I couldn't do it. I went out and won delegate to the Mid-Term Convention in Du Page County. I won, and a couple of people wanted to strangle me at BRAC. I won it fair and square on my own. The other ones that won had to cut some deals to go. They had some political pulls and they didn't win the first round. I won everything on my own. I won the voting on my own to become the delegate elector, which was 10 people out of 40 some people that ran. I was one of the 10 that won, and the second time around I was one of the two delegates.

Like I said 1974 was such a year I probably would keep going back to it. That had given me a lot of political pull, influence name recognition out there. I had just helped Mary Eleanor Wall win in the Primary election. People knew I'd worked for her campaign to raise money and she had won. Then I'd come off and won the delegate elector and delegate. Then Mary Eleanor won in the general election.

INTERVIEWER: But that's three political victories right in a row.

FESE: Right in a row before I had gone to the Women's Convention. That was back in December of '74. This was the Democratic Mid-Term Convention. I was excited about it because it was the one where the Democrats put together a constitution. There's going to be another one in '78. I'm not so excited about this one. I just couldn't do anything wrong at that point in my life. There are points in your life, and there are points that come later that you do everything wrong. Anyway, because of that win it got me really deeply involved and I also won that November. See, a lot of things were happening all through those years. I had been Secretary of the Addison Township Democratic Organization. I was precinct committeeman in my area-I had won that in '74-so a lot of things were taking place. In '75 after that I really began to talk to people. I was really deep into it with CLUW by this time. They had another convention coming up in December of that year and I was running for another office. The thought of running then evolved and I decided to run for Congress. I 'had once before gone before the Slating committee to run with Bill Redmond. Bill Redmond had gotten very uptight and went to my union and said, "Who the hell does she think she is?" And there was a little bit of problem. He's now Speaker of the House in Illinois, so I hope none of this gets out till after this is over. But I got the word that he was very upset, so on my own I did decide not to run. I didn't think I was prepared, and all the other stuff at that time. When it came to running for Congress I thought, well, '74 had been the greatest women's year and we just got to carry through in '75 and '76. I had been wrapped up so much that I didn't realize that the movement was being put down, as most of us were. A lot of women ran in that year and were disappointed in '76. Everybody thought we did it so great in '74 it's going to be fantastic in '76, but we didn't realize . . .
Permission required from interviewee for any quotes, citations, and/or material (see legal release)

INTerviewer: The backlash.

Fese: Didn't realize that we'd got caught up in our own importance. That's what happened to us, we weren't prepared for it. Anyway I made a decision somewhere around September of '75 to do this and got together a couple of people. I guess in a way I had to prove a lot of things. I felt that I could run a good, honest campaign, that I could put together a crew that could win. I refused to put yes people around me, I wanted people that would argue with me. I wanted a great group around me. Before my primary I found out there were going to be four of us running and I was not the favorite son, within my union nor anyplace else. I did convince my union to put one thousand dollars into my campaign against their better judgement, only because they would have lost face. The AFL-CIO would not give me five cents. I began to find out a lot of things about political expediency that I never knew before. And that is a story that is all by itself when you begin to run for political office--and just how rotten bastards they are when they don't think you can win. And this bullshit, that's all I can say about unions. saying we want our own people, [it's] a crock of baloney. Because they had no one ever to run with all the background I had, right smack dab in the heart of the Women's Movement, and an International staff officer, with a complete union background, raised for some 27 years through that union. I mean they usually get somebody's great grandson, that his great grandfather owned a card with the drayer's union. You know what I mean? That's the kind of people they support. But when it came right down to supporting me a couple of them made motions and did a few little things, but it was a complete tragedy in the face of what happened. They gave me the song and dance that you've got to win the primary before you can do anything. So I lived with that hope, that I've got to knock off three other people. That's going to be just nothing and especially there's a fight in the Democratic Party in Du Page County. It isn't the greatest party out there anyhow, but I was out there. all by myself fighting to gather a team that was just fantastic. And I'm going to close now for today or you're going to have to carry me out.

August 22, 1978

Interviewer: Let's pick up your election where we left it last time.

Fese: Well, last time we were talking about expediency. My union was good to me in the sense that they did give me one thousand dollars and made motions of supporting me, you know, but I found out later that C. L. Dennis and may his soul rest in peace--said, "She hasn't got a chance in hell, running in Du Page County," especially when they realized that I was running against the Party in a sense. Like I said before, I put a fantastic crew together. The Democratic Party had a school in Milwaukee that January, and I brought
FESE: Up a couple of women. Kathy Deavitt was my fund raiser chairwoman and Marrianne Kolby was my campaign manager. Now the odd thing that I found out was that even of the women in this area that were running, and all through the country, did not have women campaign managers. Nor did most of the men. I won't be positive about anything in this world. But I'm fairly sure that I was the only one with a woman campaign manager. Even Dee Clancy, who was a woman, had a man campaign manager. So it was a very unusual thing. Marrianne had never been in politics. In fact I remember in Milwaukee she leaned over to me and she said, "What's a precinct?"

INTERVIEWER: You're kidding!

FESE: No, but she had been involved in the Mooseheart and union elections and different things. But she'd never basically been really involved in politics, and of course I really wasn't either. Novices that we were, we didn't know what we were doing right or wrong.

In September that year I made my decision and I went to my union and told them what I was going to do. Al Barkin, who is the political director of COPE AFL-CIO had stood up there and inspired me too many years with his bullshit. "We must support our own. We must get union people to run." We must do this and we must do that. Well, filing date was December 8 or 2 or whatever day it was, I don't quite remember. Anyway I started asking questions and everybody is saying, "Well, we can't 'do anything for you until you're a declared candidate. You've got to go out and get your signatures." Off goes Marie and a few other friends and we stand in the rain and we get signatures. I remember being humiliated. I was out in Oak Brook and when they found out I was a Democrat they'd walk by and damn near spit on me. They'd hold their breath and leave. God forbid a Democrat out there in Oak Brook, Illinois, the seat of the Republican Party, trying to collect signatures. You'll find a Democrat here or there in Du Page, but we got most of our signatures in the Bensenville area which is highly Democratic, a much poorer section of Du Page County. Less affluent, I should say, not poorer, less affluent.

The day I filed I had to take off for Cincinnati, I had some work for the union and then I was going to go on to Washington. I only had a couple of days. Now the unions paid for my trip to Cincinnati. I was doing some research work for our union, but the couple of days in Washington were on my own and I had to pay my own way.

What happened is I started talking to Jim Kennedy and he was the head of BRAC's -Legal Department. He said that I should come back when I won the primary. He said it would be very difficult to get money before then, that if I won the primary they would set up an itinerary to meet all these union people. There was just no money available for the primary, not in Du Page. There's money for the primary in sections where it's primarily a Democratic area and there's eight or nine candidates running. Then sometimes if there's a favorite person in that group, that person could get money from
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: the different organizations of COPE. A labor person could get money, but very rarely, evidently, do they put out money in primaries. I shouldn't say that either, but in close contested races, keeping an incumbent in against somebody, that way there is money. I would imagine it's the same way with the Republicans but I'm not too familiar with that.

After I came back, Bill Redmond, who is now the Speaker of the House of Illinois, took my petitions along with everybody else's down to Springfield. They got there on that Monday morning, had them there first thing, and I came up first on the ballot out of four. Nick Thomas was running. He had run for Congress before. Another fellow that was the one the Democratic Party was supposedly supporting was a fellow by the name of Winfield Green. He has quite a few dollars, reminds me of a Southern general on a horse. He even looks that way. A lot of people said he acts like Ted Knight. Then a woman by the name of Romaine Troost. Her husband had plenty of money, he is the Troost of Monuments, you know graveyard monuments, Peter Troost Monuments. You see them advertised in Chicago. Anyway she was running. She was in her 70's, or late 60's. She was quite prominent through the years, I think if she'd been twenty years younger she could have walked away with it but she was just past that era. The Women's Movement came too late for her, sadly enough, but she had different Senators and people at her home and had entertained, and she did a lot of work in the Democratic Party through the years. But she must have been in her 70's by the time she decided to run. I felt bad about running against another woman but I had already made this decision to do this. I file now and in December I go in and they tell me all these good things. So I come back and at this point I had no campaign manager. I had nothing going for me, absolutely nothing whatsoever at this point. I told BRAC that I was running. At one point I pulled out my chair at work and somebody had left a nasty note saying, "Who the hell do you think you are?" People that I worked with, men that I had worked with got very indignant to me. This change of attitude once I had made this decision to run for Congress, and the general consensus of everybody, was that I couldn't win anyway. It was a four-way race in Du Page. 

INTERVIEWER: They thought you couldn't even win the primary?

FESE: No one thought I could win the primary. At the beginning no one else but me knew I was going to win the primary. I was in a world all by myself. Shortly before Christmas Marrianne called me. She had gone through a divorce and then she'd been staying with this fellow for a couple of years and that had broken up. She was kind of down. She worked with my husband on the railroad and she asked him, "Does Marie need any help in that campaign?" He said, "Yeah I guess she will be needing help. We're going to wait until after Christmas." Well I was getting antsy to do something, but
FESE: I had a job and the Christmas holiday was coming up. She called on her own one day and when I heard her voice I knew that this was it. The ironic thing that happened.... About seven or eight years ago she had a company job and I was working in the union as a railroad clerk and also held an officer's position in the Lodge. I was working midnights. I'd see her at 8 o'clock in the morning. We had known each other over the years but not closely. I'd see her at parties and at each other's houses and things. But I said to her, "You know Marrianne I always get the feeling that someday you and I will sit across the table and probably be negotiating. Someday you and I will do something together." She kind of snickered. I said, "No, I'm serious. I know that some way our fate is put together." And it was never said again. When she called up she said, "I want to talk to you. Meet me for breakfast." We had a four or five hour breakfast. We sat at St.Charles Road in 83 in Villa Park at the Original Pancake House. And what I did is I told her every rotten thing that was going to happen to her, being away from her family. You know the railroad bosses are going to get upset with you. Later on I'll tell you she did lose her job over helping me. She lost her job because she'd taken the day off to vote. She really had been sick but she got up out of her sickbed, went to vote, went back to bed and they fired her. She got back to work but they were after us. She had been in the hospital in February of that Primary year, too.

I didn't tell her any good things that might happen to her and yet she said, "I want to do it." Well, we became inseparable, I drew strength from that girl like you wouldn't believe. And a lot of things began to happen. She came to me later and she said, "I didn't know all this good stuff was going to happen to me, like meeting all these important people." "I didn't want to tell you any good stuff 'cause I couldn't promise." She got knee deep in politics like you wouldn't believe. It was unbelievable how she got really into it. Anyway we went on and I worked my heart out and so did she. There were days of frustration and yet we kept going. At least in the Primary I had to visit only Democrats. Bud Loftus, like I said, had been the one that blocked us and who is the head of the Addison Township Democratic organization. He's a lawyer in Addison, Illinois, He's got money and influential friends and influence and he's the town lawyer--a miniature Mayor Daley is what he's trying to be--and I wasn't his choice. No way could I win, right? I had won the Democratic nomination for delegate. If you recall I told you that I went to the Democratic Mid-term convention. Well, over his dead body I went. He no way wanted me to go. I was just reading in the paper he's declared he's going to this coming Mid-term Convention. I'm not even going to bother running, but he's running and it's in big headlines in the Addison papers this last week. Anyway, he was upset that I had won delegate elector, then elected delegate in 1974, which was two jobs that no one could understand how I won.
INTERVIEWER: Did you win by a sizeable vote?

FESE: Oh yes. I won by a very sizeable vote. One night Marriane and I were sitting at the kitchen table and I said, "These sons of bitches! I've discovered they don't want winners, they want losers. That's all they're picking, losers!" And I started hollering, "We need winners. The people out here, in Du Page County in the Democratic Party want winners, they're sick of these losers." Anyway we pounded on the table so loud my husband jumped up, he didn't know what was happening. So Marriane says, "Put that in a speech, make that your next speech." From that point on that is what I went on. And I brought out the fact that every election, my first election that I ever ran for I lost—every election after that I had won. This was my twelfth run to go for that primary. And I named all the things I had won in politics and in my union, all of them I had won. I was vice president of CLUW at the time. I had all this background. I said, "Do you people want a winner?" And it just caught on like wild fire because they did, they wanted a winner. Marriane had a ball at the primary and I was very unhappy. I can only say from September 1975 on, from the time that note hit my desk asking who the hell I thought I was until the actual November 2, 1976 election, was a very unhappy year, the most unhappy in my life.

'INTERVIEWER: What was wrong?

FESE: First I thought once we knocked off the primary—the primary wasn't so bad. We had a good time. I made everybody have a good time. I spent quite a bit of money in there and I racked up all kinds of bills, took our savings to pay them, and we just had one hell of a good time. It was a party time and we came up winning that election and we won it by a sizeable vote. With four people running I got quite a sizeable vote. The primary was March 16 and the next day we rented the Holiday Inn and everybody was swimming and having a good time. Marriane was just walking on cloud nine. And a fellow whose name I won't mention said to me, "Well, now you've got to get a new campaign manager for the general election." He may as well have pushed her out of a ten story window, she came down that fast. And I was never able to get her back up.

INTERVIEWER: He said that in front of her?

FESE: In front of her. She was just walking on air that she had won this election. And then the rest of the time she was always worried I was going to get rid of her and I would never do that. I never got rid of her until I had to in the general election because she lost me. Something happened after that day when he said that. He was a politician, a winning politician. Had anybody else said it she would have said screw off Buster, but the fact that a winning politician said it just knocked her down. Anyway I was so tired and exhausted at the time he said that I didn't realize, but my husband noticed it. He went and looked for her later and talked to her. He said to me, "You know Marriane's pretty down about it?"
And I said, "What's she worried about?" I was so exhausted at this point I couldn't really help her out, I was just too tired. To backtrack a bit--when we were up at the County Board watching the votes be counted, I remember saying, "Well now nobody can take it away from me." I went to Democratic Party headquarters at about midnight. We drove from the Wheaton Court House to Addison where the headquarters were. Marriane and myself, a young lawyer by the name of Dan Haynes and another fellow, a Republican friend of Marriane's. We walked into Democratic headquarters and would you believe that no one would hardly talk to me?

INTERVIEWER: You mean they didn't congratulate you?

FESE: No. They said hi, hello. One fellow, a union man--he is a lobbyist for this union, his name is Chuck Hickman--did not. talk to me that night, would not talk to me, and barely talks to me yet. I had won over their candidate. It was devastating to them! I was under the impression, and I guess most of us novices are, that this is a primary fight and everybody fights and then after that everybody gets back together and on to winning. Well, it isn't that way and anybody that writes it in books is full of shit. Anyway, we walked into Democratic headquarters and we walked to the back of the building where they were passing out champagne. Everybody had champagne glasses and they gave me a paper cup. Marriane got so mad she took one of the glasses from somebody and she gave me a, glass. She kept the paper cup and then she said, "Let's get out of here." I agreed because I was upset too. We still had this party going on at the Holiday Inn. I'd already planned a victory party at the Holiday Inn. That's how sure I was of winning. We got reports there but then we went out to the County Building and then we went to Democratic headquarters. It's like midnight now. As Marriane was walking through the door to leave--1 was ahead of her and I was almost to the car. She still had the paper cup of champagne in her hand. The door to this building wasn't quite closed when she took this champagne and she threw it at the door and she said, "Fuck you!" And she said it so loud, if they didn't hear it inside the rest of the world must have heard it. I said, "Oh, Marriane." She said, "Fuck them all," and she walked off. She said, "Them no good bastards. This isn't the way it's supposed to be!" Anyway after that we went back and we had the victory party and everything was hunky-dory. It's surprising how many people show up at a victory party that never were your friends before. They didn't work for me but they all showed up when they knew I was going to win. It was the next day that Marriane was let down so. I went into BRAC the next day or two days later and of course got congratulations but not really the reaction I thought I'd get.

INTERVIEWER: You mean not really warm?

FESE: No. Just adequate. A few people really came in and congratulated me but most of them never said a word, like it didn't happen.
FESE: Alright, I was running, as I said before, because I thought I could help women. With going to Europe and a lot things, I thought that I could really help my union, really help women, and this is the only way it could be done. I didn't know of any other way. We've got to get our women into politics, there is no other way it can be done. We can batten down any door we want and carry banners but until we get our women, a goodly supply of them in that Congress, in that Senate and on the Supreme Court, there's no other way that anything we really want will ever come to be the way we want it. Anyway, also being a union person I thought what I could do for my union. In April I went to Washington. I took Marriane and Cathy Deavitt as a reward because they worked for no money and everything. Marriane by this time had gotten fired from her job on the railroad. They had been laying in wait for her, knowing that she had worked on this campaign, Anyway we went to Washington. I had gone back to work at BRAC and took a week's vacation and had made the plans to visit all the different union headquarters. Now Jim Kennedy, head of BRAC's Political Action, had an itinerary set up for us. From Monday morning on we had union officers to meet. I visited almost every major union's political office in Washington and I got no money. Al Barkin wouldn't even take the time to talk to me at the AFL-CIO. I went to the one last resort I had, Bella. Bella had made a decision at that time to run for Senate. I talked to the girls in the office and they were very nice but I was getting the royal run around from Sunday night on.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't get to see her?

FESE: I had to wait outside the halls of Congress for 3 1/2 hours. She even came out and she said, "I'm too busy right now, I'm too busy." But when people from her own district came, she came out and greeted. I tried for three days to get her. It was toward the end of the week when I finally got her, Thursday or Friday; She had a really important bill, so she said, on the floor. I talked to her out in the hall, I don't think she even remembered me. I really don't think she remembered saying what she did in Mexico. She said, "I won't be able to come out and help you." Cathy and Marriane were so mad at me staying there and waiting. But I thought if she would come out then people would see that I was in earnest about getting something from Washington. She came out to the hall a couple of times, "Busy now, busy now." But before that something had happened that I never told either Cathy or Marriane because I didn't want to change the image of Bella. I had been on the phone to her girl in the office and she said, "I don't know if you'll be able to see Bella. Tomorrow she'll be in session because her bill's ready, and you can wait outside and this is what you do to get to see her." Anyway, while I was talking, Bella picked up the extension she chewed that poor girl out. I couldn't believe what I was hearing and that was Bella. I mean it was her voice, you'd know it was her. "When I tell you to do something, get off the phones, I'm telling you to...." Bella evidently did not know it was me on the other end. She never heard my voice. But she just chewed this poor girl up. I couldn't believe that one woman would talk to
FESE: another woman that way, worse than men would talk in a sense, just that she degraded her so and I could feel it. I never said a word to the girl while Bella was on the phone. I just said I'd call back and try later. After Bella got off the line, and she slammed down that phone, I thought, "Lady, I don't want you for a senator." I couldn't believe that this woman who we all thought was this great leader of women could treat her own staff that way. I began to ask around after that and found out that she couldn't even keep staff, she was so hard to work for. Demanding is one thing, but so belittling and degrading. She wasn't well liked in the halls of Congress. They didn't go out of their way to give her the extra boost to come back in I have to admit. But those are things I didn't know at that point, I found out a little bit later.

I got the royal treatment from the Democratic Congressional committees that give money but was told right out that there was no way they could give me money in my area. There was no chance I could win. I couldn't even get on as a marginal race, so there was no money coming from the national Democratic Party. People think that you can get money from every place. I went to every union but as long as I couldn't get on the marginal race list I couldn't get any money from any of them. I went begging to the AFL-CIO again. As long as I wasn't on the marginal list they weren't going to give me any money. I said, "You can't say that. I'm a union person. You preach this stuff." But Al Barkin wouldn't even come near me. He sent Joe somebody or other, his assistant. That's as far as I got. He said, "I'll see what I can do." He was very nice but by the end of the week I was devastated. Now the one last place we went was the Women's Campaign Fund which most of us had sent money to. The girls took me in and said, "Let's face it, we don't have a lot of money and we only put our money on races that can win." So even the Women's Campaign Fund--I get broke up every time I think about it.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't get anything?

FESE: Didn't get a penny.

INTERVIEWER: You had to raise all your own money?

FESE: I had to raise all my money. At the end I had a $10,000 campaign debt which still I'm paying off monthly. I could get no money until COPE gave me some, COPE Du Page County--I'm talking about national unions, not local. I got money from the little locals in the area. A lot of union people helped me, but there again it's just basic people that helped. It was those unions with all those high falutin words they put in the papers and write to the people. That's a bunch of shit I can tell you right now. From April on was just the worst time. I'd get on the phone and I'd call long distance, I spent months begging for money to operate this campaign. Finally late September after it was just
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: too late to get money from anywhere else, COPE finally gave me a thousand dollars and then got ticked off because I didn't send a thank you letter, I didn't get it until late September but I finally got it and a little money trickled in here and there but most of it was raised. My union gave me a thousand dollars before the primary and a thousand after, but that was not that they wanted to, but because someone in there spoke up on my behalf and I got the money.

INTERVIEWER: That's a heavy burden to have to raise all that money.

FESE: Then I began to realize no wonder no union person had,... Now my job became in jeopardy.

INTERVIEWER: Why? For missing time at work?

FESE: I was missing time at work. So I went to a lawyer and we worked out that any time I did not work I would write down and they wouldn't pay me. It broke my pay down in seven days a week, how much it would be and it was like $60 or $70 a day, And I said, "No, we can't do that because then I'd have to give you money back on the week-ends. I want the week-ends free." He said, "It'll be more money every day that you lose." I said, "Fine but in the long run I'll save money." So they pro-rated it for 22 days a month or 21 days a month, I don't remember now. So now I had this happening. I just kept working even through the summer. And campaigns just die in the summer, especially in Illinois. That primary should be in August or something to keep your momentum.

INTERVIEWER: Then did you have to get a new campaign manager?

FESE: Well, I was able to get a young fellow from Detroit by the name of Rafe Weston, Always wanted to work on a campaign. He's got a doctorate in economics but he was not working at that point. He came down and he actually then literally took over. He was supposed to do research for me but he really took over as campaign manager. He didn't want to but we didn't have any other alternative. The campaign got going, I got a campaign office. I really did it, up well, For the County Fair I had plastic bags and I had matches and all that good stuff that you have with union bugs, which cost a great deal of money. The printer's union doesn't give a penny in political money but if you don't have that damn union bug you're a no-good bastard. That's another fallacy. The printer's union ought to be exposed. The worst part was that Frank and Rafe, would see me on the phone begging for money to these unions. and they'd get so mad at me. Rafe would say, "Leave those bastards alone, they're not worth it." I couldn't believe the unions were
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: doing this to me, that they would let me fall on my face like this. I was so stupid! How dumb I was and I began to realize why they had no union people running for these jobs because they were all smarter than I was. [They knew] that it was a bunch of B.S., that it was a bunch of talk for people who don't ever plan on running to extract money from them. I understand political expediency, but I was laying my job and my whole career on the line for this union baloney. And they didn't even so much as lift a finger. And Al Barkin wouldn't even talk to me. I always swore after that if I ever hear him get up and say, "We need union people," that I'll make the biggest scene that ever could be seen. At least he must have got the word because he's changed that speech. I swore up and down. I told a lot of big people that I would if he ever said it again.

INTERVIEWER: You mean he doesn't even say that union people should run any more?

FESE: No. Now he's changed it, we got to support people that support us. There it is. I did finally get something only because my union put pressure on. If it hadn't been for Jim Kennedy I wouldn't have gotten that maybe, maybe L.E. Dennis too. Anyway, September I went down to the Illinois AFL-CIO Convention in Springfield. I got to speak to the entire hall completely filled with people. I gave my spiel and asked for a few dollars. I collected about $600. Out of people's pocket they gave. And even that I couldn't believe was so little. There were almost two thousand people in the hall. I went to a woman's conference in Indiana and I gave my speech again. I called it my dollar campaign. I'd beg everybody for a dollar. I said just a dollar to win this vote, that's all you had to put up. I got a hundred and some dollars out of the women in Indiana. We went to--I think Roosevelt sponsored it--a conference on Women in Labor and Industry. It was not at Notre Dame, at St. Mary's, the one across the street. Anyway, we went there and those women collected about $130. Marriane was having a garage sale for me the same day. We picked up dollar bills, that literally how our campaign was run. It was union money, it was out of union people that just put in bucks. That's the only way that we kept moving and kept going. And my salary was going down too because I would take more and more time off.

INTERVIEWER: Did you clean out all your savings?

FESE: Yes. Wiped out my son's savings, too, and we were in debt up to our tails but you just keep going unfortunately. People told me not to spend my own money but I figured if I wanted to put on a good campaign.... And I did! Earlenborn spent more money against me that year than he had ever spent against anybody. He knew he had to, Earlenborn was all over the place in 1976. I haven't seen him this year, 1978, at all. He was sending out letters with franking privileges like crazy that year. He was out there doing his thing all over the place. And we had debates and all kinds of things.
That was the middle of October.

A lot of incumbents don't want to debate, especially when they get a fiery opponent.

He debated. And I have to say that I was surprised that a lot of papers that always endorsed Earlenborn did not endorse Congressional candidates that year. I mean in Du Page it was like a miracle! They don't endorse me, just the fact that they didn't endorse Earlenborn either. I had met all the papers and the papers were great to me. The newspapers were very supportive of me. Locally I was doing fantastic as far as meeting friends and people. But Carter wasn't doing so good in Du Page County. [Tape off]

Okay. You were just about to tell me something that was very important.

In September while I was down there making my speech to one thousand people, or however many people were at the Armory that year--I think it was about fifteen hundred people, maybe more. They had come to hear Bakalis and Walker and I had all that audience. They gave me a spot in that time when everybody would be there. I couldn't have asked for a better time. That happened in Springfield on a Wednesday. Saturday I got a call from Marriane and she said, "Did you hear that there was a big fight at BRAG and that L.E. Dennis has been fired?" It was like the shock of my life. I said, "What are you talking about?" She said, "I don't know but I'm just telling you I heard this." So I called a friend of mine and he told me that there had been rumbles in my union. C.L. Dennis had a son, which was L.E. I had known L.E., as I mentioned earlier in the tape, for many years. L.E. had run for vice president at the convention in '75 and lost and everybody thought they had gotten rid of him. He came back in the organizing department and it caused a lot of animosity within the upper echelon. They felt that C.L. should have got rid of him. They said he was spending too much money and a lot of other things. I wasn't there and I can only go by hearsay but they began to attack verbally C.L. Freddie Kroll, who is now the president, began to attack verbally C.L., and L.E. came in and they had some words and he knocked the shit out of him. We used to have those huge executive offices with big beautiful chairs. I can't imagine it, L.E. doesn't look like someone who would do that. It must have been a complete surprise. There was a big battle and fist fights. Whatever went on, Freddie was going to sue the union and sue him and sue everybody else under the sun. The next thing I know L.E. was gone.

Clear out of the union?

Out of the union. He had a year's severance pay. This had to
FESE: be planned prior to that. Evidently somebody knew where bodies were buried in our union. Whatever it was, it was an inside job. By October 1, L.E. was gone, C.L. was going to go into retirement in November. What he did was, he knew that certain prominent people in our union would be fired. So he agreed to step aside provided his son wasn't sued. His son got a year's wages, severance pay. He had a list and I believe it was fourteen people. I was given the list and I was in no shape at that time or afterwards to remember what I did with it. Anyway, the fourteen people were called the endangered species list around there. I was out of town at the time but he gave a speech to all the members and said that nobody would lose their job, that everything would go on, just that he was going to step down and Fred Kroll was going to take over. That was happening in my union . . .

INTERVIEWER: While you were in the middle of running for Congress?

FESE: Yes. Early in October I had a big radio debate with Earlenborn. I had just worked my heart out and studied and everything. I must admit that I did fairly well but it was an awful strain. He knew all the answers, he's incumbent in there for twenty some odd years, you know. Here I am fighting him and the press had to, they couldn't show partiality, but they had to go with Earlenborn. He was the one that eventually would win and I understood that. We had this radio debate and then we had a couple of other debates. We were always someplace together. Now I made a very big mistake during my campaign. Years ago, because of my union, I had to follow Stevenson around. And when you go to all these dinners and you hear the same speech twice, sixteen times, eighteen times, forty times, you begin to want to die. His own people would just get up and walk around. Unfortunately I was dumb enough to say that I would never give the same speech twice.

INTERVIEWER: That's almost impossible, isn't it?

FESE: Well, I did the impossible. Any time I spoke I gave a completely new speech. We did research on any organization that I went to. I knew the background, who the people were. Rafe did all that, he was just magnificent. And then I would talk, every speech was different. My own people never knew the speech. Rafe was the closest to knowing what I was going to say. My own people, would sit in the audience because they knew that every speech was going to be different. That's what I wanted. If I could capture my own then I could capture others. Anyway, that isn't possible. I do not recommend anybody ever doing it again. I would come home at midnight and work until two or three in the morning to memorize the next day's speech. And sometimes there were four or five a week. My brain was beginning to fail. I felt that I was like a computer just pouring this stuff into my brain. He digested it as much as he could but every speech was different. And that Earlenborn, he was upset with me. At the beginning one time he got up to speak before I did and he got up and said, "In my opponent's last speech she said blah, blah,
blah," and then he gave his answers. I got up afterward and I said, "I'm not here to debate tonight with Earlenborn. What Congressman Earlenborn has done is take a lot of things I said out of context and I'm not going to argue with him because that's not tonight's speech." And I went on with a completely different speech. Well he just couldn't catch me on this. Every time he followed me every speech was different and he could not keep up with this. It wasn't a pat speech. Every speech was researched, it was impossible. Now I began to become so exhausted that I remember getting groggy. I remember in late October we had to go to Morton's Arboretum to give a speech. The truckers wanted to take a piece of the Arboretum for a highway and they didn't want them to take it. It would take out one of the glacier lakes that they had--one or two or the only one, I don't remember. Anyway, I had gone out there and at that point all of a sudden I wanted to run away from it all. It was when the leaves were all turning, it was just a beautiful late autumn day and I remember I said, "Rafe, don't take me back." He went on, he went for a walk and I just lay back in the grass. He parked the car along the side, I just remember laying there and just wishing I was eighteen. What I had done to myself! I didn't know my family any more. My son was upset because I was running. My son was going to high school and he said to me, "I'll be embarrassed if you lose." And all the boys that I had around the house didn't understand. The kids did help but it wasn't their campaign. Cathy Deavitt had made a point somewhere along the line. She said, 'Why should we work as hard as you? It's not our campaign. What do we get out of this?' And this is the general idea. Why should anybody, unless they're planning on getting something? Another thing I did not do, I did not promise anything to anybody. I said how can I promise anything to anybody when I don't know what I'll have at the end to give. One fellow said to me, "Well, you dumb broad, you'll never get anybody working for you. You've got to make these silly promises." And this is a man that had worked on Senator Culpepper's campaigns and Humphrey's campaigns. He said, "You've got to make these stupid promises." I said, "But I can't be that way." He says, "Well, then you're not going to win." And I said, "Well, then I don't win.' I thought maybe that there was a chance for honesty and integrity and all that shit. Let me tell you now and let me put it on record, there isn't! If you don't lie and you don't keep things back and you don't make false promises you're not going to go. Women need to learn the political game, I got to tell you. Anyway, this is my story and not anybody else's. I remember getting so tired and things were going on in my union. I remember in late October one day I broke down, maybe because I was tired, and began to cry. I cried for my union because I knew that this upheaval was coming. Now I had planned to go away on November 4 because I knew I would need a vacation after the campaign. I was so tired by this time. It had been over a year. We had been going on fourteen months of this. Since the preceding September I had been campaigning. I was so dead tired! God, I just dreaded getting up and dreaded going to bed because it was just, the body was going. I started taking vitamins hoping
that would help. And I wasn't eating right. No one knew but I was smoking six packs of cigarettes a day. I was using up every bit of energy in my body, I was just a nervous wreck by this time. I was hiding cigarettes; I was hiding them in my purse, in the trunk of my car. Every car had cigarette cartons in it. In my desk at work, in my desk at the headquarters, everywhere. No one knew how much I was smoking. The only thing is I'd be on the phone and I'd look down--I could smoke a pack of cigarettes while on the phone--and I didn't even remember doing it, All I know is I went through all kinds of cigarettes. I was just a basket case by the end! And then you begin to realize that it's futile, there's no more money, no more fund raisers. People say, "We'll raise you some money afterwards," Baloney! They don't. If you win they raise money. I was done begging. You just get to the point. I think by the last week of October I was in a trance. It was the Friday before Tuesday's election and Earlenborn was to speak someplace. My husband finally realized that I was mentally and physically exhausted at this point. I couldn't even get my head up off the pillow. He said, "Don't go." I said, "I've got to show up." He said, "Marie, if you haven't won by now it's not going to make any difference." I guess at that point I realized I hadn't won; there was no way that I was going to win. I think until the middle of October or the first of October I thought I had a chance. But I saw things just disintegrating around me. I thought maybe some miracle would happen. But Carter just pulled the whole ticket down in Illinois. I did even better than some of the candidates that everybody was supporting in Du Page, and I really didn't do so bad in the election. I got more votes than anybody else. My percentage wasn't as good as the two years prior to that, but then that was the Watergate year and a lot of Republicans didn't go out to vote. My vote number was the highest ever but my percentage wasn't.

INTERVIEWER: But somebody analyzing it later would not call it a bad defeat.

FESE: No. In fact at the end I gained a lot of respect from the Republicans, believe it or not, a lot of respect. Anyway, on November 2 I lost the race. I was just glad it was over. I couldn't wait for that. I guess I told the papers I'd give another shot in two years, whatever, but I was so glad it was over. On the 4th of November they had this big meeting at BRAC and I was exhausted but I had to go. I cancelled my vacation. Freddie Kroll was now president of the union. I don't actually remember what day it happened, I was having my own set of problems now. Anyway, you have to remember that I was in a complete state of utter exhaustion mentally and physically and I needed a long rest. I'd given that campaign everything that there was in me. On November 4 I dragged my body to the Sheraton O'Hare in Rosemont or wherever the heck it is on Mannheim Road--to the BRAC meeting. Freddie got up there and said from now on in this union people can't look for pie in the sky and a bunch
of other stuff, and then he announced that because of cutbacks to save money fourteen people were going to lose their jobs. After the speech I went to Freddie to shake his hand and congratulate him on becoming president. Instead of saying anything to me he started talking to somebody else and he was cleaning his glasses. I knew at that point I was one of them that would be fired. There had been remarks to me at the Grand Lodge prior to the election that I'd just better win that election if I wanted my job. I had made some remarks to the newspaper reporters, I said I was not doing this for my union, because Earlenborn was saying I was put up by my union to do this. That's what he used against me in Du Page in a sense. The local union people were fantastic. The Du Page AFL-CIO, those men couldn't have been nicer to me. They all broke their hearts to help me win. It was the national unions that didn't help. Many of the teachers got money out of their locals for me but everything was in small amounts, there was no big amount. I can't say that union people didn't help, but it was just on the local level where they believed that I really could do something for them. I kept pestering a fellow named Billy Dysart to find out if I was one of those fired. Nobody would tell me. A couple of people knew that I was, but no one, of course, would say it until the letters were official. But when Freddie wouldn't shake my hand I knew, and I guess at that point I went into shock. I got the letter within the week. I just knew that the letter came and I talked to Dysart on the phone. He said, "Yes, Marie, I did mail letters out to everybody. Everybody got their letter today. Your's is in the mail." This had to be November 10 or so, I don't remember the dates. We had until the 31st of November. I couldn't believe that this was a union that was doing this. I was one of the fortunate ones, I had a job to go back to. But they took six other women, just wiped them out of their jobs a month before Christmas. I mean I just couldn't believe that this was supposed to be unionism.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any way of appealing that?

FESE: I was probably more capable of appealing that than anybody, but for a year I was not well enough to do it. I began to go into shock. I remember going back to BRAC, I remember going in the building somewhere on the 15th of November. My mother-in-law had her fiftieth anniversary on the 14th. I remember going to it and everything is a fog after that. Going back to BRAC, nobody would talk to you if you were one of those—that was going. It's like a dream that I can hardly remember. I can't remember Thanksgiving that year or Christmas.

INTERVIEWER: I didn't think unions could fire their staff people like that, wholesale.—They do, huh?
When new presidents come in, they do. I couldn't get over the shock that this is what unionism is about, it is to preserve jobs. C.L. had let people go but with a year's severance pay and some kind of recommendation, something. This just was wholesale slaughter. Some of those people had no other jobs to go to. I had a husband to support me and I had my railroad job. My own boss who I loved dearly, he was one of those on the endangered species list. Evidently what they did is they took fourteen who were on the endangered species list and they agreed to that, but fourteen people that L.E. had hired they fired just in retaliation. It couldn't have been because of union funds, because they hired their own back only in different departments. I mean it's the same ball game, just different players is all it is. I never got a chance to be loyal or unloyal to this man, neither did any of the other fourteen. It was just unbelievable. But he must have been so insecure in himself or so hateful, that he just had to wipe out fourteen people's lives. Some of them took pensions, some got jobs. I found out that another woman, she went through an identity crisis, as I did. She didn't know what the hell happened. One girl was on leave of absence and in Italy on a sabbatical. She was doing some work with a college or for one of the unions in Italy. She was doing some work there and she'd gotten a leave of absence and they fired her. The kid didn't even know it until she came back. Her parents didn't even tell her. I mean this was just wholesale slaughter. Anway, I can't remember the end of '76. It was just unbelievable. When you work in a union there's just no place to go but your own union. You don't go apply to the Steelworker's Union or go for a job somewhere else because they take their own people. They build their own political base; they work up from the rank and file. Maybe an editor of a newspaper or some special skill will be hired from the outside. Most everybody comes from the ranks or had worked for that union for four hundred years or whatever. Sol knew that my career was over. Where did I go? I tried to hang on to my political career and I couldn't. I wasn't capable, I was too exhausted. Now I know I didn't know what was happening when it all took place. But I knew that I was sick and I tried to give up cigarettes and so I went into a cigarette rejection and got myself even sicker. At the same time I threw myself into menopause because of the shock. All I kept saying is that I'm going downhill. They give you three months so I had until March 1 to go back to the railroad. I had three months to collect unemployment. I remember during my campaign arguing with one of BRAC's officers. He said I was running for politics because I wanted a political job out of it and there was no political job. I loved my own job well enough. I believed in my own union enough, I had no idea of leaving it. He said he'd known all these other people and they'd always gotten political jobs out of it. Well, I didn't get a political job out of it, let me tell you that.
INTERVIEWER: It looks like you should have, though.

FESE: Well, I looked around. I talked to Jim Wall who was Carter's campaign manager in Illinois. Remember I had worked for his wife and everything. Once I had lost my job evidently I lost my pull. Whatever happens in this world, people began to avoid me or something. Maybe in a sense I had to avoid them. I could not go into a restaurant for a few months afterward. I could not be around people. It was shock, it was exhaustion. I began to gain a tremendous amount of weight. By January 20, which was the inauguration, I had put on thirty pounds. I think from November 4th to the 14th, I had put on ten or fifteen pounds just that fast. I mean the only friend I had at that point was my refrigerator, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: That was the pits, right there.

FESE: No, it got worse. I had to be back to work by the first of March. I knew that I couldn't go back, I wasn't ready mentally or physically. I went to my doctor. He would give me a little bit of help but he didn't understand that I was aching inside and I didn't know what was wrong with me. I was walking and talking and doing things and no one knew what was happening to me. I knew that something was wrong. In January I went to the inauguration in Washington, I was invited. Earlenborn was nice enough to give me tickets to that and I went. I thought maybe that would cheer me up. I also got a press pass from one of the local papers and so I got to see a different end of it and I thought that would be exciting. And it was. But something was definitely wrong, I didn't know what. Then the crying began. I couldn't get along with my son at all who I adored and we had always gotten along so great. I couldn't get along with him. He didn't understand what was happening. He kept saying, "Be strong. Go back to work. Get another job." Do this and do this and I was crying inside. I can only say now that I couldn't focus on anything and everybody was expecting miracles from me. I began to check out political jobs and I seemed to hit blank walls all the time. In the meantime Marriane got so upset she said to hell with the Democratic Party. She went to the Republican Party in Du Page. She did very well. She was offered a number of jobs. I was asked to help in a local election, Township election. I could feel myself getting sicker but I'm a fairly meticulous person and I always felt that I may drop dead someday and I want somebody to be able to take over without a lot of confusion and so I had everything down where everything was ready to go. On February 19---well before that somewhere along the line---the crying began; it began and it got heavier and heavier and heavier. One day I had an argument with my son and I remember going into my bedroom and I slammed the door and I began to pound on the door and I was screaming and the obscenities that came from my mouth. "You Freddie Kroll," I hate you this one and I hate the world and I hate me and I hate this and hate that. The garbage that was coming
FESE: out of my mouth! I thought, my God, where did this come from? It was like a vomiting of my mind is what it was. I had pushed all this back. I know this now, I didn't then. I said I've got to have help so I went. A young lawyer I know knows a psychologist and I went and I told her the story. She said, "You need more help than I can give you," and she sent me to a psychiatrist.

INTERVIEWER: You picked it up right away that you needed help, on your own?

FESE: I knew that I needed help and my doctor wasn't giving it to me. I was crying out for help and I didn't know how to get it. I was getting fatter and fatter until I'd gained fifty pounds in just a short length of time. I got panic stricken. I said something is going wrong with me inside my head, everywhere was screwed up, but on the outside I was still functioning. No one knew this. They were hollering at me because I wasn't going out to work, that I was gaining weight, that I wasn't getting one of these fantastic jobs, that I wasn't doing this and I wasn't doing that. I wasn't functioning inside. The crying wouldn't stop and that's not like me. Working with men all my life I trained myself not to cry. I'd never give those sons of guns a chance to see me cry, no way. But I could not hold it back. I mean I'd watch a bird fly across the sky and I'd cry. If it rained I'd cry. If the sun'd shine I'd be crying. I'd cry for anything. And I wouldn't get out of bed. I wouldn't come out of my room. I'd clean the rest of the house and my room looked like a dungeon, I wouldn't clean it. It looked like my mind. And I couldn't read. I wouldn't talk on the phone, I couldn't be with people I knew. I would do it, I would force myself to do it but I was panicky inside. I was scared. I could not read a book and I'm an insatiable reader. I had books with me constantly, never would I be without a book. I could not concentrate on one two minutes, I couldn't even concentrate on television. My mind just wasn't functioning at this point. Something's wrong, so I go to a psychiatrist and I talk to him and he says," I can put you in the hospital." I leave there and I'm crying and going on. My political career will be ruined, everything is going to be ruined if I say I've done it. I'm not crazy but I'm sick. I know I'm sick and I need help and nobody's helping me. There was not physically anything wrong with me, but I was getting colds and sick and all kinds of things. Anyway, I was pushed by this date to go back to work. Well, he gave me an extension for a month to put me to April. He said, "I'll give you this." Then at work they gave me, "Depression, what the hell is this shit?" And one of the bosses called up, "What's this stuff? I'm not even sending in for your leave." And my hatred then went to him. I said he's against me. The world was at this point against me. My son was against me, my husband was against me. Inwardly, not outwardly, I was bitchy and fighting and crying. I would cry a lot and nobody knew what to do with me. They all walked around the house on eggs. And my son was going, "You got to be tough. You always said to be strong, be strong." And I'm trying
FESE: and then I keep failing. Anway, I went to the psychiatrist one time and I went to him another time and he said, "I can't keep you off work, you've got to make a decision what you want to do." Now in the meantime I knew the six months in which to file an EEOC charge against my union was going. I should have filed it but I was in no condition. I could not face up to anything. If I didn't think about it, it would go away. I don't know what I thought at that time. I was very very ill and I was under a lot of pressure from a lot of people to continue to be superwoman and I couldn't continue to be superwoman anymore. I needed help. I went to the psychiatrist one day and I knew that it was bad and I said, "If it's the end of my career it's the end of my career but I can't go on like this. I need help." And what he did was the best thing that ever happened. I had the pressures of people and friends and everybody that thought they were saying what they wanted me to hear, how strong I should be and what I should do and I should lose weight and go out and work, work, work and get involved. And they forgot that I had been a person that had always been involved. This doctor took me out of my home; he put me in a hospital situation. No phone calls, no family, no nothing for two solid weeks. It was the best thing that ever happened to me because I needed to have all pressures off. And as long as I was home and I was walking and breathing they figured I could pay the bills and could cook and could do everything that had to be done, could meet people, could have dinner, could go to dinners, could do all these things. And why, if I'm home, wasn't I doing? Why was I letting this house go? The rest of the house began to get dirtier and I couldn't clean, I couldn't do anything. I knew that whatever the future brought for me, I needed somebody's expertise. He took me out of the situation and he put me into the hospital and now everybody says to the person that's ill like myself that there's something wrong. Now she's in the hospital she can't do anything. I'd sometimes pray that I'd break a leg [and] that would say I can't do anything. I couldn't do any of these things for anybody because I was having my own set of problems at that point. I went into the hospital and began two weeks of therapy. It didn't cure me, it's been a year and a half since then. I could tell you a lot of hell and misery that I've been through but I think I've had enough crying for today. But the two weeks were good because I met other people that had problems that made mine look like they were minor. And they didn't know me. It's strange, I think of it now, I've always been competing with doctors and lawyers and Indian chiefs, and here I had no competition. They would think I was so wise and so intelligent and so everything. It was so unbelievable. I was just dealing with simple people at that time in that group. Many of them didn't even go through high school. Some of these young, kids were just babies and some of these older women. And I couldn't believe that I had always felt in a sense that I had been such an ignoramus because I had--I guess now I realize that I was competing in a world above me and I was always stretching up. You know I felt inferior to Earlenborn because I didn't have that kind of knowledge and the education and the
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: background, And fighting all those months to keep up with the incumbent.

INTERVIEWER: But nobody possibly could. The incumbent always has certain advantages.

FESE: Well, I know that now but when these things happen to you you don't know that they're happening. There isn't any little sign that lights up to give these feelings of inadequacy. Maybe had nothing else happened, but the loss of that campaign. I really didn't get upset losing it. That's what nobody understood. I didn't give a shit about the campaign I had battled before and had lost battles. So I get up the next two years and do it again. But that union job! And it caught me at a time when I was so low, my resistance was down. And then I had also been thrown into menopause at that point. I had taken the pill for fifteen years. They took me off of it at that time because of all the cigarettes. My whole body was just falling apart. And yet I was walking and talking. There was this huge bulk of person walking around and nobody seeing that it was bleeding and dying, but I was.

INTERVIEWER: Do you want to quit now?

FESE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Alright, let's just pick it up from there.

FESE: I was talking last about being in the hospital.

INTERVIEWER: Just listening to the end of the last tape, I'm depressed. It was such a bad time. This is repetition. I had gone to the doctor and gotten a slip saying that I had depression and they wouldn't let me off. Some gentleman at work made a decision just arbitrarily that it wasn't a good enough doctor's diagnosis and he wasn't going to give me a leave. I had to return to the doctor for another diagnosis. I should have returned to work on March 1 and this was already March 15 that I made the decision to go into the hospital. In the meantime I had the opportunity somewhere in there to file an EEOC charge but I was so confused and so mixed up, I was making threats at that time that I was going to file a suit. In my own mind I said I was really going to do it, I owed nothing to this union whatsoever. I was going to run in 1979 for international vice president of my union. And I really meant it when I said it, I mean there was no kidding myself, I was going to do this. I said I don't care if I win or lose but at least I'll upset the apple cart. I said it from the time I left BRAC and I continued to say these things all through January of '78. I can only say now that I've changed my mind because I've realized that if through any quirk of fate I were to win, first of all, they'd station me in Butte, Montana, Timbuktu, India, anywhere in the world and I would be
FESE interview

FESE: stuck there. That would be one thing that they could do. Secondly, from the time I was in the hospital my whole attitude has changed. I really didn't know if I'd want this. Finally, when I went into the hospital the railroad did recognize the fact that I was in the hospital and then extended my time off. From the time I left BRAC until I reported back to the railroad office I had three months. Then the doctor got me a month extension, I didn't have to be back until April 1. When I went into the hospital I got a leave of absence until July. So that was another three months that I got this extension of time. I had to go back and yet I knew that I couldn't go back and just sit behind a desk. I needed to be outdoors, so I took a yard job. I worked two hours in the morning in the yards, walking the yards checking trains and everyone started making fun of me. In the meantime what had happened.... I weighed about 195 pounds at the end of the campaign. By January of the following year when I did go to the inauguration of Carter I weighed about 235. By the first of February I weighed around 250 and the weight just.... I could not stop the weight. At that point of depression the only friend I had was my refrigerator. I also think it was the only thing I could do that I wasn't a failure at. It seemed like everything I touched was a failure. I knew that wasn't true but I didn't. Your mind does goofy tricks on you. And God forbid I should do anything that would make me fail. I don't know if I would have been able to tolerate it. Anything that was a challenge at that point, I knew I couldn't 'handle. I just couldn't take on any challenge. And cooking had always come easy to me, had been something I'd done for twenty years. The family was so used to me not cooking anymore because of the campaign that if I had given them garbage on top of toast they would have been tickled to death. During the campaign they sure didn't get a lot of cooked meals. So now I'd whip up all these cakes and the stews and spaghetti and pastas and all. It was something I needed. Unfortunately I was eating all, that. Now I realize that my attention span at that time was just down to nil. I could not read a book, I could not watch TV. I could not be with people, I couldn't concentrate more than just minutes at a time. There was just no way. My joy in life was always reading and I'd buy them and the books were piling up. I'd go out and buy a book and sit down and I could not get beyond the first page. I have stacks of books that I bought at that time that I have not read even yet.

My husband was a union steward. Well, we call them local chairmen in the railroad industry. Whenever he would have the girl come in to help him dictate letters I would literally lock myself in my room. I could not listen to what he had to say, I did not want to take part in it. I wasn't bitter at unionism but I was just bitter, confused, knowing that in the union game my career was at an end. There's no place you go. And although I had taught at the Job Corps I didn't have teacher's education where I could say well I'll teach unionism, where I could go out with that kind of degree. I didn't have that,
FESE: so there was literally nothing that I could even see. I tried to keep in touch with the Women's Movement and I did it haphazardly. I guess the thought of facing all the women and being such a failure, and I guess in my mind I felt that I had let everybody down.

INTERVIEWER: They never seemed to feel that way, did they?

FESE: No, but it was just that so few women had gotten from unions to politics and I just felt like I was--I can only use one word, and that's fuck-up. When you transcribe it you can use screw-off. (laughs)

INTERVIEWER: I'll put it the way you said it.

FESE: I just felt like boy, I really--who the hell did I think I was, trying to reach so high. And it was just one more reason for people to say they can't make it anyway. Women! And then I think I was mad because I was sick, and I'd heard so many people say women can't take it, that I was trying to be strong for that reason. I would put on this front in front of people. But my weight was just exploding and that was just maybe a shell I was putting around me. Then I went to work on the railroad and oh, it was hell going back there. People making remarks. They were on my case all the time. Every move I made was being watched by one particular man. If I even talked to anybody--either it was jealousy of what I had done or it was just because I was from the union--they were afraid. I don't know how they felt. Or just because I was the new girl in town and they just had somebody new to pick on. And I wasn't used to being ordered around. I wasn't used to punching clocks. I wasn't used to being degraded like they degrade you on the railroad, like you haven't got brain one. I began to argue back and then I said to myself, hey, I'm not debating Earlenborn here, I'll be up for insubordination. I'd come home night after night, hiding out in my bedroom.

INTERVIEWER: Was this part before you went into the hospital?

FESE: No, this was all after. I was getting healthier but there were just so many setbacks I couldn't catch my breath. I really needed more time, I guess, but nobody was giving it to me. Like I said, when you're hurt inside like that, nobody sees it so they think you're alright and you must keep going. I had a lot of trouble with my kids. When I came out of the hospital it wasn't a panacea and cured everything but at least I knew in what direction I was going. I knew that I had never tried to commit suicide in the sense of literally trying to commit suicide. I found out later with reading about depression, that probably the food was my form of suicide, hoping that I would explode or something. I haven't done research and I never did talk to the psychiatrist about it. I had a couple
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE:  of sessions after I came out of the hospital with him and he helped me quite a bit. I remember him saying the last time, "You're not doing it right because now you have nothing. You're empty, there's nothing to look forward to." And I said, "Well, I thought this is what you wanted. You wanted me to rest." He said, "Yes, but you can't go on just...." "I'm just living every day at a time." "But that's all you're doing. You're just existing." I remember it made me cry because I realized he was right. I thought I was getting healthier and I was just existing at that point, getting through each day.

Anyway, I went back to work in July. I've got to get back to the Women's Movement a little bit. Sometime in January when I went to Washington to Carter's inauguration I went to the International Women's Year Observance offices. I went there and some friends of mine mentioned that I was one of the women that was picked to be a presidential appointee to the committee here in Illinois, one of the 57 women that were picked, I was pleased and I thought this would keep me going. Things were vague in that time. I felt like I went through a veil or a plastic bag maybe where I could see everything, or maybe a fish tank where I could see and be aware, but the scenes aren't sharp. I was not well and I went in January and February--whenever these meetings were--because I had been part of them, but for the first time in my life I think I knew that I wasn't healthy enough to participate. I wasn't a very active member and a lot of people involved in this I had never met, Some I had but many I hadn't because it was not union women only. So I didn't become one of the gang in a sense. And at this time you have to remember we had a Republican administration here in Illinois so it was all Republican people in there. It was a new ball game out there and the Democrats were out so I knew no one in there. It was a little bit different than it had been the last four years under Walker. But I got through that, and then in June we went down to Normal, Illinois to the state college and they had the big meeting. It was so strange. Usually I was in the thick of things but I had taken my daughter and my two grandchildren down there with us and maybe because of them I had to be a little bit more active with the children and my daughter: [I] wanted her to participate so that I didn't get involved and really into the thick of things. I remember running for the office. There were three hundred some women and there were some confrontations and things that went on in the general meeting. I tended to get involved in the different workshops, not the controversial ones. I knew that 'I wasn't well. Now this is June, I had been just out of the hospital about a month and a half, Now I had gained a full, almost 60 pounds. I was ashamed of that and I didn't want to be seen. I've always been heavy and it never bothered me, but this, it was such short time to gain it. If I had gained it over a number of years it probably wouldn't have bothered me. But in such a short time it was like telling the world that something had gone wrong with me. I met many women that I know and they were surprised to see me and they treated me Fantastically, I felt strange. And even with union women I just felt that we didn't have anything in common.
anymore. I wasn't part of the union in that sense. I am still a member but, not in the upper echelon with most of these women that I knew, Barbara Merrill made things a lot easier. She was one of the few women that gave me that sense that it didn't make any difference.

You were still the same old Marie to her.

Yes. It just didn't seem to make any difference. Anyway I had gone down there and ran for the election and there was three hundred women running. And I remember getting so upset, it was the first time since November I'd run for anything. I was a complete basket case down there, just a complete basket case. And while I was involved with my daughter and the kids, there was a big confrontation and they all walked out of the meeting. All kinds of things were happening and I always seemed to have just missed everything. I didn't mean to. Ordinarily I would have been right there and saw everything happening but I was gone when anything happened because of the kids and it took us time to go to lunch. We had to stop and go pick up the children before we went back because it was the last day. And everybody had walked out. They were screaming—all the anti-abortionists were out and the anti-woman's year and the anti-ERA. I missed it all. They were all leaving and I never did find out really what happened.

Then we were getting a lot of papers and things at home and I couldn't read. I was just barely reading things, I could not keep up with them. To Form a More Perfect Union had come, our book about International Women's Year Observance in Mexico. I could not read the stuff, I had a very short span. At that point I was beginning to read light things, things like newspaper articles on the change in clothing. But it could have nothing to do with unionism, politics. It really tore me up to read about that. I could not read it, I was trying to subdue all these things in my brain that had been going on, but little by little it came back. But I remember in June running for this election and like I said I was an absolute basket case and my daughter got on me. She said, "Mother, all you have done since you've been here at this conference is put your name on a ballot. Did you go out and politic for it? Did you do anything?" And I said, "No, I didn't." And she said, "Well then, if you lose what the hell are you moaning about? You didn't do anything to try and win. It's not like when you ran for Congress and you had to go out and work. You just put your name on a ballot." Well, through some quirk of fate, God knows why, I won. Out of some three hundred women I was some thirty or forty women deep in the ballot. And I was like in shock that I had won. I could say I won on my reputation and what had been, not on what I had accomplished in the last seven or eight months at that point. So I felt joy that I had won.

Then I had to return to work in July. I went to the bosses and
I tried with the Northwestern and this is really something. I went to the Northwestern to get some friends of mine to talk to the personnel director. You know there would be certain times--there was this government-appointed thing and then I was elected delegate--that I would be taking some time off work. Well, they're such--it's an employer's market now and they're really down on anyone who lays off for any reason. I wanted to still participate in the Women's Movement. I knew that I didn't have the time now. Before, I'd say to my boss, "I'm going down to this meeting and that meeting," and he'd say okay. Then I would work later to make up for it--when I was working for the union--or come in Saturdays. When it is a salary position then you could do these things. In fact they encouraged this kind of thing because when I went anyplace I represented the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks. When I was ready to go back to work at the railroad I discussed this with a very prominent young man in the railroad to talk to the personnel director and say what I had done, and say that I would be glad to represent the Northwestern Railroad at these meetings, and-say that I was a Chicago and Northwestern employee and that this kind of thing would be in the record of the history books, that the Northwestern--I mean I thought that they would be happy to have this. Yet when he approached him I guess he hit the ceiling. "Nobody will represent the Northwestern. I'm the one, never mind...." Well again it was misinterpreted what I wanted. I wasn't going to use the title of the Northwestern that they sent me but that I was a worker on the Northwestern. As it turned out anything that I did say was just that I was a member of BRAC and I didn't push the union at all. In some cases I just said no title. I think I, mentioned last time that I would never use a title again because what I found out as I began to get healthier is that what happened to me is an identity crisis. I was so wrapped up in that silly job of mine. You can get so caught up in this type of job. Marie Fese was not Marie Fese, she was an International staff officer of the Brotherhood and somewhere when I didn't have that title then I didn't exist. You know it happens to both men and women but as I mentioned I'm pretty sure that we get caught up in our own importance.

INTERVIEWER: But that was the thing that was the hardest, the loss of the job, not the loss of the election?

FESE: Yes. Because I felt that I could always go back and run again. I could still run for Congress. There's nothing stopping me to get the nomination and run for Congress. That would be an easy thing to do again and again. You could run every year if you want to go through a primary. You can have your name on the ballot fourteen times if you want to get the signatures. So I knew that there would always be another opportunity. But the loss of the campaign coupled with the loss of the job was overwhelming.

I knew in 1979 at our national convention for BRAC that C.L.
FESE: Dennis would not run again. I knew that at the time I possibly could be sent back to rank and file and I was prepared for '79, I really was, or to go on to something else. I was going to school all along and I thought maybe by that time I'd have a degree. I could go ahead and do my teaching or go into something. Or go to another union in some kind of research department. At this point I didn't know. And if nothing else in '79 I thought what the heck I'll be over 45. I'll just go back and stay with my husband and do my thing back there. I can still be in the Women's Movement and everybody would understand. It was a change of regimes and I could go back gracefully. But to go back the way I did! See, there was a lot of confrontations. Oh, it gets so involved here. I don't know if you can understand all this. I mean I had a lot of trouble in my own local with these men for years. We always had Local troubles. And I was this broad who just knew too much. And I mean literally they called me a broad. They'd say, "Go sit down," or "go back to your babies." There was still some men from that regime that hadn't retired, that still were male chauvinists and thought women shouldn't have anything to do with anything but getting in and out of bed and maybe cooking them supper. And I was always pretty sharp, not real sharp, but fairly sharp on parliamentary procedures and everything. So it was a struggle within my own union. And when I'd go to union meetings and bring something up--I was going through a lot of confrontation at my own union meetings 'cause I continued to go to them even though I was going through a depression, through sicknesses, through everything. I still continued to go and when I'd see an injustice I still had to get up and say my piece. And when these guys would say they didn't want you at the Grand Lodge and you were fired from there it really hurt! They just kept sticking the knives in all the time. They always stuck the knife in and turned it. And then the shame, because maybe the fellows knew the truth but there'd be some new kids in the room that didn't know why I had gotten fired. Sometimes I'd stay calm while I was at the meeting and then break up at home. It'd take me a month to recuperate. Old memories would come back. But all this was taking place while other things were going on. So when I went back to the Northwestern I wanted this time off and they said no, they wouldn't give it to me at that level, at the top echelon level. So I went in to a young gentleman who was the agent at that time; he's a boss, his name is Berry Michaels. And I explained to him that I had been involved in many things and that would take some time off work and there'd be no expense to the company or anything, [that] I had a government appointment. And he said if I could just show him the letters, that I wasn't giving him some B.S. So I showed him the letters and he said, "Well, You just let me know in advance." So I always knew when I was going to take the time off to do these things. They were very good to me that way. Meantime I'd been trying to get a government job. Marilyn D. Clancy had been given some jobs and a number of the women who had run for different offices were given some jobs. Now,
FESE INTERVIEW

I'm in Du Page which is strictly Republican. It's difficult to get anything out there. Anyway, I went to Jim Wall and Jim Wall told me that he had no connection with the White House. Now listen to this story. He had been Carter's campaign manager in Illinois. He had set up all the primaries. I was running in my own campaign at the time and so I didn't really get involved in the Carter campaign. I had met Carter when I went to Kansas City to the Democratic National Convention. I had been elected as one of the two delegates. I had met Carter then and he really didn't strike me as a union person. He was ultra-conservative even for a Democrat and I really couldn't get into him. But I was glad that he had Mondale running with him. That kind of helped me out as far as doing anything. But I was so busy with my own campaign that I really didn't get involved in the Carter campaign. Now Jim Wall did not want to get involved with me even though I'd helped his wife in her campaign. He didn't want to get involved with me because his whole thing was Carter, and his wife was all tied up in Carter. And Winfield Green, who was my strongest opponent in the primary, had claimed that he was a Carter campaigner. But I knew that he was giving money to the local Democratic Party to help the candidate for Stevenson. I knew this. I figured there was no sense in my yakking 'cause nobody was going to believe it and he would only go into hiding and cover it up. I never said a word, but about two weeks before the election it all came out; that he was playing both ends against the middle just to win. Wall and his wife, Mary Eleanor, then came along and gave me a couple of dollars for my campaign. Also she found out that Winfield Green was against ERA, I think, at the same time. So at the last minute they did throw me their personal support but not the contingent of people that they could command. Anyway, that was in the primary election. After the general election months later, Jim was very tied up in Carter's campaign. We really didn't get to talk or do anything together during the campaigns. So I had called him after the election and asked him if he had any White House connections. He told me no, so I pulled some strings of my own. I'd been pulling these strings for months now. It started when I went to Washington in January. I pulled strings to try and find out why I couldn't get any job. Clancy was offered jobs, all these people were offered jobs. Finally a friend of mine in another Congressional office came back to me and said, "Marie, you've been put on the blacklist. You're blackballed in Washington." I said, "I'm what?" She said, "Yes, you've been blackballed." I said, "Can you find out why?" Well it came that evidently Jim Wall had put me on a blacklist and had said that I was a flaky broad. This is the answer I got back. It was absolutely devastating. I went back into remission again. This happened in the summer of '77. I had already gone back to work. It was July or August of that year and I really thought that even this had been taken from me. I just couldn't believe! Oh God, how low I felt. I couldn't believe it but I almost had to believe that this was true because I couldn't get a nibble in Washington. Nothing came out of there, nothing at all. So in August or September-- whenever it happened.
finally I called Jim Wall [and] told him exactly what I had heard on the phone, that I was on a black list. He said, "Oh, that's not true." First I called him and told him I had been on the black ball list. Then I was later told that Jim Wall had a direct source with the White House, a direct source, and could find out for me. So I finally called him back and confronted him with that and he told me that he had never heard this or everything else. I said, "Jim, I don't know if it's true or not but I'm just telling you what I've heard." He said, "Well, can you get back and tell me why?" So then I made another phone call and got some more information about being on the black ball list, why I was on the black ball. And with that information, then I told him. He said, "Well, that's not the truth and I hope you don't believe that." I said, "Jim, I have a clear conscience and I sleep at night. I don't have to worry about it." He's a reverend, by the way, a Protestant minister, you know. This had to be September that this was all taking place because at the railroad now I was in a lot of trouble there. And of course International Woman's Year was coming up and I was getting closer to those things, taking time off for meetings and some special time. Then I went to Washington to a CLUW Convention. I was going to run for an office [but] I knew I wasn't up to doing the things I did and I really didn't push to run. I didn't run for a CLUW office. I had been an officer and I just didn't fight [for] it. Nobody came forth to nominate me and I didn't push to get a nomination. The doctor had said I've got to get rid of some of these jobs. He knew [that] I didn't need any more involvement. So I, thought what I'd do is come back and start a CLUW chapter in Du Page. I intended to at that point, but when you're in depression you intend to do a lot of things and you just can't get them off the ground. At the same time in Washington there was a special union meeting with the new president. This was a year after he had taken office. He was having a political thing going on and this big meeting in Washington in September of '77. I had gotten time off from work to go to this and the CLUW Convention. I had to have a letter from my assistant board chairman that we were going to that and then I went to the CLUW meeting. The Conrad Hilton was where the CLUW meeting was held. Of all the places, this had to bring back some terrible memories to me because we had our '75 convention there for BRAC and then the inauguration for Carter was there. It was kind of depressing. But the weather was beautiful and I was getting away from work and everything.

And I had an outside job. Let me go back to the job again. The fellow that had always been down on me since I'd come back finally convinced them to abolish my job. They didn't need my job, so he said. So now I don't have a job and I have bumping rights. I looked around in the office and I knew there was nothing I could bump that I wanted. And I've always felt from day one that if I had to work I wanted to work for the most money I could. There was a couple of departments but they had--punch in, punch out, punch in when you go to the bathroom, punch out--in office work. I still knew I wasn't up to that kind of job. It was the
FESE INTERVIEW

second or third week in September that we had to be in Washington. My husband and I both went, had about ten days altogether. While I was gone. I put a couple of bumps in, bids for jobs. Anyway when I came back there had been some other things that had happened so I was without a job. So I made a decision to bump the time keeper. I was going to bump her when a job came up as foreman on the piggy-back ramp. I decided that I was going to take this job because it was a very vigorous outdoor job. You'll have to remember that I weighed around 256 pounds at this time and I thought this would help me. This would get, me out of the office. I would go out there to the ramp and work this job. I worked from 11:30 in the morning to 8 o'clock. That would be good because it would keep me out of the bed, it would just keep me busy enough.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do on this job?

FESE: Well, I didn't know, but before I knew what I was supposed to do on the job all of a sudden eighty people came up and told me I wasn't going to be able to work this job, it was a young man's job. Now these people, they hadn't known me. For almost six or seven years I hadn't been on the railroad. They thought I was that little girl that left years ago. What they saw was this fat woman there and they had no concepts of what I had done in the meantime. All they had to do was to say that a woman couldn't work that job, and I would have died for that job. They didn't know that! They didn't know the odds and the things that I had fought against and this thing was like nothing. They didn't realize what they were up against. (laughs) In the meantime some of the women that I had known had gotten into the EEOC offices and all that good stuff. The railroad people weren't aware at that time that I had some friends in the right places. Not close friends, but acquaintances that would at least pull some strings. Anyway, I had people on the phone. They called me, they made bets that I wouldn't last two weeks. I wouldn't be able to take on this job and I couldn't do it. October 3, I' took the job over and they gave me the God-awfullest time you could imagine. Thank God it was beautiful October weather we had that year. And in the meantime I had a couple of things that I had to take off because of International Woman's Year, a couple of meetings that we had to attend. Most of them were on the week-ends but there was one or so that I had to take off. But I was really leery about taking days off because I had to have a hundred days of work. I needed a hundred days for vacation and by the end of the year if I didn't take a day off I'd have just 110. That's how many were left. I didn't really want to take days off so I missed a couple of women's meetings because in case I really got sick I didn't want to lose my vacation. They gave me a rough time while in training on the new job and then I was on my own. They pulled every stunt in the book but I knew. I had been a politician enough to know that you never tell them directly, but you tell the other fellow what you're going to do so that it gets back to them. Those men did everything they could possibly do to get
FESE: me discouraged so I'd get off the job, put more" blocks in
the way than you could possibly imagine. At one point I opened
the door and looked at the assistant manager and I said to him,
"Listen I ran, for Congress. I didn't run for Congress because
I was the biggest dummy and didn't know what's going on. I'm
going off this job. I know what you guys are doing." So he got
all elated and told everybody I was getting off, but I was just
at a low moment at that time. The next day I called the EEOC
offices and talked to a couple of people about what I could do.
And they said, "But you can't get off the job. You've got to stay
on the job and prove these things.' When I went back next day
and didn't get off the job and the assistant manager got all
up tight because I'd made a liar out of him. Now he's really
mad at me because he had told everyone, "I got her off the job.
She's not going to stay on the job." Then I thought I'd talk to
a few people and just mention I'd gone to the EEOC offices to
see if they could help me. Well, the word got back and they got
frightened.'

INTERVIEWER: What kind of things were they doing exactly?

FESE: Well, I'll give you an example. One time they cancelled a train
and they told everybody but me. Just things like that they would
deliberately do.. The train had to go out at 7 o'clock. One night
I had been out in the yards getting the train out by 7 o'clock.
We used walkie-talkies in the office but it wasn't working. I
got the train out by 7 o'clock and went back into the office.
They put it out at 7:05 to show there would be a delay. Actually,
it had left at 6:55. It took me some time to get back into the
office. I had been walking the track and everything. So what
happened is when I got back in the office I scratched out 7:05
and put 6:55. The next day the manager called me in his office
and said that I'd falsified the records. So I said, "You horse's
ass! If I was falsifying the records I would have torn the
whole sheet up and started again. I told you I was out there.
You want to go out there and find out from the engine crews
going out." They tried every trick in the book. Every little
teeny thing that did. All of a sudden I had to keep track of
even the temperature. Never anybody kept track of the temperature
for the day. What I was doing on this job was I was a piggy-back
foreman. The trucks from the different railroads and trucking
companies came out there and we'd have to load them on flat cars
for the different industries that we handled. We'd send them
to Minneapolis, Seattle, wherever they were going and they had
to be loaded. My job was to supervise the Teamsters, the truckers
that drove onto the platforms and then what they call tie-down
men that are tying these trailers down. They were actually done
with what they called jacks that clamped on the trailer onto the
flat cars. They called them piggy-backs. I had to see that the
supervision of this was done and everything was locked up good.
And we had a hot train called 477 that had to be out by 7 o'clock
every night. It was a very hot-shot train and everybody was always
watching it. Many of the companies knew that the time of the cutoff was 6:30. Well, they'd pile them up there, maybe ten of them would come in at 6:25 and we were really pushing to load all these cars. Now, you've got to remember I am talking about winter time. It kept getting colder, and the colder it got the harder it was to work with metal. And I knew that some of these men had never worked with a woman foreman before and they were up in years and they weren't ready to take orders from me. Then there was two brothers working and one of them was kind of a baby. They worked in shifts and he was my last shift. If I gave him a favor or asked him to do something he'd run back and tell everybody the next day. It was just unbelievable.

At one time I had fourteen women working under me when I worked for Fuller Brush and I didn't have as much trouble with them as with that one man. I was even the head of the IBM Department years before at the railroad before I went to BRAC. I thought that was bad. But all men--I couldn't believe it! These women beat them all to hell. The men are nothing but a bunch of cry-babies. "He got... He put on four trailers more than me. I did...." I couldn't believe it. Now this was a hard-hat job, I had to wear a hard-hat.

Another thing that was very deflating to my own ego. I always had to be dressed up when I was at BRAG. My clothes were always in perfect order because there were times when somebody would say, hey, there's a cocktail party for such and such, or a meeting, and you're assigned to it. I'd run home and have to be dressed. I always had wigs ready and clothes ready. I could be in and out of my house in ten minutes plus shower, you know. Even though I was always heavy I always had stylish clothes and always felt presentable no matter what situation. Lots of times they'd say hey, there's a meeting and you've got to go to it, so you always had to be decent to go anyplace, Now I've taken a job where I'm wearing safety boots, I had to wear two or three pairs of pants 'cause it was cold as hell out there those winter months. All of this was very depressing. I was going through this at a time when people wouldn't tell me things and I was cut out of all information at work. Somebody said why didn't I talk to my union if I was talking to the EEOC, meaning my System Board, but I could never prove anything. The things they did, they made sure I didn't have proof. The only proof I could have had was if they had gotten rid of me, and they were afraid to do that. They wanted me to get rid of myself. I was just determined that I was going to work that job. Well now, I worked it all of October, all of November and all of December. The job damn near killed me. I was overweight but I had given up cigarettes almost a year now. I was able to handle the job. I had to climb up and down on some of the flat cars; I had to jump into ditches and check cars through snow that was up to my rear. It was not a good job. The pay was fantastic and there was a lot of overtime and I would
FESE INTERVIEW

Permission required from interviewee for any quotes, citations, and/or utilization of material (see legal release)

FESE: work it when I didn't want to because I was exhausted. I had no social life because it ended, at 8 o'clock. Now even my politics went to hell because when I got home and changed it would be so late to go to anything and especially if we worked overtime. Sometimes I would work until 10 o'clock at night. It was a very difficult job but I was bound and determined to get it. Everybody kept saying why don't you get off of it, 'cause even my friends knew that my social life was gone. Good friends, my husband would go out with them and I would be working. Or I'd maybe try to meet them and they'd be all done and home by the time I'd get out of work. So they were trying to talk me out of it. But there was nothing ever good enough that I wanted with a Saturday and Sunday days to bid on, and that's the way I could get off the job. And, a little bit that I was determined, too, that I was going to show them.

Now we have International Woman's Year. That takes my job to the beginning of '78. The rest of the year I told you about. Jim Wall had come back and I'd found out that I'd been on the blacklist. Somewhere in December all of a sudden I get a call from the Labor Department. They need, overseas attaches and if I applied for this job they would send me overseas. I tell you that was the beginning of the end of my depression, it was the beginning of the end of it because I felt as though somebody in Washington remembered that I was there, I found out that some of the women put in a good word for me, a couple here and there. And in my own union one of the fellows had done a little something. It seems that I got off the blacklist then a little bit anyway, and Jim Wall must have given his sanction to go ahead and send an application to me. After I got to thinking about it I was really excited. I even went out and bought a new dress to go to Washington for an interview. Then I got to thinking later if they offered to send me somewhere in North Australia or in New Zealand and then if I refused it they would say, "Well we offered her a job and she refused it." And in a sense maybe it wasn't a fact that I wanted a job but I wanted to be offered. I wanted to say "no" to somebody for once. So that is what happened.

Now in November at the International Woman's Year Conference which was held in Houston--I went there apprehensively. I was a delegate but I don't know why I went. I said well this would probably be the last one. When I got there and saw the mass mob in the lobby of that Hyatt House--it was unbelievable that these people had done this to these women. If that was a man's convention they would never have done what they did. Our women from Illinois just amazed me. Sometimes I become so proud that I'm a woman and that I'm associated with some of these women. A couple of these women, and I don't want to mention their names, said, "Hey, we've waited in line for seven or eight hours. We're all dead tired." It was just mass hysteria. That lobby had such lines, 7, 8 and 9 hours! Finally one of the girls late into the night stood there and she gave out numbers so people could! sit down a little bit, so they
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: could sit and have something to eat or something and you could hear the numbers being called off and you knew that you were a hundred or two to go. They had a huge cocktail party that nobody could attend because we were all waiting for our rooms. It was terrible, terrible, terrible! Finally a number of women from Illinois, very prominent women, called Governor Thompson and told him how abominably we had been treated, all the women down there. And he was going to call the governor of Texas. He said, "Better yet, I am personal friends with the president of the Hyatt House Regency." So he called him. Well after that, it was beautiful. They were so efficient when check-out time came later that week it was unbelievable. The next day they got with it and pretty soon you could see the difference. They flew in trainees from all over the country. They were standing at attention at the elevators directing traffic. But this is the power! Now men would never have put up with it in the first place. And these women said, "Hey, we're not going to put up with this kind of garbage." They called Governor Thompson and Governor Thompson had action within 24 hours, but it was not good enough to take care of the mess at the beginning.

Everything else for the conference was handled fairly well. With the many traveling hours and everybody was tired, we all missed that big cocktail party that we had all paid $15 for to get into. But the next day, registration went much easier and our official pictures. The hotel began to straighten out their act after that first day. We were in walking distance of the conference center and we walked. I stayed with a woman by the name of Marge Jendrick who was from Du Page County. She has tried desperately to get a CLUW chapter out in Du Page and it has always fallen through. But she's from rank and file and doesn't have the connections she needs with her union. I knew that I had enough connections and knew enough people and had enough names that I could do something about a CLUW chapter out in Du Page, so I told her that I would try to do something. I was supposed to meet with the Du Page Federation on November 17, which is the Monday that I was to be in Houston, Texas. So I had to cancel it. Then I was going to meet in December and it didn't happen and then after that, well, other things happened. And to this day I still haven't helped her.

I went to Houston and I said I'm not going to let what happened in June--you know, I wanted to be really part of all this. By now I was able to read a lot more and I was a little bit more prepared for going and had read all the resolutions and all the things we were to pass. I became much more aware of things that happened. Illinois was sitting next to the Mississippi delegation and later on I'll tell you why this becomes important. Illinois was not really brought into a lot of things because we were half anti- and half pro-ERA. So we, were kept out of pretty much a lot of things. There was some coalitions formed all over the country of states that wanted things, and what they did is they met a number of evenings. Their leaders and a number of people met and hashed everything out long before the convention, two or
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: three days before the convention itself. They sat there and hassled it out. Hey, we want this so let's not argue, let's not get on the floor and have a big hassle. Let's argue here. We want the Equal Rights Amendment so give us this. For the handicapped women we want this, for elderly women we want this. So everybody had their own little coalitions and they did their arguing and they came up with a united picture when they went into that convention. It went pretty orderly. But I will say -one thing about women's conventions, we women tend to do it always on week-ends because none of us ever get paid for going to these things. Men would never do this. Men wouldn't even attend a conference unless they were paid for it, unless maybe it's a Democratic or Republican convention. Number two, women work many many late hours. They go from 10 o'clock in the morning to 10 o'clock at night in sessions. Men would never do this kind of thing, maybe one day out of a convention. But women's conventions are planned for two or three days of conference work. We put too much business in them, we expect to get it all done; As much as women love to talk, they never seem to give us enough time to talk. We went to Houston as a platform to speak to the country and we really didn't have it. Some of the women that were there did a fantastic job. It was a very touch and go, kind of meeting. There was a lot of anti-ERA people in there. As the voting progressed, if the majority wanted something Mississippi would stay down, and they had men leading them. I want you to know that there were men there, men delegates were there in this group from Mississippi. These women were told when to get up or down. I'd swear they were all hand-picked women. There wasn't one of them that knew what the hell they wanted in there because they just got up and down like yo-yos. When the leader and his assistants stood up--and there was always one or the other there--they all stood up. I've just gotten the book on International Woman's Year and I haven't read it. I don't know if there's any analytic parts to it or not. Everything we women wanted Mississippi didn't, until it came to finances. When the part came to give women credit it was almost a unanimous vote to give women credit. To this day I never cease to ask myself the question, how can these people that do not want to give us equality, do not want to give us the right to vote even though we've got it, yet Will let us go out and make credit and get into debt? And they all stood up! It was a unanimous vote.

INTERVIEWER: That's woman's role, the consumer, I suppose.

FESE: I would like to have people do research into that. Why will they let us do this and yet not give us equal pay? I would never have believed that Mississippi would have stood up in a body. I almost fainted. Anyway we went on and all of a sudden a couple of people from Illinois came up and said, "What do you feel about the gay rights?" And I said, "I really don't care one way or the other about it but I don't think this is the place to bring it up. I don't think it should pass here." I talked to a couple of
other women and they didn't believe it should be, but one of the compromises evidently at those meetings before the conference was that they would vote for freedom of choice in sexual matters. I said to myself and to a number of other people, "If that passes it's the end of the Equal Rights Amendment. It'll never pass." It will pass in years to come but not now. We're having enough trouble convincing people on the abortion law. Now they're going to say that here in Houston, Texas there are a bunch of lesbians who are trying to do away with mankind and the family and everything. I don't know the outcome of that prediction of mine but I tend to think that I was almost right. And I have nothing against my sisters that are that way. It doesn't bother me at all, but if they would have just curtailed it we could have got everything they wanted in ten years if they would have just waited. But by giving them what they wanted we lost what we needed. The world was waiting to see what came out of there and those women that were against abortion were then convinced when that happened that what we were was a bunch of lesbians.

I want to tell you one thing, the place went wild when the ERA bill passed. ERA had passed, it went wild. We were part of it, waving flags and doing all kinds of things. We went crazy! It was funny because one of our women politicians from Illinois had brought a bunch of little flags and we started waving these flags all around, the Equal Rights people. The press came along and wanted to know why the Equal Rights people were waving the flags. We said what's the matter, you think we can't wave the flag, too? Only those that are against? Anybody that's for Equal Rights and abortions can't wave a flag? They were all stunned. We broke out these little flags and we were waving and screaming. We said, "We're Americans too, We love our country, just because we want abortions and the Equal Rights Amendment." And I tried to explain that it isn't that any of us want abortions. I don't want an abortion, but the freedom should be there for those who do. Abortions are going to take place anyway and it's going to go back to the kitchen table.

Anyway when the lesbian resolution or the freedom of choice resolution came I had to walk out of the convention. I cried for the Equal Rights Amendment. I knew that if the Freedom of Choice passed, that ERA would be dead right there on the floor. As much joy as there was the day before, again a smaller group of women did the same thing when the Freedom of Choice bill passed. The TV camera zoomed in on it so that on TV it looked as large as the pro-ERA demonstration had been. But it really wasn't. With this vote we had passed the Freedom of Choice bill, [but] it was just a shallow victory. The women who wanted freedom of choice acted like that settled it. Now they had freedom of choice automatically. It wasn't true! I mean it isn't true; it's not a state law, or a federal law. It was just a resolution. The only thing this did was give us a piece of paper that we could send to President Carter to give to Congress. And they could throw it in the garbage. But I'm sure it helped kill ERA in the long run.
It's all done! But I began to wonder if these women realized what we were there for. I wonder if maybe I'm wrong. Why did I see it and all these other women didn't? Not Illinois so much but these other women, from around the country and even some women in Illinois. They thought that this was it; this has passed, we have freedom of choice. This was just a meeting, it meant nothing. They gave us women this conference to shut us up for another year. I mean that's all that was. It could have been a springboard. It could have been used to our good.

Anyway, I was going to say-- back tracking a bit--right after the ERA resolution passed in this huge hall with everyone there, the press, TV, et cetera. The world was watching us pass this proposition for an Equal Rights Amendment and we won the vote. Instead of leaving the floor on that joyous note; the chair was pounding the gavel trying to get us back to order to make us work. And then we ended up on a very late and sour note. Women are nuts! They are absolutely crazy! They wiped out everything we'd done. We had been on such a high joyous note and two hours later we were completely hoarse and exhausted and still trying to conduct business. That's crazy. The ERA resolution should have been put at the end of the night agenda and that should have been it! That should have been the night. That should have been the crowning glory of what we had done that evening.

Maybe they need one of the politicians to plan the meeting.

Where were Bella Abzug and all those women who were planning this thing? They must have known if we won it would go absolutely beserk. Then they plan two hours more work afterwards. And that came at 10 o'clock at night. If it had been three in the afternoon I'd say well okay. Then the next day with this freedom of choice. That was the last thing on the agenda. That was the note they left the conference on. It should have been in the beginning to get it over with. When they stuck it at the end, it just left a bad taste. It was beautiful ceremony to start with; all these women on the dais had come forth, Republicans and Democrats. It was a beautiful feeling and it was a good feeling. I felt that I had been in on the beginning of the women's movement back in the 60's and that this was the end in '77.

I was pleased that all the women marched for ERA just this year in '78 in Washington. I thought that it was a good sign that not everybody feels like me. I remember--now that I haven't been working and money's so tight--I wrote them a check for $100. I don't remember if I wrote them a letter or not. My husband doesn't know this. If my husband reads this he'll probably string me up, knowing how tight money is.

You have a pretty big debt left there from your campaign, don't you?
FESE: Oh yes. A big debt. Uncle Sam is after me, everybody's after me. I don't know if I wrote it or not, but I meant to put a little note in with that check saying that this is for an endangered species, which I feel we women are. We just have lost so much ground. Even the way clothes are now, the more feminine flowing clothes. Slacks are kind of out. Women are going back to more feminine roles. They pushed it over the peak and now it's going down hill. Maybe women will emerge even stronger, I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Well a lot of things in fashions just sort of ebb and flow. Just so they can make money by changing the styles. But they still have a market, I suppose. It has to indicate something.

FESE: Yes. The women are ready for the market for the more flowing, loose, dependent, free from care kind of role. Maybe it doesn't mean anything at all. Maybe I'm just talking off the top of my head.

INTERVIEWER: I think it might mean something. Well, that takes care of International Woman's Year and 1977. I guess you're ready to start 1978. When did you get hurt on your job?

FESE: I got hurt on January 12, that starts the year. To start 1978 I was not really out of my depression, I was coming along, I was able now to read and I began to read insatiably. Now I wanted to see if I could make up for lost time. I tried my damndest to get involved in politics, did get involved with a fellow by the name of Don Carroll who is running for County Board chairman out in Du Page. He asked me to be his campaign manager and I was thrilled at that, yet I'm not. I don't really want that kind of thing. I also wanted to start my own corporation, the Du Page Consulting Corporation. I wanted to get involved with this thing. What happens as you're coming out of a depression, you want to get involved and you don't. You try anything. And everything I touch seems to turn to shit.

INTERVIEWER: Your Du Page Consulting Corporation?

FESE: Yes. That's almost defunct as my campaign fund. I was starting to make money. I was looking forward to what I was going to make this year and I thought that would perk me up. It would get me out of some of that debt from the campaign. I was really looking forward to some things that I would be able to do. I hated the job, everybody knew that I was really very unhappy on that job and, they didn't make life any easier. Cold weather, ugh!

INTERVIEWER: This was an awful winter.

FESE: Ohhhhh, those sub-zero days! Anyway the afternoon that I had —gone out—before I get to that I just want you to know that anybody on the railroad that has an accident nowadays they automatically have a hearing for them so that if in later times they sue them they can say it was not negligence on their part, Some of the
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: safety rules--you know, I was worried about those men that were on those tracks. It was dangerous out there, I worried about them. And I sometimes got mad at myself. I said you're acting like an old mother hen. I'd get mad because I wanted people to wear their hard hats. Well, they had to wear their hard hats and all their other safety equipment. I didn't want them to do things that I thought were dangerous but the men would say it's the only way they could get the trailers blocked or they could do this or that. And I would worry about them because I wasn't knowledgeable enough on the job. I really didn't have the expertise that I needed. Every day I would learn more what could be done. I think the thing that floored everybody out there was the fact that I was still handling the job. The thing is if you're a manager you don't do the work. What they were asking these young men to do was to do the work and that's where I drew the line. And they wouldn't push me, not because I was a woman but because I was a union person and knew that I didn't have to do the work, because the contract said what foremen should do. And when you're a foreman you're to supervise the work, not handle it. I'm still under the union contract even being foreman. I was as high as you could go without being out of the union. I was always kind of a fanatic about safety and we had to read the safety rule every day. I made a point of doing it. When I first started they made fun of me. Everybody'd read it and I'd read it out loud and I kind of made it a joke.

But there was this one woman, Beverly, she had been a chief clerk at a time when women didn't get many jobs like that. She was maybe ten years older than I am, maybe not quite that much. Anyway she and another woman by the name of Elvira had been chief clerks. What they were is every example of what a woman shouldn't be on a job. They were worse than men, the kind of women that other women tend to say they can't work for. I guess they knew they could never go farther. They hung on to their jobs greedily. Any man or any woman that got close to them, they would bite off their head at the thought that they could even come near to touching their jobs. They liked the power. -They couldn't handle the power that they had, being chief clerks, and these were examples of women that I'd said all my life that I'd fight against ever being. But I understood these women because I knew where they were coming from, that they knew that that was as far as they could go. Elvira, especially, should have been an agent. She had the intelligence but then she had some personal problems and eventually took to drinking. But that's neither here nor there. I tend to wonder if it wasn't the frustration maybe that she as a woman might have felt. I've never talked to her much about it. Beverly had actually been someone that I had cited in my speeches. I had actually talked about her, not in name, but I had brought up that as women we had no mentors and the women that might be our mentors had to fight and struggle and claw to get where they did and when they did they hung on with machine guns.
FESE: And the men couldn't even work with them because they got so domineering and they tried to order people's lives around, had people fired and did things that were unbelievable. I tended to be sympathetic towards these women because they had no example and didn't know where they could go. They are over the hill, of course. The younger generation was coming up and the company wanted something in acute short skirt and out of college. Anyway, while I was running for Congress this woman Beverly had come to me. She had done campaigning, had sent me some workers. She has a husband that's very very ill and has been very ill for years. She was so proud of me that I was doing all of this and she was just so enthralled because I was going to do all this kind of thing. But she also at this time mentioned that she was going with a fellow occasionally. I said I was happy because she really looked good and a little love in a woman's life doesn't hurt and her husband had lung trouble. He just lays around, he just exists. I mean he can't do anything. I tend to be a fairly liberal person and if that's what she wants maybe that's what she needs. It's not my life. Anyway when I came back to the railroad I could not believe how bitter this woman was towards me. Now she was bitter of either two things: the fact that she confessed to me her sin and that I came back and now knew who it was.... The other thing I could think of was that I came back and was foreman, her boss. She had lost her job as chief clerk and through the years had really gone down hill. She was in a hearing, an investigation of her work, and my husband as Local chairman of the union had to represent her. She bared her soul in this particular hearing and said all the rotten things she had to do for the company as chief clerk, all these rotten things. She worked during the strikes, she had to have people fired. She had to do this and she had to do this for the company and this company did nothing but give her a kick in the ass in the end. My husband said afterwards, "As a union person, I wish I could have put this out so everybody could read it." Not just because she was a woman because it happens to men, too, that the company asks them to do these rotten things to their fellow employees. I never read the transcript and I had the chance but I said no I could not do it because it would always be in my mind. Now I come to work and this woman is just--I got to tell you when I started working down there in the piggy-back ramp she was down there and she'd been down there for a number of years and was lord and master of it down there and a bitch on wheels. And when I got down there I couldn't believe how rotten she was. She was unbelievable! For somebody that had been pawing at me and praising me a year before because I was running for Congress, then when I didn't make it she gave me a sense again of that feeling that I had failed. She would make remarks that were irrelevant to me, that had nothing to do with the job. I hadn't worked this kind of work for all those years and even when I was at the railroad before I didn't work there at the piggy-back ramp. So it was all a new world to me. And when I came back from International Woman's Year this woman loud and clear--when there were
FESE: about ten people in the office--said, "I wish I was allowed to have some time off to fight for equal rights." I usually can keep pretty calm and pretty collected but I said, "I did not go there to fight for equal rights for the Woman's Liberation Movement. This was a government appointed job, and the president himself appointed me. If you want to, I'll bring the letter down to show you." I really got off because I had not said anything to these people about it. I would just keep it calm, just go about my business, just take the days off from work. But everybody else spread the word where I was going although I hadn't said anything."Well,"I said in front of everybody, "I was a presidential appointee." Then she said, "Well, I've never been a presidential appointee." I thought to myself thank God somebody has sense enough to know who not to appoint. But I 'didn't say it. I was glad I didn't. It was really a rotten thing.

Well, anyway, I was praying that another job would open up, so I could get out of that piggy-back ramp, but nobody was retiring, nobody was giving up their jobs and I was stuck on this job. I think one job opened up with Monday and Tuesday midnights at about $10 a day less. I'd be damned if I was going to do that. So I continued to work on the job. On the 12th of January I was asked to go outside early. It wasn't my time yet to go out. I usually didn't go out until 3 p.m. I was on duty but had my paper work to do. One of the fellow said, "Would you go down and put the flags down on track 8 and 9?" I said okay. There were ten tracks that we were working with. They were going to come in on track 8 and 9. The engine came out of 8 and it was going to push some cars into 9. You can only put seven cars on track at a time. So they put the cars on the first track and they were going to come back and pick some out of the other one, track 9. I don't know exactly which move was going to be made. It was snowing and it was cold. We had had a lot of snow and then we had some kind of a thaw and then it had started to snow again. It was a light snow and it was about 1 o'clock in the afternoon. The engine had backed down to the switches and was coming in on track 9. I took a look around and I thought, "Marie, it's so icy here and so rough you'd better,' just for safety's sake, walk away from the engine." What I did is I walked across track 10 and at the end of track 10 there was a little, oh maybe eight inches, of an incline going down. I saw a flat spot and thought I'd stand there. What it was is this flat spot had been a low spot and when we had the thaw all the water had drained there. When it got cold it turned to ice and now had snow on it. Now I did not know there was ice under there. What happened is that I stepped out there. Now the engine was coming down and I walked down away from it just in case, just as a safety precaution. As I stepped back my left leg slipped and came buckling up underneath me. Well my right leg went out from under me too, both legs went out from under me. I felt the jar in my back and my neck and my whole body and I sat there for a few minutes. I could feel that I was like in a little bit of shock. I sat there and I worked my legs across. At first I thought that I'd broken my leg. Well, nothing broke. I was out of breath and I got up slowly and the
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: car was not too far from me. I got to the truck and I crawled up. I pulled myself up. I was still kind of a little bit in shock and I was breathing hard because of the fall. I went back to the office and you just have to open the door and there was a chair right there. One of the company officers was there. He was the head of the piggy-back department. He asked what was wrong and I said I just fell in the yards. He said, "Well, sit down for a minute." When he said sit down for a minute I knew that that was the wrong thing for him to say. The first thing you do as an officer or a foreman is to take that person to the hospital. You don't care what they say, you take them to the hospital immediately. So I said, "Okay I'll just sit here. There's nothing wrong, maybe." But I knew that he should have said more than that. Then George came in, the day foreman. I was assistant foreman on afternoons and he was general foreman on days. He came in and I said, "I'm a little out of breath, I just fell out in the yards. I took pretty bad fall." He said, "Well, sit there and catch your breath for a while." So I sat there for about five or ten minutes and I thought well I'm feeling a little better. Nothing's broke 'cause there's no sharp pains or anything. Then I walked over and sat at my desk, telling the two rate clerks that were there, "Boy did I take a tumble! I really feel pretty shook up." I was sitting there for about a half hour and my leg was bothering me. I was in kind of pain now, the first shock waves were beginning to wear off and the leg was really throbbing now. I opened up the bottom drawer of the desk and I picked up my leg to put it into the drawer to rest it and when I did I let out a scream; the pain went through my body. I felt like one of those cartoon characters that you see where everything shatters when they get hit or something. From the head to the foot I just couldn't believe the spasm that went through my body. I said something's wrong, I knew then something was wrong. I went out of the building to the main building and I could hardly get up the stairs. I literally pulled myself up with my arms. I couldn't get my left leg up. The first one I saw was this Berry Michaels I had mentioned. I said, "Berry, about a half an hour ago I was hurt. No one has taken me to the hospital and something's wrong and I don't know what. Somebody get me to the hospital." They took me down to this clinic and they X-rayed me but they couldn't see anything wrong. The doctor at the clinic said to come back tomorrow and he gave me hot packs. They figured I'd be back to work the next day. That was Thursday and the next day was Friday. So I worked that day, I was put on restricted work on Friday. He gave me some muscle relaxors and some things and over the week, end I got deathly sick. By Sunday and Monday and Tuesday I was as sick as a dog from these pills that he had given me. Then on Tuesday or Wednesday I went to my own doctor and I told him what happened. I was feeling a little better but the knee was weak and I could hardly walk so he kept me on restricted. Well, it turned out I was on restricted work for six weeks, I couldn't go out in the yards. I was working inside at that time. It was winter time and I was still going through a lot of depression, Then I began to feel very ill.
January and February. I stayed on restricted. Remember it was that real severe cold we had. And I was stuck in the office. Every day I would go to work dressed completely with all those clothes on and then I'd have to go to the doctor's before I went to work and he'd tell me, "No, not yet, not yet." So finally six weeks later on a Friday he said, next Monday he would release me. By Monday I was feeling so rotten I could hardly move my body anymore. Finally I went to my own doctor. The knee had swollen up and he said there'd probably a little water on it, this and that. I'd been back and forth to him. Well what had happened somewhere in the meantime is that I came down with a bladder infection, which had nothing to do with the knee but this was why I was feeling sicker and sicker. Everyone thought I had cabin fever because I'm used to being so active. My husband kept saying, "It's just that it's winter and everyone feels closed in." But God, I could barely move. I was supposed to go back to work that Monday and I felt so terrible that when I got to the company doctor's office that day I could just barely move and I called my doctor as soon as I got back to the office to make an appointment for the next day. Monday, the company doctor wasn't there and he was the only one that could release me. I could hardly get up and down off the examining table at his office. The nurses just gave me the hot packs on my knee and back. When I got my doctor on the phone I said, "I've got to come in and see you, something's wrong." But that Monday night I wet the bed and that wasn't what I was supposed to be doing at my age, so I knew something was wrong. Then I went to the doctor. I said, "I don't know what's wrong with me. Maybe I just need a couple of days off and I can't get off work without a doctor's certificate. I need something, I'm sick," and I told him what happened. He said, "Well, let's take a urinalysis." And it turned out I had a really bad, bad bladder infection. He started giving me penicillin and I ended up in the hospital anyway.

INTERVIEWER: Was this about March?

FESE: March 1, I ended up in the hospital. So I was off work all of March, all of April and of May because of this infection. Now I come back to work and they figured that they had me. These guys out on the ramp thought they had me because I was overweight, I had high blood pressure. They figured with all this infection I was in bad shape and they could say well we can't keep her on the job because of health reasons. So I was to go down to the company doctor for a check-up so I could go back to work May 1. But May 1 we started our vacation. It was May 15 I went back to work, I was actually on the payroll May 1. They said I couldn't stay at work, I had to go downtown. I went downtown to see the company doctors and they wouldn't let me go back to work for another two weeks until I saw the company specialist. They all checked me out and they said there's nothing wrong with me but the knee. I had just come out of the hospital and I knew I.
FESE: didn't have high blood pressure and all the other stuff. So there was nothing wrong with me except this overweight and this knee was bad. Now they were upset at the ramp because I was to come back to work. I got back to work on May 23 and I worked one day and then I had two days off. But while I was working there in the yards—we have some metal devices that are put on tracks that are called de-railers, They're very awkward to handle, they're about 40 or 45 pounds apiece. I had to lift them up, walk about ten feet to the truck, lift them up in the truck. When I carried them my knee would just about—I couldn't believe what was happening. My knee would just about kill me. I did that and then I had two days off so I thought I'd feel better and it was just a matter of getting my strength I thought. Well I did it Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday. Thursday I had to take off for union business.

I must backtrack for a few minutes to say that in November 1977 I had given a letter to my Lodge saying that I would accept the nomination for union officer. What I had been all the years was a vice president of my local. I thought they would just re-elect me for that. While I was in Houston, Texas at the convention our union had a nominating meeting and I was nominated for president of my local, Now I was honored that it happened but I really didn't think I had chance because my husband is the chief steward, or the Local chairman. I really didn't think I had a chance at winning anything and I didn't want to hurt his chances. The Local needed him much more than they needed me a president. They needed him on that job. So I didn't want to hurt him and I did no campaigning, but I did win. Of all the winners, I was the lowest vote getter. I only won by 14 or 15 votes so it was close for me. But I was very pleased. If I had won that ten years before.

INTERVIEWER: It would have meant everything.

FESE: Oh, I would have been walking on air. Now it was just that I knew how to handle myself and, that it was no big thing and that I would do the best I could. I was pleased that even though my husband was Local chairman this many people decided that I could handle the job, even with what all had transpired. So that really was a little boost of confidence in there. Now comes February. I'm going through all this trouble with the railroad and now the election is being, challenged and nasty letters are flying between the Grand Lodge and my local. I sometimes wonder if someone put this man that challenged [me] up to it or what was going on. On September 2 the second election is going to take place. I don't have to run because the fellow who ran against me dropped out. He does not want to take the nomination so I still am and will be president for another two years. But there still is a union election between my husband and the man who challenged. So this had all taken place. I became president of my local in the meantime and I was trying to do a decent job on this. now challenges began to come in and
FESE: I guess in a sense because of the depression and what the union had done to me I began to take this personally, at first I did. I felt it was against me. Whether it was or not I don't know. Anyhow they challenged this election and it was strange because it was really the old regime that they should have challenged, not us, the new ones that had come in. It was being challenged because of procedures but we had come in and gotten the blunt end of it. Then in the middle of all this I got sick, went back to work a few days and took off for some union business. I had to explain all this about being elected president to explain how I could take off that day. That Thursday we were doing union by-laws and I was to meet with C.L. Dennis, who was the ex-International President of our union. He was a member of our local and I was his president, which was a real switch after all those years. We were to meet at his house and he was to help us put together new by-laws, update the by-laws. They hadn't been done since 1948 or something and we wanted to really get our local going. The next day I came back to work and I really was tired and the knee was really bothering me. That night at his house I had gotten up and my knee gave way and I, stumbled, The knee just gave out and it had done that a couple of times. In March that's why I got so much time off. Just as I was ready to come back to work I had gone to a wake and as I'm walking the knee just gave out and I went down on the ground. That time I got a little scar out of it because I got a scab on there. So my doctor kept me off. He said there was something like a little tiny piece of cartilage running around in there. Nobody can find it. It may never happen again and it may happen three times! in a row. A trick knee, I guess, is what they call it. So this, is what must have happened in the fall. I broke off a piece of cartilage. Sometimes I get a burning sensation and that's the cartilage running around there. He said it could be ever so small a piece that's in there. And the only way to get it out is some operation and he doesn't recommend it. My doctor doesn't recommend it. Anyway the company doctors didn't want me to go back but they couldn't find anything wrong and their specialists didn't find anything wrong with the knee. They took X-rays and everything but there's nothing they could see. My doctor okayed me to go back to work [if] it was a sedentary job. But there was no other job, the company said you have to go back on that job. On June 1, I had gotten to work a little early which I always do and had gone to the upstairs office and was talking. I was talking to this fellow sitting at a desk and he was taking down some information about the original injury back in January. Someone called me and wanted to speak to me. What it was is my husband happened to pass by and say, "Do you have a minute to talk?" As I got up out of the chair I twisted and I came up on that knee and boy I really took a tumble on the floor. Well that time I must have wrenched my back. They took me to the hospital. Nothing could be seen on any X-rays, nothing was broken. But the muscles were all stiff.
FESE INTERVIEW

FESE: I was 256 pounds that had fallen, with a twist on top of it. After that the back got worse, and the knee got worse. I couldn't heal everything up. So I have now been off since June 1. I'm not scheduled, to go back until somewhere around October 2.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think you'll be able to go back on that job at that point?

FESE: I'll never be able to go back on that job, the knee is better but I can tell even if I pick up something that is heavy, that extra weight.

INTERVIEWER: You can't pick up a 45 pound object now?

FESE: I could pick up a 45 pound object if it was compact and I could put it close to me, something I could put my arms around. My arms have gotten very strong working that job. And since my knee has been bad I go up and down stairs holding on to a railing. My arms have gotten very powerful. And I've been swimming to help my back and my knee. I was surprised, not too long ago we had to get into a boat from the water. No one could do it but me and I couldn't even use my legs. I actually pulled myself up with my arms. I was shocked that I had gained so much strength in my arms because my leg is so weak. It's funny how the body compensates, I was shocked I could do it without the use of this knee to get up with. Anyway what has happened in that time, a lot of things have taken place. One of the things is that I was recommended to read a book, Passages, by Gail Sheehy. Ironically I hadn't been able to do a lot of paper work and stuff. When the campaign was over, all the stuff from the campaign office, and when I lost my job, all that went into my office in the basement. It was just a mass of clutter and I could not bring myself to go into that basement. I just couldn't! The memories are just too thick and I couldn't do it. Since June I have been able to do more-and more of it. I also read this book, Passages, and in a sense I saw there's no answers in this book, but I saw many of the things that other people have gone through. The only thing is that they were all women and what they had gone through on their job and in relationships. I guess what had happened somewhere along the line is I thought I was superwoman and could do everything and when I finally learned I wasn't superwoman and couldn't do everything no one around could understand that this had happened to me. I was their leaning post and all of a sudden I was leaning and no one wanted to accept it. No one wanted to accept the responsibility in my family of me being the one that needed anything because they never thought that I needed help. I could always do it on my own.

INTERVIEWER: Have they begun to?

FESE: In a sense, but my son said to me at one point, "Well you know you used to always talk to me about being strong and all this other stuff." And I know now that if I hadn't been a strong
FESE: person, that I really was, and knew that something was wrong with me, that first of all I would have committed suicide. You and I talked of this privately. There was a union man that lost his job by a very small margin. They gave him another union job, a lower echelon job down in Florida, and he committed suicide. I've heard of other men losing their jobs in this age bracket of myself or a little older and not being able to cope with either the shame or the fact that they had lost it and committing suicide or attempting to commit suicide. I've read a lot about depression now and I know more about what happened to me. And if I hadn't been strong enough to know that something was wrong and to say that there was nobody around me that could help me, that I had to go for help.... I don't know if I mentioned it before but I knew that when I went for help it could possibly be the end of my political career. Although it's nothing to be ashamed of. I went through a terrible time and I just needed a doctor to tell me how to help myself. If I was having a miscarriage I went to a gynecologist and whatever the problem is you need a specialist. That's what I did when I needed help with my emotions and I couldn't get myself on track, I went to a specialist. I began to eat much healthier foods and I'm really watching my diet now.

INTERVIEWER: How much weight have you lost since I started interviewing you?

FESE: I don't know if this interview has been a therapy or not, but I've lost thirty pounds since then. I think it wasn't just this interview. But I was very pleased to know that I was one of the fifty that were asked. I don't know if I should be pleased or if I should cry that my case is so bad that they asked about it. (laughs) I still get moments of depression and I cannot read this transcript without crying. Even just listening back when I tell myself what happened to me I cry. But the crying comes very little now. I'd say your life goes on and there's a lot of things that I want to do. I feel very schizophrenic at this point. I feel that the old self that wants to get involved with the Women's Movement, get back involved in politics, is there. She keeps emerging all the time and yet this new self says, "Let the younger women do it. Just rest, you've done it, Marie. You've probably done more in your life time that most two men accomplish in a life time. Why are you still pushing?" There's nothing out there for me at this point. When I was at the International Woman's Year Convention I met a dear friend of mine and we had dinner and she insisted that I will never go any place unless I go back to school and get my degree. And I tend to think that's hell with it! If my experience isn't enough, if they don't want me, then to heck with it if I have to have a piece of paper. And yet for my own self-satisfaction I want it. I can't explain it. Again it's like having that title. If they don't want me for me, they're not going to want me because I got another year of education or a little piece of paper saying I graduated. Like I say, I feel schizophrenic;
INTERVIEWER: What kind of advice are you going to give your granddaughter when she gets to be an adolescent?

FESE: Oh, I'm already giving it to her. Be a lawyer, that's the only thing I will advise. Any money I will leave the child will be for her to become a lawyer.

INTERVIEWER: What else? Don't get married or get married early?

FESE: Oh, you can't give advice. There's no way I can tell her. That's twenty years from now, who know & what the world will be like? God forbid I should give advice to anybody. You can ask for my opinion and I will give it to you but advice I cannot give you. As far as the children go, my own daughter--my son-in-law gets mad because he never wanted a liberated woman and he says sometimes that she sounds like me when she talks. Well, some of what I did had to rub off after 23 years, so maybe she's just knowing things that I taught her. She in her own way has gotten involved. She has a husband who was hitting her and she's on the verge of divorce but that's not part of this story. But she's become part of Battered Wives out in Du Page and I think in her own time that she'll do her own thing. She never got the education I'd wanted her to. Now we talk about it as adults and she says, "I guess because everybody told me I had to have enough education I rebelled against it and didn't want it." I said, "Now you get it on your own, When you're ready and you know that you think you have to have an education to make a living for yourself and your two children, then you'll do it. I can't push anybody to do it. I can't force you. We did as much as we could." We did everything, I even drove her to school every day. She'd go in one door and when I'd leave she'd come out the other. I have another daughter in Texas. I don't know, maybe my kids, my girls never really paid attention to what I was doing. I never preached and made it part of their lives. Maybe this was part of my life and not theirs and when I was with them I never told them, "Your mother's doing this or that." I had a confrontation with my son-in-law not too long ago. He said to me, "You know it's alright to get involved now that you have no children at home and you have plenty of time. Sure you can go out there and be a woman's libber." I said, "Jim, I was in it before it was fashionable. In fact I was one of the fifty women picked by the University of Michigan to do a history program." He said, "Well, if you think you're trying to impress me you're not." I said, "I didn't tell you that to impress you. I just wanted you to know that I had been in it a long time. It wasn't something that I just last week started doing." He says, "You don't impress me at all. All those things you did and you never got a piece
FESE: of the meat." And then again all the hurt came back because I didn't get a piece of the meat. And yet I can't explain to anybody that I really never went out to get a piece of the meat. It's because I didn't, that's why they think that I was so foolish, such a foolish woman.

INTERVIEWER: Deep down in your heart, how do you feel about yourself now? Do you think that your ideas of success and failure are your own or are they the ideas other people hold up to you?

FESE: I think that I was a cock-eyed optimist. I was so naive, I put everything on such a high level it was just impossible. Politics aren't like that, people aren't that good. I'm too hard of a taskmaster to myself. I know that and I tend to try to realize it and I'm not now such a hard taskmaster with myself. I lie a little bit now and I cheat at games with my grandchildren and I do little things that I laugh that I do because God forbid that I'd done them before. I just do them to prove they can be done. Nothing big and nothing 'that hurts anybody. You know people call me and want me to do things and I say, "Oh, I'm sorry, I'm leaving for work now. I can't talk to you." I just say things like that.

INTERVIEWER: You're just being kind.

FESE: Kind? Well before I would say, oh, alright. I say no to people now where I would never say no before. I'm not involved in anything and my husband's very pleased. I've got the union local presidency and I'm not too involved in it. I'm not letting myself get too wrapped up as president or get too caught up in my own importance. I run the meetings: and I do a good job and try to just keep up with what's happening within the union. I still have one big hang-up that I have not been able to overcome and that is writing. I cannot put anything on paper. It's the one thing yet I can't do. And I know that I'm capable of writing because I have done newspaper articles. I was writing a column for a newspaper at one point so I know I'm capable of writing very well. I had to write reports and I put together a history program for BRAC. I used a slide show and all kinds of things. I was speech writing during the campaign.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think is probably the best thing you've done? As you look back and reflect on it, not maybe the thing you got the most credit for but the best thing?

FESE: Marrying my husband and staying married to one person. Staying married to one is not always so easy but you always need someone there. Even since we started the interview my life has changed so much. I decided not to run for vice president of my International. Always back in my mind I said if C.L. Dennis was still alive maybe I would run for vice president and I kind of gave up the idea. C.L. Dennis died just a few weeks ago and a whole era
died. He died a week after Fred Kroll decided to move BRAC from Chicago to Washington. Right after he got into office he sold the building here in Illinois and bought a building in Maryland and he moved the entire BRAC offices to Washington. I feel a little cheated because I 'didn't get any severance pay when I was fired and it wasn't my idea of unionism just to be tossed out on your ear because that wasn't what unionism was about. It was to keep jobs or let them off gently or to give them severance pay or to give moving pay or something to them. The people that didn't go to Washington got very adequate severance pay. I guess thousands of dollars were spent on this move. It's over now, C.L. Dennis passed away, it was an era. I felt that I had lived a little bit of Camelot. It was such a sad thing. for me to know he was dead.

At his funeral I was able to face many of these people from BRAC. When I left BRAC I kept punishing myself because I would keep going to places where BRAC people were and my husband would get mad at me, for doing, this. In September '77 I mentioned I went to a BRAC convention, not a convention, a political gathering. I went there and I was facing all these people with all this weight and everything and it really was rough on me. It threw me into depression again. I never went back in so deep but it did throw me and I cried half the way home from D.C. My husband was just mad. "Why do you do this to yourself?" I said, "I have to do it. I will never know whether I can face them. I have to do it. I didn't do anything wrong or shameful that I can't face these people." So I would face them. Then in January 1978 I attended a District Council dinner and faced them again. It was a little bit easier, still not too, too easy, but I was able to face them. And at C.L.'s funeral they were all there.

INTERVIEWER: You went to the funeral?

FESE: Yes. I was there every day as long as I possibly could be. I helped with the food afterwards and everything. I faced these people and I was kind of proud of myself that there was no crying or bitterness afterwards, no animosity, no hatred.

INTERVIEWER: You are surviving and surviving pretty well.

FESE: Yes. And then, too, I think maybe in the long run it turned out best because if I had stayed with BRAC I would have gone on to Washington. I would have been so tied up with my job and my personality I would have gone to Washington and possibly lost my husband.

INTERVIEWER: Lost the one thing that in the end you liked best?

FESE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you a lot, Marie.
Abzug, Bella, 55, 56, 63, 66, 76, 105

Addison, Illinois, 73, 75

American Can Company, See Work experience

AFL-CIO, See American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations

American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations, 41, 43, 78
  Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks and, 68
  Coalition of Labor Union Women and, 61
  Committee on Political Education (COPE), 71, 72, 77, 78
  Fese and, 54, 59, 70, 71, 77, 78, 84

Anthony, Susan B., 53

Barkin, Al, 71, 76, 77, 79

Bensenville, Illinois, 71

Berta, Joan, 67, 68

Bombeck, Erma, 50

Books
  Passages, 114
  To Form a More Perfect Union... Justice for American Women, 93

Booth, Heather, 62

BRAC, See Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks

Brinkworth, George, 39

Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks
  AFL - CIO and, 68
  Brazil and, 64-65
  Chile and, 64, 65, 68
  Cuba and, 64-65
  Fese and, 12, 35, 36, 38-40, 45, 46, 50, 56, 64, 70, 75, 76, 90, 94, 112
  Fese's husband and, 39, 41, 50, 90, 108, 112
  Miami Convention of, 33
  Save Our System drive, 41, 43, 46, 47
  Washington and, 118
  Wild-cat strike, 20
  Women's movement, 31, 54, 64, 67, 68

Burril, Mr., 21

Carrol, Don, 106
Carson, Rachel, 53

Carter, Jimmy (president), 80, 83, 86, 90, 92, 96, 97, 104

Catholic Church
  Fese and, 6, 10, 20

Chicago, Illinois, 1, 3, 14, 31

Chicago Northwestern Railroad, 38, 52, 94, 95
  See also—Work experience

Clancy, Marilyn, D., 71, 95, 96

CLUW, See Coalition of Labor Union Women

CLEP, See Education, College Level Examination Program

Coalition of Labor Union Women, 54, 97
  AFL-CIO and, 61
  BRAC and, 54
  ERA and, 54
  Fese and, 54, 55, 69, 74, 97
  International Women's Year and, 102
  October League and, 61
  SDS and, 61

Collins, MaryAnne, 55

Conrad Hilton Hotel, 97

COPE, See AFL-CIO, Committee on Political Education

Culpepper, Senator, 82

Curry, Diane, 54, 66, 67, 68

Day, Clara, 55, 60

Deavitt, Cathy, 71, 76, 82

Democratic Party, 51, 55, 69-80, 86, 92, 96.

Dennis, C.L., 14, 32, 35, 67, 70, 80, 81, 85, 95, 113, 117

Dennis, L.E., 32, 33, 46, 41, 43, 46, 47, 49, 51, 52, 79, 80, 81, 85

DuPage County, Illinois, 70, 71, 72, 74, 77, 80, 83, 84, 86, 96, 102

DuPage Consulting Corporation, see Work experience
Dysart, Billy, 84

Early influences
father, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6
home town, 1
mother, 2- 6
Sioux City, Iowa, 4
work, 2, 6, 7

Earlenborn, John N. (congressman), 79, 80 84, 86, 88, 91

Education
Graduate Equivalency Diploma, 35
College Level Examination Program (CLEP), 44
See also Educational institutions

Educational institutions
Freemans Business College, 8
Roosevelt University, 40, 42, 44, 53, 62, 79
St. Marys University, 79
Triton College, 24, 35-36, 37
University of Illinois, 33, 37, 49, 62
University of Michigan, 49, 116
University of Notre Dame, 79
University of Wisconsin, 49
Willow Brook High School, 23
York High School, 23, 35

EEOC, See Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 88, 89, 98, 100

Equal Rights Amendment, 43, 54, 55, 57-57, 63, 93, 96, 102

ERA, See Equal Rights Amendment

Europe
Fese and, 49, 50, 51, 59

Family
children, 15, 17, 19, 42, 45, 49, 82 87, 92, 93, 114,116
father, 1-2, 3, 7
husband, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 26, 43, 78, 83, 87
in-laws; 13, 16, 17, 18, 25, 27
mother, 1, 3, 5-6

Freedom of Choice movement, See Equal Rights Amendment

Friedan, Betty, 19, 53, 55

Geneva, Switzerland, 59

Genovese, Carol, 66, 67
Goodin, Joan, 66, 68
Green Winfield, 72, 96
Harrison, George, 34
Hartung, Artie, 38, 41, 48, 49
Haynes, Dan, 75
Hickman, Chuck, 75
Hyatt House, Houston, Texas, 101-102
Illinois Labor History Society, 62
International Womens Year, 55, 59, 97, 98,
Commission on the observance of, 92
National Women, Conference, 58, 101-105
Tribune, 65, 66
United Nations Conference, 63, 64, 65-66, 93
See also Mississippi, Delegation to National Womens Conference;
coalition of Labor Union Women
Italian - American Labor Council, 50, 62
Jendrick, Marge, 102
Job Corps, 40
See also Work experience
John Birch Society, 57
Jordan, Jean, 67, 68
Kennedy, Jim, 71, 76, 79
Kolby, Marianne, 71, 72, 73, 74, 76, 78, 86
Kroll, Fred, 67, 80, 81, 83, 84, 86, 118
Labor Department
Fese and, 101
League of Nations, 59
Legislation
Railroad Retirement Act, 14
See also Equal Rights Amendment
Loftus, Bud, 73
McGovern, George, 51
Madar, Olga, 55
Mayberry, Bob, 43, 52
Meany, George, 54, 61
Merrill, Barbara, 54, 55
Michaels, Berry, 95, 110
Mississippi
delegation to National Women's Conference, 58, 102
Mondale, Walter, 96
National Organization for Women (NOW)
Nixon, Richard, 46
NOW, See National Organization for Women
Oak Brook, Illinois, 71
October League, See Coalition of Labor Union Women
Periodicals
Miami Daily News, 121
Federal Register, 64
Wall Street Journal, 64
Pick Congress Hotel, 53, 54
Politics
Fese and, 44, 46, 50, 51, 55, 64, 66, 68-70, 72, 73, 74, 77-80, 81-83
96, 106, 108
Reardon, Jim, 30, 33, 38, 48, 49, 50
Redmond, Bill, 69, 72
Republican Party, 86, 92, 96
Rucklehaus, Jill, 66
Santore, Corky, 33
Schlafley, Phyllis, 57
SDS, See Students for a Democratic Society
Sheehy, Gail, 59, 114
Sioux City, Iowa, 1, 3, 4

SOS, See Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks, Save Our System

Stanley Home Products, See Work experience

Students for a Democratic Society, See Coalition of Labor Union Women

Thomas, Nick, 72

Thompson, Jim (Governor), 102

Toppen, Jerry, 38

Troost, Peter, 72

Troost, Romaine, 72

Unions

Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen, 51
Steelworkers, 85
Teamsters, 85
See also Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks; American Federation of Labor—Congress of Industrial Organizations; Coalition of Labor Union Women

Van Klech, Bill, 38, 49, 50

Wall, Jim, 68, 86, 96, 97, 101

Wall, Mary Eleanor, 55, 69, 96

Washington, D.C. 86, 96, 97, 98, 105, 118

Watergate, 55

Weaver, George, 59

Weston, Rafe, 78, 81

Wilson, Earl, 41

Women's Campaign Fund
Fese and, 77

Women in Labor and History
Conference on, 79

Women's movement, 31, 35, 36, 37, 41, 42-43, 45, 47, 50, 51, 52-53, 55-56, 62, 70, 91, 95
See also Coalition of Labor Union Women; Equal Rights Amendment; International Women's Year; National Organization for Women; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
FESE INDEX CONTINUED -7

Work experience
American Can Company, 7, 8, 11, 14
Chicato Job Corps, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 90
Chicago Northwestern Railroad, 7, 8, 13, 14, 94, 95, 106-110
DuPage Consulting Corporation, 106
El Morocco, 1, 6-7

Wyatt, Addie, 55, 60