



MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
FOLK ARTS & HERITAGE PROGRAM

## AUDIO TAPE LOG

Accession No.: MH-04-04-D1 Date(s): April 6, 2004

Fieldworker(s): Maggie Holtzberg

Interviewee(s): Maggie Holtzberg

Event: Visit to Union Local #56

Place of Recording: Meeting Room

Recording Equipment: HHB Microphone(s): Shure

Recorded in: stereo Tape Brand and Format: DAT, 65 minutes

Amount Tape Used: Cassette: 2 Dats DAT: ABS time: 1:00:00

Related Accession Numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

Brief summary of tape contents: Interview with Business Manager Dan Kuhs and Regional Council Representative Dave Woodman. How each got into the trade, Dave's father a pile driver, Dan started as commercial diver, what sets apart the pile drivers, ability to work with steel, iron and wood; work on the Big Dig, Ted Williams Tunnel construction, various contractors, strong work ethic, long hours, pride, jurisdiction, Local 56, reaching out to other trades, other locals around the country, fatalities, danger versus hazards, working in very tight quarters with huge tonnage, camaraderie, setting tunnel sections on Ted Williams Tunnel, women in the trade, project being 90% complete, membership at its peak in 1999, long hours, stress on families, work flow and poor planning, "found money" at peak, some members lived large, others save, middle class lifestyle, pension, pile drivers in the 1940-50s came down from Newfoundland, fishermen, strong work ethic, nickname of "pile bucks, pile butts" only on the west coast.

### Counter/ABS | Contents

I'm Dave Woodman. graduated high school 1961, went to work on a bridge project on 495 that very summer. I was 17 years old (born 1944). Worked 2 or 3 months, my first experience as a laborer. I went back to prep school for half of that next school year. Went back to work on the Mass toll road extension following that for approximately a year and a half. And then into Service. Was in the submarine service from 1964 to 1966, at which time I was initiated into Pile Drivers Local Union 56.

My father was a 25-year member of Local 56 at the time and he was initiated in the early forties, 41 or 42. Basically worked out in the field on various heavy construction projects, mainly in the Boston metropolitan area or north of Boston. I'm originally from Haverill, Massachusetts and still live in that Merrimac Valley area.

Your father was first in this trade, and so, when you were growing up, did you think you'd end up following his footsteps?

Not initially. I guess I was kind of intrigued by the navy and in particular the submarine service and kind of struck out in that direction as a young person. But then soon came to the conclusion that the armed services, that military life would be a very difficult place to bring up a family successfully.

DK: My name is Dan Kuhs. I graduated high school in 1973. Knocked around for several years. Went to commercial diving school in Wilmington, Cal. in 1980. After dive school, I came out to the east coast. I had family here at the time, looking for work. I was able to get into the local as a commercial diver, initially. The commercial diving business, being what it is, is fairly nomadic. I banged around, worked throughout the northeast. And eventually decided that I needed to be home more than I was gone. So I kind of broadened by horizons. Got my welding certification. Started working more as a pile driver. When there was diving work, I worked as a diver. When there was pile driving work, I worked pile driving. And eventually, worked myself into the office here, six and a half years ago. I've been the business manager here for six and a half years. So I've in the local for around 24 and in the office for six and a half.

[asking Dave] And you were out in the field for how long?

DW: I was out in the field about 22 years until 1988. And then one business agent retired and I was nominated and elected to fill that position. And have been in that position ever since.

Among the various labor unions, how are the pile drivers regarded? It seems like the tunnel workers, when I talked to them, they sort of talked about themselves as being top dogs. Is there competition among the different trades?

DW: Well I guess what kind of sets us apart is that we're a specialty local union and part of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. We had our early origins as marine type carpenters building the timber docks, piers and were carpenters in all the marine work. And then basically as technologies changed and the materials changed, we assimilated the skills to deal with that. So basically, our members are very all-around, skilled people that can work with timber, steel, concrete and do the necessary joining of all of those, whether it be welding or bolting and cutting all of those materials to fit one another - whether it be steel or timber.

And so a lot of it, or some of it is under water? Which is very specialized.

DK: Right, commercial diving is part of the trade autonomy of the pile drivers. As Dave said, we're pretty diverse. We do almost anything and everything on the water, in the water. And our membership has to be diverse to keep up with the technology, keep themselves working. You have to be multifaceted or you're going to limit yourself to the type of projects you can work on.

When you say technology changed, what that was that came about. Can you describe -

Well a lot of things, in particular, on the Central Artery, there was a lot of technology that was new technology that hadn't been done in Boston before. A lot of slurry wall, ground freezing. There were certain tunneling aspects that weren't used prior to the Central Artery project. Probably the biggest change in the industry was this CA/T job.

Well let's talk about that, the Big Dig a little bit. And the role of the Pile Drivers in the Central Artery Project. Can you take me through it from the beginning?

DW: The Kainer project in City Square, Charlestown was the first Central Artery related project. The general contractor on that project was Perini Corporation, a contractor native to Massachusetts, but a worldwide general contractor. Basically, this local union is responsible for all of the earth retention that happens on underground projects. Basically, or the traditional methods have been soldier beams and timber lagging in between them. Or steel sheet piling. But a number of years ago a European technique of slurry wall construction was introduced to the Boston Metropolitan area. And probably even before Central Artery there was more slurry wall installed in Boston and suburban Boston than any other place in North America. And basically those projects involve the MBTA, Orange Line and Red Line extensions in the 70s. But then the Central Artery project became more of a reality. There were design techniques for underground earth retention that were developed as new techniques and these new techniques, for the most part, had never been used anywhere in the world before. The machinery in order to do these processes also had to be engineered and designed. So I guess I, for one, in a joking way, describe this project as the biggest thing since the Pyramids. It really is quite a feat that's been accomplished or will soon be accomplished here, over a long period of time. And naturally, at great expense.

DK: Generally, as Dave said, we're supportive excavation and underground utility work and foundation work. So we're generally the first craft on. And after the Perini project, the next big project was Ted Williams Tunnel in '90 that we started. And it was Pile Drivers involved in every aspect of that. It was an immersed tube tunnel project. We lifted 12 tunnel sections. It was our people that set the tunnel sections. We provide all the diving services, all the marine support services for that. We worked on that for two years and did the land tie-in. That was the second big project. There was a bit of a lull after that.

DW: Well ? & Sons were awarded the first land section that butted up to the Ted Williams Tunnel in South Boston. And then Modern/Continental joined venture, had a similar venture in East Boston at Logan Airport. The Ted Williams Tunnel, that work was performed by an old-time and very renowned general contract by the name of Morrison Newton. That construction project and schedule was probably more successful than any other contract on the Central Artery Project. That same nucleus of Morrison Newton people, 5 or 6 of them, after they completed this project, went up to Prince Edward Island to construct that bridge that goes from the mainland of Nova Scotia to PEI.

DW: And actually, Dan Kuhs here, he was the steward on that project. He impressed the MK people enough so he also was invited for an opportunity to

work up there, which he declined. Actually he took this job here that he has today instead.

MH: What makes someone a really great pile driver? What does it take to be really good at that trade?

DK: Real strong sense of work ethic. That you get up in the morning, no matter how miserable the day is. You put your boots on and you go out there and you don't think about the rain, the mud, the cold, the sunshine. Because if you start thinking about how cold you are, how wet you are, it just isn't going to happen for you. You go out, you know you got a job to do, and you go home when the job is done. When we worked on the MK project on the tunnel, we would go seven days a week and we went seven, eight weeks in a row without a day off. Working anywheres from a 10-hour day up until, I think the record amount of time we spent there, the day before Thanksgiving, we did a 39-hour straight run when we set the last tunnel section. It was like a machine. Once they clear the harbor to set the tunnel section, you went out and everything was shut down until it was in. So you started and you couldn't stop until it was done. So we did that in the cold of winter, in the rain of the spring. Once you started, you knew it had to be done and you just got to have that sense of work ethic. You got to get the job done, irregardless of what the personal sacrifices are.

MH: But there must be a tremendous pride that comes -

Oh absolutely. You're doing something, you're building something, it was a once in a lifetime job for me. And the entire Central Artery project here. This was the largest public works project ever in the country, probably that will ever take place in this country. So yeah, our guys take a lot of pride in working on something that's going to be a permanent thing. It's going to be there forever. Their grandchildren will be driving through this and utilizing this.

So yeah, we take an awful lot of pride in what we do. Cause once again, we do something that's physically difficult to do. It's a skill, it's a craft. It's not just showing up and wallowing in the mud. You got to be a decent welder, you got to be a decent burner, you got to be a decent diver. And you got to be able to do it under very adverse conditions. Which our guys take an awful lot of pride in.

MH: How would you like, stepping back, history to remember the pile drivers role in this project. And do you think that will happen? How can we make sure that fifty years from now, people are aware of what was done by day to day laborers?

DW: Well, I guess the basic trade group, pile drivers, ironworkers, crane operators, laborers and carpenters, all played a very intrical part in this Central Artery history. We all have our own jurisdictions which are sometimes are a little too similar and cause an awful lot of controversy. But once again I think we all can tip our hats, if you will, for the work that we do as individual craft jurisdictions. A little better to describe further what pile drivers do, is besides driving into the ground steel pipes, steel beams, pre-cast concrete or timber, we're also responsible for the earth retention systems, whether it's slurry wall, steel sheet pile, soldier beams and lagging, and then the monstrous bracing that was

installed to support these walls. And in addition to that, we were responsible for all the temporary steel pre-cast and timber decking that went all the way from Stuart Street alongside South Station all the way to North Station. This was part of the cut-and-cover excavation of Central Artery, where the work actually took place underneath live traffic that was supported above.

In addition to that, we were responsible also for any underpinning that occurred the right of way. In some areas, the Aquarium area on Atlantic Avenue up through the North Station area to the Charles River, the Central Artery was actually almost levitated, if you will, above the construction that was taking place underneath.

DK: You had to support the existing structures as they were, so you could work through the area. For transferring the load over to new foundations, so they could create the tunnel underneath the existing roadway.

MH: Who decides, when you talk about the jurisdictions and the overlap, who decides which trade does what?

DK: Well there are some things that are pretty traditional that it's pretty well defined. In the grey areas, it's a work assignment by the contractor. And then if the trades have issues with there's an arbitration process that you go through.

MH: So that man that you put me in touch with, Rich Lynt, is that office involved?

DK: Well yes and no. They're the labor liaison, so if there was a jurisdictional issue on the Artery, you go through that office to go through the arbitration process. It's a 3-step process.

DW: Actually, the labor relations person who retired only a couple of years ago was a fellow by the name of Ken Paridy. So he was the labor relations individual. He coordinated all of those meetings for 9 or 10 years of the project.

DK: Ken left a couple of years ago. Rich Lynt took his place. At this point, most of the project is completed so any controversy is also completed. It was an initially, when everyone was scrambling for jurisdiction, they weren't quite sure who had what, that's when there were more issues.

MH: And your ranks swelled and then are we dealing with unemployment now?

DK: Well our local is relatively small. Compared to other trades. We grew percentage wise, probably 20 percent. What we did do was we reached out to some other crafts that had like skills. We established a relationship with the Boiler Makers. A craft that at the time we reached out to them they were relatively slow work-wise, but had some great people. Skilled welders, we were able to put them to work with us. As the work finished up, they were able to go back to their own trade. Now that we're slowing they've been able to put some of our people to work. That was the best thing to come out of this, the relationship we established with a trade that we normally wouldn't work with. Great people, skilled, they were great guys to work with.

DW: So we used the boiler makers. We also used the pipe liners out of Tulsa, Oklahoma for a period of time. And also used pipe fitters from the South Shore and the North Shore of Massachusetts. I'm a trustee on the Carpenters Pension Annuity and Health Funds. Because of that we established reciprocal agreements so that the fringe benefit that were earned by the boiler maker, the pipe fitter and the pipe liners could be transferred back into their own home funds. I don't know whether that's ever occurred in this part of the country before.

DK: See, two unrelated trades were able to go back and forth. You get innovative when you have to get innovative. That was probably the best thing that we did, was reaching out to these other crafts, because when the work slowed down, they were able to go back to their own craft and do what they do and pull us in. And we're not looking at a larger membership than the work can normally support. See unfortunately, during these peaks, a lot of trades will grow to meet the demand of the job. Then you end up with a far amount of attrition afterwards and people leave. It's not fair to the individual to bring him in. The trade can only support so many people on an average.

MH: How many locals are there around this state of pile drivers?

DK: One. We have statewide jurisdiction.

MH: No, I mean around the country.

DK: Nationwide?

DW: The best I know, there are approximately 16 or 17 United Brotherhood of Carpenter affiliates that call themselves Pile Drivers. I think there are two in Canada. The next closest local union to Boston is Local Union 1456 in New York City.

DK: There is one in Philadelphia. And then going west,

DW: There is also one in Washington, DC. There's one in Florida. And then there are several out on the west coast, in the northwest, where they kind of predominate. Actually, we're part of the Pacific Coast Council of Pile Drivers and will be attending a conference in early June in Ketchikan, Alaska.

MH: You know, in many trades, when there is a greenhorn, new guy on the job, there are pranks that are played. Do you have that in your union? Can you think of any examples of sending someone on a fool's errand?

DW: [sighs] Uh, you know, not in particular. I guess we kind of view our work very seriously because it is as hazardous as it is. And everybody needs to be on their toes all the time, being completely aware of what's happening around them.

DK: We're dealing with hoisting loads that are tons of tons. If something goes wrong, it can be catastrophic immediately. So we take a very dim view on job site horseplay, as do most of our people.

DW: Unfortunately, in that vein, we hold the distinction of having the first fatality on the Central Artery Project. A welder by the name of John Hagerty from Dorchester was killed in March of 1998.

MH: What happened?

DW: Basically, he was working setting a timber pile. The hammer, for whatever reason, came down unexpectedly and hit the top of the pile. Therefore, pushed the bottom of the pile out and struck him and pushed him against a steel plate wall.

DK: Struck his head and was killed.

MH: Danger is a huge area in all the trades. Can you talk about that a little bit? How people deal with that presence on the job? Are there superstitions?

DK: I like to say, "It's not dangerous; it's hazardous." Hunting grizzly bears is dangerous; working on the job site is hazardous. A hazard you can kind of plan around and watch for, try to mitigate whatever circumstances are causing the hazard. So once again, our guys - there's kind of a sixth sense, because of what you do, if something goes wrong, it can be extremely hazardous immediately. So there is a pretty good awareness with our people. As Dave said, unfortunately, we got the distinction of having the first fatality. There was several others on the Artery.

MH: But not many, considering how long this project has gone on.

DW: Well I, myself, really think it's remarkable that there were as few fatalities as there were, considering the enormous amount of man hours that were worked. A lot of that has to do with the requirement that each general contractor or joint venture had to have in place an effective safety program. I, for one, think that this type of construction that was done at Central Artery, being the cut-and-cover type, is actually the most dangerous. I mean, coal mining, obviously supercedes that, as does logging.

MH: Tell me why cut-and-cover is particularly dangerous.

DW: Well, in particular, people are working below the street surface. And on this project that got up to in excess of 100 feet in some places. As Dan mentioned earlier, very large of steel bracing had to be maneuvered in areas where it was just very difficult to work as we normally do, conventionally.

DK: You work with loads in excess of 20, 25 ton, in very tight quarters, 100, 110 feet below street level. The Perini job over by South Station was the deepest part of the cut and there were eleven sections of bracing over there. So when you look straight down in the hole, all you would see was bracing. And you're trying to maneuver a piece of steel that weights 20 ton and is 30 or 40 feet long

MH: Are there hand signals? How do you communicate?

DK: Well generally, with a crane operator, when you have a line of vision, you use hand signals. If not, then it's a radio. Some jobs require an extra signal person,

someone in the hole signal, someone on the surface who signals the crane operator.

MH: It seems like trust would be very important under these conditions.

DK: It's trust. With us, initially, it doesn't take too long on a job site to show whether you have the skills that's required to do the job. It's pretty obvious, pretty fast, if someone is somewhat of a faker. The system cleanses itself, I guess. What we do can be extremely difficult, extremely physical, under tough conditions. So if you can't go out there and produce, and produce safely, those kind of guys just fade away.

DM: It's up to each individual to not only be responsible for his own personal safety, but to be working heads up, with eyes and ears wide open, and be looking after the guys that are around him. Whether they're members of this local or whoever is in the proximity. We're all in this industry together. We look out for each other's welfare.

DK: Or even another craft that's working in close proximity to where you're working. If you're going to swing a load or you're going to do something that's going to effect them, obviously you give them a heads up. So it's not just your own people you look out for, but anybody that's on the job site.

MH: When you were out in the field, what did you love most about this work?

DM: Well I guess the comraderie. And the fact that you knew when you were going to work that morning that you could rely on the guy on either side of you and the foreman to keep things safe. So that you'd be able to go home that evening.

MH: And you?

DK: I guess probably, in particular, when I was diving, doing something that not everybody has had a chance to do. Working on Ted Williams Tunnel, actually being underneath the tunnel sections, being inbetween the joints . . . after they lay a tunnel section, we would go underneath the tunnel sections and crawl the perimeter of them, take measurements, because there was stone that was bedded underneath them, that was put in after the fact. We jett [sp?]it in place. When the last tunnel section, where it came together, there was a concrete closing joint that was poured. There was a void under each tunnel section at the end, we'd have to go down and take measurements so they had an idea of how long, how much the [concrete]pour was. We did that last section in the middle of January. I think I came out of the water at three o'clock in the morning. So actually immersing yourself down in the pour to take measurements, so you knew whether you had to order another 20 trucks, another 30 trucks. I mean just being places that no one else had the opportunity to go I thought was pretty neat.

MH: What about women in this trade?

DK: We have a number in the local. What's hard for us is to attract, if you take a look at our training video, you'll see, our trade isn't real attractive to some people. There are other crafts out there that just are a hole lot more appealing. There's

nothing you can say about our craft -- other than it's in the mud, it's heavy, it's hot and it's hard. So that doesn't always appeal to everyone. But we have a number of women in this craft and the ones that are in it are skilled tradespeople. Certified welders - they're out there doing it everyday.

DM: At the peak we probably had 7 or 8 percent women. That's probably dropped off to half of that. One of them is Sally Addison and she's a steward for Revelin? right now over on the Leverett Circle job. She's a second generation pile driver. And Paula Friscoe actually is a fourth generation pile driver. Her father just retired and she has two other brothers that are active in the local. Both her grandfathers on the maternal and paternal side were both members this local union. And actually she's married to a pile driver. [laughter]

MH: Is she still employed?

DW: No, I think she's gone back to school and is out around Colorado.

DK: Another female member is Brenda Chamberlain. I have her as a steward down on a job in South Boston. Just like the male members, if they have the skills, that's what keeps everyone working. Yeah, they do a great job.

MH: And how much more work is left? Can you tell me what, I don't get what they're doing at Leverett Circle right now.

DW: Well that's a tie-in of the ramps to Storrow Drive and MrGrath O'Brien Highway, that will tie in to Memorial Drive.

DK: Overall for us I would say the Artery Project is probably at least 90% completed. So, once again, we were the first craft in there. We had a number of people in there before the other crafts came in . So we've been on that for -

DW: The Kainer Project in City Square, that probably got going in mid 1989. However that was before the Project Labor Agreement was put in place.

DK: It really started to climb in '96 and probably peaked out at '99. In 2,000 it started to taper off some.

DW: Previous to the Fall of 1997, the membership was about 400 or thereabouts. We probably averaged 33 or 34,000 man hours a month. That Fall of '97 we hit 50,000 hours in October. From that point on there were months when we worked 125,000 hours. But with probably an additional 200 members, would put us around 600 people.

MH: Is there competition between New York and Boston? For the locals? I don't mean in getting work but just sort of -

DK: - our local's better than your local?

DW: Well, they're a much larger group, only because of the demographics.

They're probably five times the size of Local Union 56. But more than competing I think we try to cooperate with one another. We try to keep them informed, as they try to keep us informed of different contractors that might be coming in the area, new techniques and how to better serve the membership.

DK: There are some federal regulations that are changing in OSHA right now, so we reach out to them. We make it a nation wide effort as opposed to just us doing something. As Dave said, we belong to the Pacific Coast Council of Pile Drivers. The name is somewhat misleading because it actually encompasses locals from the whole country.

MH: Do you get together once a year?

DW: We get together at least once a year and sometimes maybe three or four.

MH: This project spans so many years. Was there any "wow" moment to you personally, when it just hit you what a phenomenal thing, feat, as you said?

DK: I guess when we saw the man hours climbing up over 120,000 for a local that would traditionally do 40,000 man hours. Where you had a increase in hours percentage wise and didn't have an increase in membership percentage wise, which shows you that people were out there working seven days a week, 12, 18 hours a day.

DW: At a contract negotiation previous to the lion's share of work beginning on Central Artery, we actually negotiated into the agreement certain clauses to try to keep the overtime hours down. Where once a person was into an overtime situation, and a double time situation after 12 hours, we said if they didn't receive 8 hours of rest then any work that took place any time of the day would also be at the double time rate of pay. Basically, it didn't make any difference in some situations. People were working in excess of 24 hours a day. Which was a very hazardous type of a situation.

DK: There were plenty of times we would finish up and I would just grab a couple of hours on a barge. You might finish up at 2 o'clock in the morning, to be back at it at 5 or 6. You either go crawl in your truck or crawl in the shack on a barge and in couple of hours get up and do the whole thing all over again.

MH: Were you in touch with your families?

DK: Yeah - it was kind of open-ended; I'll be home. I'll see you when I see you. It didn't mind me because I had spent a lot of time working on the road. They were used to me not being around during those periods. But I would have times when I had two or three days, I'm an hour north of the city, where I wouldn't get home. Just because you'd work right straight through.

DW: So to be slightly critical, I guess, from the start of the project in 1989 to 1990 it would have been good to see these projects advertised and awarded in a timely manner, which did not necessarily occur because into the early '90s after the Ted Williams Tunnel that Morrison Newton won, the first land section of cut-and-cover in East Boston, the Logan Airport was won by Modern Continental. And then Keewood won the first land section in South Boston, there was kind of a point in time where there was somewhat of a moratorium. There was nothing that went on the street to be bid for probably two, two and a half years.

MH: So you're saying that it could have been planned better and the work spread out more so people weren't working such crazy hours.

DW: That's correct.

DK: See the problem is they didn't spread the work out but they kept the same milestone. So they still wanted the same completion date. So we would get calls here at noontime, "I need two crews for a three o'clock start." It was ridiculous manning requirements. You'd spend literally entire weekends sometimes on the phone setting up crews for a Monday morning. It was crazy here at the height of it. But after the peak, it dove.

And our people were all aware that that was going to happen so with all these hours, it was kind of like found money. You know that, o.k., we're going to grab this now because when it's over, it's over. That's the construction business. You wait for the next project to start.

MH: You see a lot of high rises going up and so your people are working on--

DK: On the foundation work.

MH: To work on the Central Artery Project versus doing that other construction work, did it feel different? Did you get the sense of history of what was going on?

DK: I think why a lot of people liked working on the Artery was because of the amount of overtime that was available. Everybody takes a certain amount of pride in what they do, particularly if you're doing a project that no one else can do. But if you're doing a bracing job on a project and you've been there for several years - - which is what is unique about the Artery. Normally for us on a normal pile driving operation, it's short term. The project might be two months. If you had a job that went six months, that was really unusual. Different story with the Artery. Because of the scope of the project. We've had people work for the same contractor for several years. Where a normal construction year on a normal pile driving year, you could work for as many as half a dozen contractors. So that was really unique. Whereas our guys are somewhat independent. They're used to banging around, mobility in working for a number of contractors, found themselves working for these same contractor for several years.

DW: So therefore, today or more recently, members of this local that have been around for 8 or 10 years, think that that type of employment is the norm. And are actually coming to realize that if you're working 60 or 70% of the time, that's full time for the heavy and highway construction industry.

DK: Normal cases, if you work 10 months out of the year, you had a pretty good year.

MH: And what would an average salary of that be?

DK: Back at that time, if someone was making 40,000 a year, 45,000 a year, they were getting a healthcare benefits, they were getting some pension credits, they were doing very well. Obviously, with the Artery and the amount of overtime that was out there, some people reached upwards of the six figures. Just because they were working 60 or 70 hours every week, for a long run. And I would tell everyone, you don't adjust your lifestyle to that kind of money. You adjust your lifestyle to what you made previous, set some aside. And for the people who were

members here long term, they realized that. Because of the peaks and valleys of the business. That's an adjustment not just with us, but with most of the crafts out there. Someone that came in new, and waltzed right on to a job where they working 60 or 70 hours a week, it was a little overwhelming. You'd go by the parking lots and you'd see the \$30,000 pick-up trucks and stuff and I used to shake my head and tell the guys, "This isn't going to be forever. You bank it when you can bank it." That's not just with us; that's with all the trades.

DW: So I guess I can reflect back to the first job I had laboring in the summer in the summer of 1961. The rate of pay was \$2.75 an hour. I don't recall a health fund or a pension fund or an annuity fund back at that point in time. So it's quite a contrast between what's appeared in forty odd years.

MH: And what's the hourly wage now for a union member?

DK: A journeyman pile driver now makes \$26.53 an hour plus benefits.

DW: So all trades, the average might be 28 or 29 dollars an hour. With a healthy fringe benefit package that would involve a pension annuity and healthcare, which is quite a burden for all of us in this industry today, like it is all across the country.

DK: So with our people now, it's more than just a job, it does become somewhat of a career. They know that during slow times, you come in, we have an apprenticeship training we do here and journey upgrade training. We have a welding shop downstairs. Guys come in, they can keep their welding certificates current. If they don't have them, they can get them. Because they know they can go out there and work those 10 months a year. They can make a nice middle class lifestyle for themselves, with health care, with pension. So they know after 25 or 30 years in the business there's going to be something there for them when they get out.

MH: Now do people stay, because it's such hard labor, do people tend to retire earlier or not? What's the average age of retirement?

DK: With us we have a 30-year in and out. You get 30 good years, 30 vested years, 30 pension years, you can retire with a full pension with no penalty. There are a couple different ways, at 62 you can get out.

Generally, once someone has their 30 in, unless they've worked themselves into a supervisory position or general foreman, most of them will leave the trade. Because with us, there is no easy work. If you're shin deep in the mud, it's the same mud for the 60 year old guy as it is for the 22 year old guy. It's not like, o.k., you're to this age now, so you can go over there and do this part of the job. Almost everything we do is difficult. There are very few pile driving jobs you can walk on and say, "Geez, I'd like to do that part of the job over there."

DW: I do recall that there is right now an active member that's in his later on 60s. We've had people retire in their early 70s. I can go back to when my father was initiated in the early 40s and this local was made up mainly of people that came to Boston from Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. As fishermen kind of types, basically you couldn't find a stronger work ethic than

those people brought to Boston. Not to say that other ethnic groups that make up this local today aren't just as strong. It comes from a very solid foundation.

MH: I was curious about the ethnic make-up.

DK: We're a very diverse local. I would say, probably more so than most trades. Because the work can be so miserable, that's like the one common thread everyone has. It doesn't matter what your make-up is; it matters whether you can do the job when you're out there.

DW: Some of the requirements on Boston Redevelopment Authority work - the workforce must be made up of 50% Boston resident, 25% minority type on top of that and then 5% female. Generally speaking, we have never had difficulty meeting those policies.

MH: That's interesting. Cause I think of the Tunnel Workers or some of the other trades as, this is probably not even based on fact, but I think of Italians and Irish, going back two generations say.

DW: And the Tunnel Workers in particular, when I first broke into this business in Boston I was working as a laborer for Perini Corporation on the toll road extension. I can remember working in a crew of tunnel workers. Other than the foreman I was the only caucasian.

MH: Really? So what were they?

DW: They were American Negro. A significant number, in the 60s, but these fellas were significantly older than I was. They would have worked on the Callahan Tunnel and the Sumner Tunnel before that.

MH: Going back to the very beginnings of this local, didn't your people do the first subway ever built in this country? At Park Street?

DW: Well yes. The Boston subway system, that was done in an open cut manner, along Washington Street, the Orange Line down through Park Square. We don't have archives that tell us what the participation was back then.

MH: Yeah, that's the point of this. Wouldn't it be great to know what that was like?

DK: Oh, yeah.

MH: The Tunnel Workers have a nickname - "Sandhogs." Do your people have?

DW: In other parts of the country they call dock builders or pile drivers "pile bucks."

DK: Pile butts. That's a west coast thing. We're pile drivers here.

MH: I have these release forms, just basically saying that's o.k. for me to have recorded you . . .

(change to new tape)