Harry Johnson Tapes, session I  
1410 Josephine Street, Janesville  
July 29, 1976

Interviewer: Clem Imhoff

<table>
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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>0:00 to 0:20</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Family background near Sparta, Wisconsin--father from Norway--</td>
<td>0:21 to 6:25</td>
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<td>farming and logging--H. J. as workers on Chicago and Northwestern R. R.--</td>
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<td>mother's background.</td>
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<td>3. Family religious background--mother as 7th Day Adventist--father</td>
<td>6:26 to 7:48</td>
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<td>Norwegian Lutheran.</td>
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<td>4. Father comes to America--family political background.</td>
<td>7:49 to 10:14</td>
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<td>5. Elementary education--two years of high school--no knowledge of</td>
<td>10:15 to 15:07</td>
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<td>unions, fellow workers scabbing--loggers unorganized.</td>
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<td>6. Family &quot;never had very much&quot;--move from Sparta to Janesville to</td>
<td>15:08 to 17:58</td>
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<td>work at Chevrolet.</td>
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<td>7. Early attempt at farming--H. J. worked with the C. &amp; NW R. R.,</td>
<td>17:59 to 29:10</td>
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<td>line work--member then of the AFL Maintenance Away Union, recalls</td>
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<td>attending meeting, but not a very active member.</td>
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<td>8. Patrolling the track--H. J. saw no future in railroad work--little class awareness.</td>
<td>0:00 to 4:00</td>
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<td>9. Chevrolet in 1923--H. J.'s first work, body drop--plant closed</td>
<td>4:01 to 6:06</td>
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<td>during 1933.</td>
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10. Reaction against inside plant work. 6:07 to 7:22

11. Nature of workforce in 1920's--many from west central Wisconsin, most off the farm--came to Janesville for jobs at Chevrolet. 7:23 to 10:13

12. Pay at Chevrolet--piece work pay system, hard to figure wages. 10:14 to 13:32

13. Working conditions at Chevrolet, smoke and heat--problem with open windows--conditions good in drop area--health hazards in many areas--paint department. 13:33 to 18:13

14. More on body drop area--union members from body drop area, no talk of unions until 1933--many workers in this area off the farm. 18:14 to 21:39

15. Positive relations with foremen and supervisors. 21:40 to 23:40

16. Reaction to national political and labor leaders--FDR, the LaFollettes, Herbert Hoover, Bill Green of the AFL. 23:41 to 26:20

17. Introduction. tape 12, side 2-A 0:00 to 0:10

18. Reaction to capitalism, slight--old Sparta friends as Janesville friends. 0:11 to 2:41

19. H. J. as a conscientious worker--problems of other workers on the Chevy line--no relief--H. J.'s attitude toward GM. 2:42 to 7:32

20. The speed up--control of the rheostat--speed up caused union--model changeover--short days--difficult times. 7:33 to 11:43

21. The frame gang periodically refused to work before the union was organized--lack of relief--clothing. 11:44 to 13:36

23. AFL federal union as first FM union in Janesville. 18:58 to 20:48

24. H. J. worked with GM exhibit at 1933 World's Fair in Chicago--positive experience. 20:49 to 25:34

25. H. J. joins the union--recruiting other members--working conditions most important, especially the speed up. 25:35 to 29:45

26. Maintenance department as hardest to organize, no speedup there--anti-union workers--influence of wives. 0:00 to 3:45

27. Joining the AFL union. 3:46 to 5:08

28. Organizer named Dillon--need for education--fear among workers. 5:09 to 9:09

29. H. J. fired for organizing activities--successful appeal to the Wolman Board, nature of the Board--surviving with no job--others fired at the same time, all reinstated--H. J. continued union efforts, more determination--firings as a setback to organizing efforts until H. J. was reinstated, then an influx of new members. 9:10 to 22:00

30. Establishing separate locals for Fisher and Chevrolet. 22:01 to 22:50

31. No bitterness toward GM--key organizers on Chevrolet side, Mark Egbert, Elmer Yenney, John Donagan. 22:51 to 25:51

32. Learning about the union--speakers--the role of the organizers. 25:52 to 27:31
1. Introduction. 0:00 to 0:25

2. Community reaction to the UAW, mostly negative--some school teachers supported the union--business reaction to UAW. 0:26 to 4:21

3. Union members as diverse group. 4:22 to 5:52

4. Sources of information regarding the UAW and unionism--reliance on Elmer Yenny, president of Local 121--independent labor newsletter in Janesville. 5:53 to 8:57

5. Planning the sitdown strike of 1937--key people--unanimity on executive boards. 8:58 to 13:38

6. Congregating at body drop area on sit-down day--H. J. assembled commercial truck bodies then--support for the sit-down. 13:39 to 18:29

7. Shutting down maintenance in the Old Foundry, last group to stop work in the Chevrolet plant. 18:30 to 21:15

8. Membership at time of the sit-down in 1937 (H. J. was financial secretary)--small percentage of workforce as members, membership fluctuated. 21:16 to 24:28

9. Boom in Local 121 membership immediately after strike--attitudes of new members--Local 121's recruiters. 24:29 to 29:18

tape 31, side 1-B

10. New members as reluctant, justifiable fears--attitudes of early members toward new members--no particular groups represented by new members. 0:00 to 8:50

11. Wildcat strikes, not a major concern. 8:51 to 9:15
12. Financial status of Local 121 in 1937--sufficient money for travel and other needs--Janesville locals very frugal--open with financial and membership records--Jimmy Hall as an informer.

13. The Harold Lewis case--Lewis furnished information to management.

14. Jeanne Rimley as secretary to Local 121--H. J. observed her hiring--very efficient secretary.


16. Little recollection of "button day".

17. Transition from the AFL to CIO--support for AFL's Homer Martin--Elmer Yenney eventually recommended the change.

18. Introduction.

19. Relations with the international office--H. J. at 1937 UAW convention in Milwaukee--not persuaded by Reuthers at that time.

20. H. J.'s work during World War II.

21. Reaction to absence of black workers at Chevrolet--hiring as management prerogative, no involvement by union.

22. H. J.'s service on Janesville City Council, urged to run by Mark Egbert--accepted by business slating group--J. J. tried to serve entire city--most council decisions by consensus.

23. Problem of dogs running loose--problem of beer license for bowling alley which served UAW bowlers.

tape 31, side 2-A
24. Term as city council president. 14:26 to 16:41
25. Closing statement. 16:42 to 17:22