

People's History of the I.E.

Interview Summary

Item Number: 2025.001.006

Interviewee:

Sala Ponnoch

Interviewer:

Peyton Beeli

Interview Date:

April 8, 2026

Interview Location:

Riverside, CA Riverside Main Library

Interview Summary completed by:

Peyton Beeli, 2026

Description:

This interview details Sala Ponnoch's involvement with union organizing efforts at UC Riverside in the 1970s and 1980s. As a young clerical worker, Sala became the chair of the local CSEA chapter, working closely with other activists like Lorraine Klein, Gladys Murphy, and Margaret Ellis. They faced challenges from management and competing unions like AFSCME, but were able to provide representation and support to many employees facing discipline or termination. However, the CSEA ultimately withdrew from the organizing effort, leaving AFSCME and other unions to compete for representation. Sala reflects on the power dynamics, gender dynamics, and political tensions that shaped the union organizing on campus during this period.

Subject Topic:

- Activism
- California Senate
- Community Life in Riverside
- Community Organizing

- Economic Rights
- Employment
- Feminism
- Labor Organizing
- Labor Unions
- Riverside History
- Sexism
- Social Justice
- Solidarity
- Women's Rights
- Worker's Rights
- University of California, Riverside
- Women

Key Organizations:

- California State Employees Association (CSEA)
- University of California, Riverside Dept. of Education
- University of California, Riverside Dept. of Biochemistry

Spatial Coverage:

Spatial coverage refers to the geography covered by the interview. Add general locations (street names, cities, areas, etc.) and addresses – use newspaper searches & google searches to find addresses when possible (but note source).

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
University of California, Riverside	900 University Ave, Riverside, CA 92521

Temporal Coverage: 1970s-1980s

Related Materials:

Archival material about union organizing in the 1970s at UCR

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed

transcript	[00:27:57]	Sala navigating dynamics inside the CSEA union
transcript	[00:36:34]	Sala organizing members of the union and becoming president of the UCR CSEA chapter
transcript	[00:54:56]	Sala discusses the purpose of a union of UCR workers

Sala Ponnoch UCR Labor 4.8.26.m4a

Peyton [00:00:00] Awesome, so I have this too, but I'll, awesome. And I'll put this, this is kind of stressful, recording this, okay. Cool, so my name is Peyton, and I'm a UCR student documenting histories of the region. Today is April 8th, and I am here today in Riverside doing an interview with Sala for A People's History of the Inland Empire. So first I wanna make sure that you are comfortable with me recording this interview. So are you?

Sala [00:00:24] Absolutely.

Peyton [00:00:25] Okay, and if at any time you would like to pause or stop recording, please let me know. Perfect. So, for the record, would you mind just kind of spelling your full first and last name on tape for us?

Sala [00:00:40] My name is Sala Ponnoch. First name is spelled S-A-L-A and my last name is spelled P as in Peter O-N-N E-C-H.

Peyton [00:00:50] Beautiful. All right, thank you.

Peyton [00:00:51] So just kind of maybe to open up, could you tell me a little bit about kind of how you came to Riverside? Where did you grow up? How did you kind of move out here if you did? How did get involved kind of in the Riverside community?

Sala [00:01:04] I was born in Los Angeles, in East Los Angeles. My parents moved, like many people, to the eastern part of Los Angeles County, specifically Pico Rivera, and the reason they moved there was there was housing they could afford. I mean, they were a younger couple, already had two, two very young, well one toddler myself and a baby. And the apartment they were living in just wasn't doing it. So they moved where they could find affordable housing, like so many people today. So I grew up there, was very oriented toward Los Angeles. And I might add also, that my father was a member of the Garment Workers Union.

Peyton [00:01:55] Oh, amazing.

Sala [00:01:56] And I grew, I learned how to read by reading, um, oh, I read children's books, but I also read the Union newspaper that came to our house in the mail. So you can understand I was off to a bad start. I was doomed from the- Now I came to Riverside County in the 1970s because my boyfriend, again, my boyfriend and I weren't going to be able to buy a house in Orange County, which is where we were both living at the time. So we moved to an area on the

outskirts of Corona in unincorporated Riverside County called Home Gardens, which I believe is still largely unincorporated because nobody wants it. Sorry to say that, but it's the awful truth. And, um, we split up, but I had already become familiar with the city of Riverside because I was working in that area.

Peyton [00:03:00] What were you doing?

Sala [00:03:03] I had started off doing a bunch of this and that until I finally ... No, in fact, I was commuting to Orange County to the job. I still had there—

Peyton [00:03:13] Oh wow, from Corona. Or from Home Gardens.

Sala [00:03:17] Home Gardens. And that really wasn't working for me, so I needed something local. It was a clerical job in a manufacturing plant. So I applied among other places to UCR and got hired there in the School of Education to do clerical work.

Peyton [00:03:38] Yeah, so had you gone to like to school in Orange County before or in LA somewhere?

Sala [00:03:45] I went to school at UCLA and then I did—I went to graduate school at the University of Arizona and majoring in Anthropology.

Peyton [00:03:53] I was an anthropology major in college too, I love, and my sister goes to UCLA right now. So that's amazing, what kind of drew you to anthropology? Like when you were just curious about the human experience?

Sala [00:04:06] Yes, and I think kids who somehow get hooked on reading about ancient Egypt and classical Greece, etc., will tend to get sucked into that field.

Peyton [00:04:18] Yes, yes, I was, that happened to me.

Sala [00:04:21] Other kids get into get interested in it because they had a say a thing for Native Americans from the as long as far back as they could remember...

Peyton [00:04:32] Yeah.

[00:04:33] —And that was how that happened. Now I don't want to say it was a waste of my time because it wasn't. Looking back on it, and I've only told this to one other person who I thought would actually believe me, I think I would have been wasted as an academic and might eventually have been unhappy because everything, there was a need in me that it was never going to be able to fill.

Peyton [00:05:06] Yeah, there was a more desire for kind of action.

Sala [00:05:10] The need, yes, being very action-oriented and somehow needing a role in the bigger world.

Peyton [00:05:19] Yeah, I totally understand that.

Sala [00:05:21] I'm the kind of person who would prefer to be a small frog in a big pond because the big pond is entertaining.

Peyton [00:05:30] Yeah, there's more things going on in the big pond, absolutely. So then, so UCLA, Arizona, what's it like in Arizona?

Sala [00:05:38] Arizona was wonderful, Tucson, wonderful place.

Peyton [00:05:41] Was the graduate program in anthropology as well?

Sala [00:05:44] Yes.

Peyton [00:05:44] Oh, amazing. Did you do fieldwork?

Sala [00:05:46] I did a little. My thing was not archeology. My thing was what they began to call at that time human biology. And my emphasis was in what they call forensic anthropology. There was a very highly regarded laboratory for that at the U of A, and I spent significant time there.

Peyton [00:06:12] Yeah. That's so cool.

Peyton [00:06:13] So that's like you're studying kind of like you're working with like human remains.

Sala [00:06:18] But of course, unlike the osteologist in the medical school, we have a very different, and we share a lot of the same information, basic information about human beings and their bodies, but we want to know, we're looking for the remains to tell us different things, a different story.

Peyton [00:06:41] Right. Yeah. So then you take that kind of work and you decide you don't want to go into academia because you need some more. I feel that.

Sala [00:06:47] Actually I got blown out of it. I was very unhappy for a long time until I found what I think was my real calling. I'm afraid I still had a little growing up to do.

Peyton [00:06:59] Yeah.

Sala [00:06:59] And maybe should have put off going to graduate school or not gone at all. Until I kind of knew more about who I was.

Peyton [00:07:07] Did you go straight from kind of your, oh yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

Sala [00:07:10] Too sheltered, okay, too sheltered.

Peyton [00:07:13] Well, moving to Arizona was a big step, kind of getting out from your, out from LA, out from kind the family, that's amazing. And then you came, did you meet your kind of partner that you moved to Riverside with there in Arizona?

Sala [00:07:24] No, I came back and moved to Orange County because I was, I had part-time teaching gigs.

Sala [00:07:31] Yes, the adjunct kind of mill. [Laughs]

Sala [00:07:34] Yes. And, so one of them, my most steady one being at Fullerton State. So that was living there and that's where I met my boyfriend. And we moved again to the outskirts of Corona, but I felt drawn toward Riverside, and was very charmed by Riverside because it wasn't Orange County. Now, it wasn't like, I didn't like Orange County, but Riverside had an air of antiquity about it. It had not yet been hit with any significant redevelopment.

Peyton [00:08:09] And this was in kind of the 70s?

Sala [00:08:12] Yes, the middle, I would say the middle 70s. Let me think for a moment. Yeah, I'd say the middle to late 70s. There was much less traffic here. Things were slower. And I liked that.

So again, I began to not like the commute to Orange County and was lucky enough to find employment at UCR.

Peyton [00:08:34] What was the campus like when you first kind of started working there?

Sala [00:08:38] I would say the campus was parochial.

Peyton [00:08:48] Yeah. Could you, like, was that just because of the people? Was that kind of the space felt kind of?

Sala [00:08:54] No the the space was interesting. For one thing there was a lot of space, and the buildings were you know it didn't have the old buildings that you see at UCLA and USC—.

Peyton [00:09:07] Because this college wasn't that—wasn't that old.

Sala [00:09:10] No, but it was you know buildings were aggressively modern, I kind of like them and, but, the people still had a kind of a small townishness about them. Or what I thought was a small town, townishness.

Peyton [00:09:28] Did that bother you, or was that just kind of getting used to?

Sala [00:09:31] No, it was just something I noticed.

Peyton [00:09:33] Yeah, yeah. Did you feel that kind of working in education department, or was it different there?

Sala [00:09:43] Education Department, no, I felt it there. Yeah. Maybe in particular, with a few exceptions.

Peyton [00:09:52] Yeah, so what kind of work were you doing? You're doing clerical work there?

Sala [00:09:55] Mainly, most of my responsibility was typing letters and short documents for the faculty. There was another type clerk, typist there, who was responsible mainly for manuscript typing.

Peyton [00:10:12] Oh, wow. It's like long form.

Sala [00:10:14] Yes.

Peyton [00:10:14] Wow.

Sala [00:10:15] Now later on, after we got the first of the computerized text typing, what they call—I forgot the technical name for them at the time, but the name of the doohickey, [laughter] I shouldn't call it that because it was a large machine.

Peyton [00:10:36] We'll Google it later. Okay, a "Videc."

Sala [00:10:39] Yes. And after that I began to do quite a lot more of the manuscript typing too.

Peyton [00:10:46] So you're typing up manuscripts for, like, faculty members?

Peyton [00:10:48] Yeah.

Peyton [00:10:49] What was that like?

Sala [00:10:50] It was a lot of fun. I was able, oddly enough, to put my education to work.

Peyton [00:10:55] Yeah, because you must have been a good writer, coming from...

Sala [00:10:57] And so even in the letters I was sometimes able to, I would pick up the phone and I'd say you know, there's a like a noun verb disagreement here, or there's a, you know, misspelling or, you know, sometimes if—if the document— you had sections things might be

numbered incorrectly or not in sequence. And nobody ever complained. I found out much later that that's one of the reasons I was hired. The Associate Dean, Dr. Irving Hendrick decided he was tired of hiring typists who couldn't—who couldn't spell, or didn't know anything.

Peyton [00:11:49] [Laughter]. Yeah, so it's helpful to have somebody who knew what they were doing, I can imagine. Working in that department, did you, like were you making friends? How was that, was that like socially in the department?

Sala [00:12:04] Um, let me think. I was friendly with Betty, who was really the other typist. I always felt my direct supervisor, the management services officer, didn't like me.

Peyton [00:12:16] Why do you say that?

Sala [00:12:20] Because she would say bizarre things, as if she were trying to bait me into doing or saying something unacceptable that she could really complain about. That would, you know, something that would be cause for someone to take action. And sometimes, it was even difficult to describe the things she did. They were so, I knew what she was doing, but... To somewhat they were just too subtle, and sometimes completely out of left field. And I was afraid nobody else would believe me. But the reason I'm telling you this now is that my suspicions were later verified right before I left. The Associate Dean told me what really happened during the hiring process. He was hired—I was hired his insistence. Over apparently, he didn't mention her name, but I got—it was apparently over Rosie's objections. And it was I think because of my education level. But much later, I realized something else. When I was hired, okay, Rosie was in her early 40s. And she was a very good-looking woman, very well turned out. And she adored the Associate Dean. I can understand why. He's a great guy. But he insisted on hiring me. And I was 27 and I was educated and I was a little hottie, okay, so do the math. So in the end, I hate to say this, but it was all about a man and I didn't even know it.

Peyton [00:14:24] [Laughter] Yeah. Yeah. It's funny, like, I think I feel that way sometimes looking back and I'm like, oh, it was actually it was it was a guy the whole time. Like ladies. Yeah, it's like, like, guys, we could do better. Yeah but it's it's unfortunately, you know, that that kind of stuff still happens all the time. But yeah, well, I'm sorry that happened. It was not very kind of a fun working environment. It must have been kind of stressful. Did that ever?

Sala [00:14:48] But a lot of it was fun. The people I really loved were the people who were the teacher trainers. You know, the folks who oversaw the placement of wannabe teachers in the local school districts, and then went out there to evaluate them. They were basically the liaisons for that program.

Peyton [00:15:14] Yeah, and they were faculty in the department.

Sala [00:15:15] Yes, they were faculty in that department, although they didn't have PhDs. All they had was hard experience and many years of knowledge.

Peyton [00:15:24] [Laughter] I mean, sometimes that's more—

Sala [00:15:24] [Jokingly] Who cares about that? So obviously they weren't drawing the salaries of, you know, the professors. I don't know if they were even members, technically, of the

Academic Senate, and frankly I doubt they cared. They were just down-to-earth people, very knowledgeable and doing an extremely important job.

Peyton [00:15:46] They had bigger fish to fry than the academic senate.

Sala [00:15:50] So I was always happy to do something for them, although they seemed to do most of their stuff themselves. I think it was their years of experience as teachers, it's like "hey, I want something typed up and I want it by a certain time. Maybe I better do it."

Peyton [00:16:05] Yeah, just just kind of not having kind of like a some sort of clerical person to do that for them. Did you ever think about doing that yourself? That kind of, like becoming a teaching liaison? No. But so you stayed in kind of the clerical position for most of your time there? Or did you ever kind of transition into anything else?

Sala [00:16:22] I transitioned into the accounting assistant series.

Peyton [00:16:26] Oh, what is that?

Sala [00:16:26] When I went into biochemistry. These are people who do basically what's usually referred to as bookkeeping in a private business.

Peyton [00:16:41] So that was for the biochemistry department.

Sala [00:16:43] Yes, that was when I went into biochemistry because that was a screaming need.

Peyton [00:16:49] Mmm. So did they ask you to shift or did you kind of? How did that transition work?

Sala [00:16:53] No, this is what happened. I had left the School of Education intending to move to Oregon, but that never happened. So I was at Lucanne's, and my good friend Lorraine Kline, who you probably hear a lot about, was the graduate secretary at biochemistry, and we were still tight, and she told me about the problems going on there, specifically. And the real... crux of those problems was the grant accounting. And she basically said, the new management services officer, John Cogan, needs someone who can be trusted. So the minute I heard that, I just knew, okay, here's an opportunity for good trouble if I've ever seen one. I really didn't know how much of a host- I suspected I was going to be kind of a hostage. I didn't- I was unaware of how much. But I went in there and what John basically said, all of this, he said, whatever I can pull out of the computerized records that Bernice left behind, so here's all of this stuff, here's anything that has been preserved on paper. And here's everything that needs to be caught up after you have put all the past stuff onto the Lotus program. Well that man, I now know had to learn how to use Lotus, then we have to figure out an acceptable format, I mean, where I could hide everything off the main pages, and then have it automatically fill the main pages. But the main pages could be printed out and given to professors or to administrators who would actually then be able to read them. That was the real crux is, is somebody going to be able to come in sort off the street. And read these and say, okay, the remaining amount of money for equipment is this much. So that a professor if a prof wanted to do something but was wondering okay is there enough money in the appropriate line item to pay for it, um, he or she would know right

off the bat. And then if there wasn't enough money let's say, in the line item, I knew which line items could have money transferred into our algorithm and I would then fill out the work for main county. And they would transfer that money.

Peyton [00:19:47] So you're really kind of the linchpin of this whole system.

Sala [00:19:51] Exactly. Because it's not something that a management services officer can micromanage. It is not possible. It is already a more than eight hour a day job and most people are already working, you know, 10 to 12. And of course, they're salaried, so too bad for them if it's overtime.

Peyton [00:20:10] Yeah, yeah.

Sala [00:20:11] And John was great. Now John had a very strong background in administration, but he was not pro- he was not prepared for the level of infighting in faculties. And the fact that other people would be dragged into it.

Peyton [00:20:30] And when you say other people—

Sala [00:20:30] Staff.

Peyton [00:20:32] Right.

Sala [00:20:33] Who are often happy to take sides, I think it made them feel important.

Peyton [00:20:37] Yeah, yeah,.

Sala [00:20:40] And Lorraine handled the—was the graduate secretary—

Peyton [00:20:44] Of the biochemistry.

Sala [00:20:46] Yes, so you have to handle all the graduate students' issues.

Peyton [00:20:49] Oh, boy.

Sala [00:20:50] And obviously, she didn't have enough time, hands, to really help John in the work that he needed to do. He just—at least he didn't need to worry about the graduates, because she was handling them.

Peyton [00:21:03] What kind of, like, when you say infighting is that kind of, what is that about? Like about positions, about, was, like, an example?

Sala [00:21:10] It involved basically three people, one of whom was not at fault but was the target. When I came in there, the department chair was a woman named Jolinda Traugh. Now I don't know, Lorraine knew her very well and they were friendly for many years, but Dr. Traugh started somehow to change. I don't remember if Lorraine ever told me why or if Lorraine ever knew. [Sala's phone rings] Hold on, just a moment.

Peyton [00:21:52] No worries.

Sala [00:21:55] Sometimes it's important, most of the time. Uh-huh, just as I thought, okay. [Peyton laughs] But you see, my home alarm is also on the cell system, so if anyone broke in, that's how the alarm company will try to reach me. Anyway, so unfortunately I don't like to completely turn it off or even turn the sound off.

Peyton [00:22:19] No, of course not.

Sala [00:22:20] But anyway, okay, I don't know what happened with Dr. Traugh.

Peyton [00:22:22] She started to change.

[00:22:24] She started change, became extremely paranoid. Now, enter... The man who may be the real villain of the piece, Anthony Norman. Anthony Norman had been department chair. My impression, this many years later, is that when it came time to choose the department chair again he wasn't picked, and that was for rea—for a cause. But I again can't fill you in on any details that was that's the whole faculty thing, I don't think Lorraine, well she knew plenty about him and if they didn't want him as the department chair, actually I do understand why.

Peyton [00:23:09] Yeah.

Sala [00:23:09] And, if anything... Anthony Norman reminds me the most of the fallen angel Lucifer. [Peyton chuckles] That was always my impression, my summing up of him. He was brilliant in his field, to the extent that he wasn't stealing graduate students' work. Who knows? They all did it. I've had my work stolen. Only one time did anyone, any faculty person, ever ask permission. To use any any work I had done. And of course he you know I was happy—I would've been happy to give it to him because he's a great guy, super super nice. But um—

Peyton [00:23:57] With credit though?

Sala [00:23:59] Yeah.

Peyton [00:23:59] Yeah, okay, that's good.

Sala [00:24:01] But um he was tall and handsome but he was a sexual harasser, and I don't know... How well he worked and played with the other faculty, but apparently they didn't want him again. And I think that stung. Instead, they picked Alexander McPherson to be the department chair. So Norman has it in for McPherson. Does this sound familiar? [Peyton laughs] And I think Anthony Norman worked on Jolinda Traugh. Got her paranoia up and running big time. I mean, at one point, what was it? Dr. Traugh complained to somebody or spread the story that Dr. McPherson—[Peyton laughs]—(jokingly) don't laugh, it was not funny at the time, but the Dr. McPherson had broken into the biochemistry department.

Peyton [00:25:15] What?

Sala [00:25:15] And he did that, it had a—the office had a pull-down window. I guess at one time it had been a storage area, so but it still had the pull- down window—they never remodeled that away—and she claimed he broke through the pull-down window and climbed in. This man's the department chair. He would have a key. He can go into the office, [both laughing] but that gives you the flavor of what was going on. And, you know, fortunately I had some champions. I really did. One of them being Dr. Wedding, Randolph Wedding who carried off a immense amount of clout. Immense amount of clout. And who looked out, Dr. Wedding was also, was a friend of Lorraine's. And she told me he could never stand the thought of anyone being bullied or left out or that somebody who was trying to do something good for the department was being picked on. So in his very, grumpy way he looked out for me [laughing].

Peyton [00:26:28] Yeah, that's nice.

Sala [00:26:29] And nobody messed with him.

Peyton [00:26:33] Being an educated, intelligent woman in a UC in the 70s and 80s, did you feel kind of like, you know, it still seems like it must have been a pretty male heavy, especially in biochemistry.

Sala [00:26:48] Oh yes.

Peyton [00:26:48] So what was that like with the women in the department or in the college in general?

Sala [00:26:55] Okay, oddly, I was not friendly with the rest of the staff who didn't like me there, except for Lorraine who was my best friend, and I had, oh, you know who else I was friendly with? I was with the research associates, many, at least half of whom were women, and whose I think whose work was regularly stolen, but except—No, I know it was only June Bishop and she was cited in journal articles. So that was good. As far as female faculty, there weren't that many.

Peyton [00:27:37] Did you feel like, I mean, do you feel kind of a sense that like something, you were being treated differently because you were a woman or there was some sort of environment on campus that was kind of, not necessarily hostile but kind of... tension?

Sala [00:27:52] Not any more than any other setting.

Peyton [00:27:56] Yeah. That's true. That's fair.

Sala [00:27:57] If anything, I would say that ethnicity at that time was more of an irritant to everybody, that it was, they were far more likely to get rubbed the wrong way because of ethnicity than you would have been because of your sex. But again, now I did know female faculty from other departments, like a woman named Edna Bonacich who, from sociology, but she was sort of like the house radical, so I'm not sure anyone really listened to what she said. But she was good folks, but I had issues with her from the point of view of unionizing. I always considered myself the most youngest old lefty, until I became old and then I was simply an old lefty. But to me, Bonacich carried that agenda into an area where it wasn't really appropriate. Getting collective bargaining rights and then trying to negotiate a decent contract and policing that contract, isn't where you showcase your radicalism. You really don't. Because, as happened later on when I worked for Riverside County, you usually ended up messing things up. There was one exception, and his name is mentioned in one of the documents I gave you, and that was a man named Ralph Cuaron. Ralph Cuaron was, I don't know, may have been a communist. We weren't really interested. Because it's like, the question for the people in the union were, were you doing your job, were you doing right by the union. And everything else was—.

Peyton [00:29:58] Secondary.

Sala [00:30:00] —was personal problems. But you see, Ralph acted crazy, but Ralph was a real unionist, and we respected Ralph. Because Ralph really, I don't think Ralph let his other political beliefs really get in the way, he knew how unions worked.

Peyton [00:30:17] And he was doing good work for the union.

Sala [00:30:18] And he was doing work, and I remember one time one of his members filed—one of his members acted in such a way that one of our members actually gave him a

letter—some kind of letter of warning about his behavior. And um, that had been done, he misbehaved deliberately because he figured he could create some bad blood between—well he was a man who always played what we called "vanguard of the proletariat." Plus, as a member of AFSCME he was very interested in creating bad blood between AFSCME and the other organizations on campus.

Peyton [00:31:08] Before we get into the kind of meat, I would love to kind of lay out, because I don't even know. So there's AFSCME and there's other organizations, there's multiple. So how did you get into this organizing and what organization were you a part of?

Sala [00:31:21] Okay, then we would have to go back to the 1970s.

Peyton [00:31:23] All right, let's go back to the 70s.

Sala [00:31:26] At the beginning, I came to work at UCR a very few years after the state legislature and the governor passed the collective bargaining for the higher education unit of state service, which was UC and state universities. So we didn't have collective bargaining for a long time, but there was an organization on campus that dated from the 1930s called the California State Employees Association. Now, again, it was not a situation where they did full-bore collective bargaining and maybe not even much in the way of representation. They were founded to keep the CIO out of the university.

Peyton [00:32:22] Why would they want to keep them out?

Sala [00:32:24] Because the lower level management people and the higher level clerical series and accounting series who were, by my standards at the time, extremely full of themselves for having gotten jobs in the UC system, didn't want the evil unions in there. But, you know, over the years, it became obvious, it was obvious to everyone, especially the people in the lower ranks like me, that they weren't gonna do anything for us. Except whine. [Peyton chuckles] And we needed, we needed the protections of full-bore collective bargaining. So a lot of people worked hard to get the collective bargaining rights, but CSEA was in the running to be one of the exclusive bargaining representatives, maybe not of all the units statewide, but of many of them.

Peyton [00:33:28] And a unit is?

Sala [00:33:29] A collective bargaining unit, it's best described as like an employee community, a group of employees that have more in common job-wise than they do with other people. For instance, all clerical workers have more in common with each other than they have with the skilled crafts.

Peyton [00:33:50] Yeah, like the same people at the same institution. So your clerical workers are a unit? Okay, great, makes sense.

Sala [00:33:57] And one of the important things to remember too was by the time I came along, I think the skilled crafts had gotten tired of CSEA. And that's going to be critical because those people, whatever else is going on, whatever organization is there, they are tightly organized. And again, many of them came from other employment that was already unionized, so they didn't see themselves as somehow climbing up some mysterious ladder and making good.

Just—and not needing a union because they knew full well that they had no rights. Without organization. So anyway,

Peyton [00:34:44] So did you start kind of like talking to each other? Did you have meetings to kind of talk about forming a union?

Sala [00:34:49] I stepped into this, that was already in the process.

Peyton [00:34:56] And this was in like the late 70s, early 80s?

Sala [00:34:59] Late 70's.

Peyton [00:35:00] Cool.

Sala [00:35:01] Some of the people, let me see— [Sala gestures towards some archival documents she had brought with her]

Peyton [00:35:04] Oh here's your documents here, yeah.

Sala [00:35:06] —who are named here were already heavily involved. For instance Gladys Murphy, one of the library assistants, Jim Dunlavey, who was—let's put it this way. The crafts people, you know, skilled trades, had their own manager, but it was Jim Dunlavey who was actually in charge. And fortunately their manager was a good guy, you know, who I don't think was going to have any problem having a union in there, because he was just going to be acting, they were just going to do the same things they were already doing. And then there was Lorraine Kline. Who was my bud. Okay. Now most of these people were like in their early middle age. They were often significantly older than I was. By the time I got in there, I mean, once, I got active right away, I just had to keep a low profile because of probation.

Peyton [00:36:10] So you started—when you were still in Education, you were doing this.

Sala [00:36:12] Well, now we can actually put things in chronological order, which I like, because sometimes things jump out when they're in chronology order in a way that will never happen when they are just messed up. Or a lot of unrelated events. I began working with them (CSEA), and there was already kind of a way that they did things. The clerical activists, and I'm including people like Gladys who were library assistants, although that was an entire, that series I think was split off later from the clerical, we had access to typewriters, copyers, and other useful—.

Peyton [00:37:08] Yeah, yeah totally.

Sala [00:37:09] —You know, supplies and other things. But the guys in skilled trade—and I say guys, there were no women in the skilled trades—and at that time I don't know if there ever had been.

Peyton [00:37:20] And when you say skilled trades, are we talking about like carpentry?

Sala [00:37:22] We're talking carpentry, painting, electrical work, that kind of thing, plumbing. But they had the freedom of the campus. So clericals, for instance, we'd prepare the flyers and announcements and skilled trades would distribute them everywhere.

Peyton [00:37:44] Oh, that's so cool.

Sala [00:37:45] And especially, you know... the skilled trades often went—would go into the academic offices to do whatever it was that needed doing. And especially Jim, [laughing]

women were always drooling over Jim, so he came just to—[high voice] "here ladies!" And so they had a nice, a pretty nice well-oiled machine, and at 27 years old I became the youngest, I don't know if I was the youngest president they ever had— I don't think so, there had been a much younger woman, but she had had gone, which is too bad because I always wanted to meet her. But I was 27 and everyone else at one of our meetings, they all kind of surrounded me in the corner and they said, "We are tired. We've all been the chair of this chapter"— We didn't call them locals. God forbid it should sound like the AFL-CIO. "And we're tired of it. Okay kid, you are now the chair." And I worked at it. So I—and I remained the chair all through the time that bargaining units were established.

Peyton [00:39:01] And this is the chair of the CSEA?

Sala [00:39:03] Yes. The chair of the UCR chapter. Now the other thing too—and this is repeating some of what was already, what I already said—because CSEA predated collective bargaining there were no bargaining units. So anyone who wanted to belong to CSEA could belong to it. So it was an incredible mixed bag. It reminded me a little bit of stories I read later about organizations like the rights of labor, or I should say, not the rights, the Knights of Labor, where everyone who was a worker could join. And that included something revolutionary for those times, which was women who stayed at home because keeping house was considered work by the Knights of Labor.

Peyton [00:40:02] It is, I'm glad.

Sala [00:40:04] We actually had managers in this union. We had police, we had the skilled trades, and the clericals as I mentioned. We had—I don't remember if we actually had, I think we had one or two of the librarians themselves, although they were always in their own little group. Kind of in library la la land, I guess. I think with the sole exception of a man I met later named David McCarger. Now, David McCarger was very active in one of the rival organizations, in the American Federation of Teachers. But McCarger, like some of us, or many of us... McCarger's feeling was a unionist is a unionist, it didn't even matter what organization it was, it's like first things first, let's see what happens when we get through uniting. But until then we worked together like we would work with Ralph at times too.

Peyton [00:41:14] And that's Ralph, sorry.

Sala [00:41:16] Couron. Yes, who had the thankless job of heading up AFSCME. And we knew that would come to an end, but while it happened, it was entertaining. And the few cops who were members, well, we knew they were also destined to be united out because police, by and large, their community of interest is with themselves, and they tend to favor being represented by organizations that have a lot of experience representing law enforcement. I mean, so there was no, no occasion for hurt feelings there, but they were also people who could get around on the campus. But they had more qualms than the skilled trades guys about actually passing stuff out. You know, or doing something during work hours that wasn't related to work. So, you know, okay. All right. The last thing we wanted to do was push our members so that we got them in

trouble. Doing something that is absolutely indefensible [laughter]. So you know, that kind of thing.

Peyton [00:42:33] So did you run into trouble with like management when you're trying to kind of get things going?

Sala [00:42:38] Oh, there were a lot of them who didn't like us, but there wasn't much we could do, because despite not having, you know, not actually having full collective bargaining rights or an exclusive representative. As public employees, we already had rights simply because of some landmark court cases like the important one, one of the important ones was Skelly versus the state of California. That's S-K-E-L-L-Y. Yeah, S-K-E-L-L Y versus state of California.

Peyton [00:43:24] This is my Google later list. Yeah.

Sala [00:43:28] And, you know, it's been a long time since I've really—been over 10 years since I even thought about a lot of this. So it might not be 100% accurate.

Peyton [00:43:39] No, of course.

Sala [00:43:40] But I think Skelly. In Skelly, this court found that the public employee has both a liberty, but more importantly, a property interest in his or her job. And therefore, to fire someone without due process is an illegal taking.

Peyton [00:44:10] Oh, interesting. Yeah.

Sala [00:44:11] Now the other important right that extended to public employees was, and I forgot the name of this one, but it's the one that said, that stood for the proposition that if an employee is called in and questioned about a matter that could lead to discipline, not even necessarily firing, but could lead to any kind of discipline, they have the right to have a representative present.

Peyton [00:44:39] Oh, yeah. Yeah, okay, so I see where you can kind of...

Sala [00:44:43] Right, so that may have been one reason that, you know, unions' collective bargaining was late coming to UC. It was the combination of parochialism, egotism, and the fact that public employees already had some rights that the private sector didn't have, and that the unions—and people, employees in the private sector knew they were never even going to get those rights if they didn't have a union. And as it still stands California is an at-will state except for those few protections that are granted either by union contract or by these court cases.

Peyton [00:45:29] So yeah, so it's really important to kind of have.

Sala [00:45:31] Dismal, to put it mildly.

Peyton [00:45:33] Yeah, but I mean, it seemed like you were doing kind of a lot of good work.

Sala [00:45:36] But the big thing was, even in the absence of a contract, what the stewards of the various labor organizations did was they enforced what rights there were. Now there were some, besides having, there was the right to, we had the right to actually file some grievances. There was the right to contest discipline, and that was a big one because of course that came out of the court cases. And then there was, which I think no longer exists, but I'm not sure, you could find out. There was a creature called administrative review. Now, administrative review

was very useful. Had nothing to do with collective bargaining. It was an in-house, purely in-house sort of procedure.

Peyton [00:46:37] At the California university?

Sala [00:46:39] Yes. And that was an employee who simply had a beef with the way the whole department was running, because there was some kind of pervasive misdoing. It wasn't even just, "hey, this happened to me. I didn't get my promotion. I'm misclassified." That was not grounds for—administrative review was like something that should have happened in Biochemistry. It never did, because we took care of it, but it did happen in other departments. But of course employees who were in a position where they wanted to file any kind of action were usually so strung out that even if they had the knowledge and the skill that was going to be needed to file these written actions and follow them up, they were simply in no mental condition to do it. Yeah. I saw so many grown men cry. You won't believe it. And people were also who held, you know, responsible well-paid jobs where they got to dress up and they didn't have to punch time clocks and all of this. They felt ashamed that they had to resort to a bunch of troublemakers for help, and I think for some of them the problem they had was bad enough, but the humiliation [laughing] made it even worse.

Peyton [00:48:11] [Self-satisfied voice] "Well, well, well. You gotta come talk to us."

Sala [00:48:14] "Oh, how the mighty have fallen." [Laughter] But, you know, let's put it this way, we didn't ask them a lot of questions about their feelings, because, you know—

Peyton [00:48:26] Bigger fish to fry.

Sala [00:48:26] —Bigger fish to fry. And a lot people also, they wouldn't have had the skills to do it. And you might wonder, well, where did you people, you union officers, et cetera, where did get the skills? Yeah, hell if I know. [Peyton laughs] I think part of it was a desire to do it. But anyway, getting back to the administrative review, the administrative review was cool. Because somebody, what would happen is a management services officer or some higher level administrator from another department would come in and start investigating what was going on. They would, I never got to read any of the reports that were finally issued by these investigators but the scuttlebutt was that they were often absolutely scathing.

Peyton [00:49:25] [Exclaiming] Oh yeah, that'd be so good.

Sala [00:49:27] And departments really wanted to avoid that. But I'll tell, just to give you an example of how bad things got, at least at UCR. UC Employees Pension Fund has always been separate from CalPERS. And, by the time I got to the campus, a problem that had been brewing in the UC pension system came to a head. What happened is, people were so strung out from working there that they were going on medical retirement many years before they would have been eligible for service retirement. So instead of putting money into the system, they were now drawing money out, well ahead of what the actuaries were projecting, and this was happening at a rate, where, UC retirements, UCRS, that was the acronym, UC retirement system. UCRS said, we are sending one of our employees to every campus to see [with

emphasis] what the fuck is going on there because the pension system will not take this strain. We are not meeting the revenue. We're not going to be funded. Okay, so anything I say to you, or have said to you so far, could have been the product of my diseased imagination. But let me tell you, this really happened. This was noticeable, this was an objective fact that people were bailing. So, of course, we managed to get tight with the young man that was sent. And he was so frustrated trying to deal with UCHR, with Riverside's UC HR, I don't know about HR on other campuses, I can't believe they were any better or much worse. And, which was hostile and secretive and possibly improperly involved with the rest of the administration there. So. You know, that gives you some notion of how bad it was for many employees there. And we were, you know, and, of course...quite more often than not, the faculty was involved, either directly, because they were part of the wrongdoing, or indirectly, because department chairs... Wanted management services officers who would simply take responsibilities off their hands. Because a department chair was a faculty member, and most faculty members were not interested in the day-to-day running of departments and everything else that was beneath their notice. They were there to get research done, to get classes taught. To push people through their degree programs, because that was the purpose of an academic department. I agree, no problem with that. But these people were also nominally in charge of a management services officer whose job was to deal with their employees, plus the day-to-day running of the department. If the management services officer dished up enough flattery and as long as there were no problems that were hindering the operation of the department, the department chair did not want to be involved. Now there were people, for instance, like the Irving Hendrick, the Associate Dean of the School of Education. Irving Hendrick was the kind of man who would do the right thing whether there was anything in it for him or not.

Peyton [00:53:53] A rare form. Yeah, yeah. So like when you were president of the CSEA like what was kind of your main—I mean you're talking a lot about these kind of social kind of dynamics are really shaping how the union is operating. Like what was kind of the main things that you were dealing with kind of in that leadership position like in your kind of day to day?

Sala [00:54:14] My main thing, and some of this was done because it was my point of view that was it important, my main thing was trying to maintain contact with our members. That often involved going places in person because I've always believed—I would get tired of listening to people complain about paying dues and they would sometimes say "I'm not, I don't know what I'm getting for it." Later on I had a snappy comeback, but I didn't at that time.

Peyton [00:54:50] What was it?

[00:54:51] Oh, this was later when I actually worked for the laborers union. When someone gave me that, "well what," and it was always in this snotty tone. Like, they're really telling me, right, "well, what am I getting for my dues?" And let's face it. A lot of people would have liked to hang on to those dues. They would have come in handy. You know, I agree. When I would really, when I tried to explain, and it wasn't working, I would look at them in the eye without blinking,

and I would say, "if you want to see what you would get for your dues, and if you want to get the full service union treatment, that would involve you getting a letter saying that they intend to fire you, and then the union would be representing you at the lower levels of discipline, and then if we felt that we had a chance to win, we would then pay our own money for someone, either a union rep or somebody who's highly skilled at this, to come in and represent you at an arbitration hearing. And we would have to pay half the costs of that arbitration hearing. Of course, and if we hired someone from outside the union, well no, actually, someone from outside of the local, that might cost, unless it was, well, usually it would be somebody who was on the staff of a bigger union, specializing in arbitration. And I said, "Are you sure you want to get your money's worth out of your dues?" And people would sit there in shock. I don't know if it was because they never considered this, which is just as well. I wanted everyone to go through life without having to know what it was going to be like, getting the letter that's saying, we're going to discharge you for cause, and having to deal with that. Part of it was that I would even talk to them like that. But I think another part of it was, that it just opened up a whole can of worms that they just wanted to see closed again and never got that question.

Peyton [00:57:27] Yeah, it would never happen to me. I'm not—it's not my problem. Yeah. And did you feel like you get did you get pushback being like, such a young woman like I'm in charge of such a big—?

Sala [00:57:35] No, I didn't get pushback for being a young woman. What I might have gotten was the beginnings of inappropriate attention. But nothing more than you know, the up-and-down look and the crooked smile. Mainly because if a woman was you know president or chair of the union local, something might tell you really didn't want to mess with her that much. [laughing]

Peyton [00:58:02] Yeah, she knew what she was talking about. Awesome. I mean, did you ever have to deal with any sort of litigation when you were president? Did you have?

Sala [00:58:10] I represented some people, I think I filed some grievances and I represented some people. Well, no, I didn't really do that much representation because a man named Lou Keijer, who worked for Statewide CSA, but who was based in Los Angeles, would come and handle those kinds of things. Lou would do the arbitrations and that, but I would, for instance, go in when the employee was being questioned to represent her there.

Peyton [00:58:44] And what else are you doing? Are you kind of serving as like a, it seems like you're kind of connecting a lot of people to each other.

Sala [00:58:49] Yeah, and you know, whenever I could I played hooky and would you know I'd go to the scope—I made myself seen. That's the key. You know so that people know okay first of all there actually are people on campus. And secondly, there actually are people on campus, and if I do get in a jam, well, that's the person I can call.

Peyton [00:59:18] Yeah. Amazing. I mean, well, I want to hear more about Lorraine. Cuz I feel like, I wanna know more about, I mean it seems like you guys are kind of a formidable duo. I wanna-

Sala [00:59:28] Well, then there's and you know Gladys— there was Lorraine, and then there were also Gladys Murphy and Margaret Ellis who worked as a team.

Peyton [00:59:36] Okay, [writing] Gladys Murphy, Margaret Ellis.

Sala [00:59:40] I think I told you already, but this bears repeating, Lorraine Kline was one of my best friends I ever had. She is long dead, a loss to everybody. But Lorraine was active in this from the beginning at UCR when she first worked there. And I think part of it was she also came from a union background.

Peyton [01:00:02] Right. And that's because—I mean you talked about your like your household was very kind of pro-union and she kind of had a similar—

Sala [01:00:09] Right. Her dad became I think he became president of the what was then the projection—movie projectionist union.

Peyton [01:00:15] That's so cool. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sala [01:00:23] And um, so Lorraine knew a lot about the unions, you know, she had contacts all over campus. And she was, I like to think of her as the person who taught me what raw power really is. And I'll repeat that for the recording, but I'll try to keep it short. One time during my organizing, you know, you could or I could come to campus before my workday started I could stay after you know do what I want, hand out flyers, we did have those rights. And I remember one time I was waiting in the main parking lot, approaching people as they came to work and I approached a lady, and she looked at me a little hesitantly. I don't think she was afraid, because I never came storming right up to people at their cars, you know, and I gave her a flyer. I forget what the occasion was for handing out flyers. Probably we were having a chapter meeting or there was some big deal about uniting perhaps. Who knows? I don't remember exactly what happened. I gave her this and somehow I let her know, well you know if you really want to check this out because you don't know me, if you know Lorraine Kline, she'll tell you more about this. And the woman looked up and she said, "You know Lorraine?" I said, "Oh yeah, we're really tight, we work together all the time on union stuff." She said, "Well if Lorraine says this is important, it is." And that is when I knew. That's power.

Peyton [01:02:07] That's such a good story.

Sala [01:02:08] That's power.

Peyton [01:02:10] So the two of you—.

Sala [01:02:11] Now how do I get some?

Peyton [01:02:12] Yeah, well you had some.

Sala [01:02:15] Let me tell you, it takes a while though. Now there are, here's a note for people who are interested in this kind of thing. There are people who everyone likes instantly. Those are the people that you send out on union organizing campaigns when it's election time

because they don't have a lot of time and they've got to pull the people in like right away. First impressions count. Then there's me. I like plugging along. To great extent, I've never considered myself an organizer because I don't have that temperament. But after five years, you better believe I've dug myself well into everyone's business. But it takes a while. And after that, you know, you have street cred. Street cred is a great term because it describes exactly what I'm talking about. And then later on it was my turn to be the one whose word you could take to the bank.

Peyton [01:03:19] And that, but that takes kind of building trust.

Sala [01:03:21] That takes, yeah. Absolutely.

Peyton [01:03:23] And when you say temperament, like what do you like, what kind of temper, are you just kind of sociable?

Sala [01:03:29] I can be at times. I'm very sociable with like-minded people and people, obviously, that I'm close to emotionally. But I can be a little standoffish, not in so much in a bad way of I don't like you as more reserved. In fact, I was told that years before when I worked in a manufacturing plant. And during lunch I went behind the tool shop to smoke dope. [Both laughing] Yeah, like the tool shop and they were out there smoking and they told me they had hesitated to invite me because I was, you know, very proper, very reserved, but they said, I guess somebody figured what the hell, all she could do is say no. So they, you know, [chuckle] they passed around a marijuana cigarette and I took it in with a deep breath of the experienced stoner. [Both laugh]

Peyton [01:04:36] They knew you weren't messing around.

Sala [01:04:40] Right. My initial first impression I give to people is that, you know, I'm not like really warm and friendly.

Peyton [01:04:47] And you think that because some of that more front-facing union organizing requires a slightly different temperament?

Sala [01:04:55] Oh yeah. I mean, I have my skillset and they have theirs, so it's nothing to...

Peyton [01:04:59] You need to have a variety, absolutely.

Sala [01:05:02] But, I did organizing as far as simply being seen and talking to people, because that's how they know the union's there.

Peyton [01:05:16] Yeah, yeah, you said making yourself visible to the people.

Sala [01:05:19] I mean, you don't have to be everyone's new BFF.

Peyton [01:05:23] Yeah, but they got to know—

Sala [01:05:25] Now the organizers do. Yeah, it's different.

Peyton [01:05:27] Yeah. But they got to know when, you know, when they're in trouble, who they're going to call. And that's you. Yeah, absolutely.

Sala [01:05:35] And then, you know, after a time, you know, going to a lot of CSEA meetings, you know what I used to love, though, is taking time off and flying to Sacramento. One time, Lorraine and I, what was it? I don't know why Lorraine did this. It was a decent reason. But for

some reason, we had to go, it may have been short notice, or some issue, but we went, we had to go to Sacramento, sometimes it was on short notice. And we couldn't get the flight we needed on a conventional airline. So she got us on one of the small jet services, the kind that hold five to six people? You know what for the you know the CEO business? I should say the wannabe CEO community types and we got on that it was fun. [Laughing] When we got to Sacramento in record time those guys are crazy. Yeah but, you know, we did a lot of that. I loved my contacts from the other UC campuses, especially Berkeley. Now you don't need to have a lot of imagination to wonder what the stewardship at Berkley was like.

Peyton [01:07:02] Yeah, some experienced stoners out there.

Sala [01:07:06] Lou Kaijer, who was our staff guy contact—

Peyton [01:07:09] At Berkely. Yeah.

Sala [01:07:12] Even though—well yeah, he worked for—out of Sacramento even though was stationed at UCLA because UCLA you needed somebody there like 24-7. And Lou always said every day at Berkeley is Halloween. And I kind of see what it was. The other problem with Berkeley is [chuckles] the union, the CSEA stewards, had this split between, [laughs] I can't believe it. Let's see. Between the Leninists and the Trotskyites. I mean, you know, in Riverside, we laughed our asses off over that. [Both laugh] Now, when it did, so, and they did bring some of that, a little too much of that into the stewarding work, mainly by taking certain cases to arbitration that shouldn't have gone, that they maybe took for their, for political reasons.

Peyton [01:08:19] Like, what do you mean? Like do you have an example?

Sala [01:08:21] I don't really, but I had an admission from one of their stewards.

Peyton [01:08:27] Oh, sure.

Sala [01:08:27] Well, what happened was they used to think that that the Riverside contingent didn't like them. And so I got together with one of their stewards and I said, you know, what's this shit about? Well, this is about, you guys are always red baiting. Like we care. And I said it had to do with money and how much of it. UC Berkeley was spending on arbitration. I mean, it got to be a serious worry for us. Maybe we shouldn't have been worried, but we were genuinely worried. And I said, well, no, Bob, this isn't about you guys being reds at all. I said, some of us are pretty much to the left in some cases, and I said, but that's not even an issue for us. What is an issue is you guys are burning up money on arbitrations, and we're afraid that if we get into a jam where we really need to file a lot of them, there isn't going to be any there. And Bob just looked at me and kind of blinked because he was so surprised by this. And so after that, well at least Bob and I always got along fine. And we absolutely, everyone though, absolutely, we absolutely adored the chief steward from the Berkeley contingent. His first name was Howard. I don't know, I can't remember what his last name was, and he was this big guy. I mean he was very tall and he was carrying quite a few pounds too many, and he had a great sense of humor. When we were together howard was always the guy who decided where everybody was going

to go out to eat and when we finally all got there there was already an open beer in front of your place. [Peyton laughing] Which was fine with me.

Peyton [01:10:24] Yeah, he got down to business.

Sala [01:10:26] Yeah, we got down to business and you know, I didn't have to watch my weight at that time. So, I was pretty happy. But if you wanted to have fun, that was who you hung out with. Although I would hang out often with Jim and Lorraine and we'd go do things and we'd laugh our asses off about something. Yeah, Gladys Murphy. Gladys Murphy was Boston Irish here in California and she still had the Boston accent which is is funny enough.

Peyton [01:10:59] Oh yeah.

Sala [01:11:02] She was the queen of snark. She was so funny that even if she made like a cutting remark to me, I had to laugh because it was so damn funny you couldn't—you couldn't be offended. And then I really enjoyed her, you know, there. And she had her buddy, another library assistant named Margaret Ellis. Margaret...was the kind of person who said nothing until the critical moment. And then it was fantastic, you know, it was wonderful. Now together they had the ability to disrupt meetings without doing anything you could ever put your finger on. So what they used to enjoy doing was going to meetings where somebody from human resources was there, and then just somehow subtly baiting them. And there was one guy who would always lose his temper, so he was just game. But nobody—they never got in any trouble because nobody could really put their finger on what those two were doing.

Peyton [01:12:31] So it was all kind of subtly under the radar. And you all, four of you kind of knew each other and would hangout?

Sala [01:12:38] Yeah, we would.

Peyton [01:12:39] I guess you all because you were working in the union together.

Sala [01:12:41] And uh...

Peyton [01:12:42] And Gladys was the president at some point?

Sala [01:12:45] Oh, yes. Every one of them had been the chair and they were sick of it, so when there was fresh meat there, they were all ready. And then we had people who never really went anywhere. There was a man... I think he was a research associate in one of the science departments, not biochemistry. I don't even remember what he looked like, but he was very quiet and his life revolved around work and family and church. So, he said, don't ever... put me on a plane and make me go to any meetings. I don't have the time for that. But anything you needed done on the campus, he would simply do. He was just Mr. Reliable. And then Skip. Skip was—Skip Coffman. Skip was lot of fun, too. And he was kind of Jim Dunlavey's sidekick over in the skilled trades.

Peyton [01:13:55] And, yeah, just maybe like a bigger question for you. Where did you see kind of, you're talking about talking to other unions, like Berkeley, UCLA, like what was UCR's kind of role? Like what was your kind of dynamic? Like your kind of group, what was like in between all

the other colleges? Did you fill like a specific role in that kind of larger union? Or did you have like a specific quality they would kind of prescribe to you?

Sala [01:14:20] I don't know. I didn't see a particular dynamic. It would be fun for you if you could get ahold of someone who had been on one of the other campuses to ask them if UCR had [laughing] a particular dynamic.

Peyton [01:14:36] Yeah, from the outside, for sure. What were you guys doing in Sacramento?

Sala [01:14:39] And you know, going back, usually we were like getting updates with staff, or you know planning organizing strategies—

Peyton [01:14:47] But sorry, I interrupted you.

Sala [01:14:47] —Going over election matters, going over legislation.

Peyton [01:14:54] And all the different kind of leadership from the different campuses would meet in Sacramento?

Sala [01:15:00] Which I loved. We all loved it.

Peyton [01:15:02] Yeah my whole family lives, is from Sacramento so i love it up there.

Sala [01:15:05] So let's see what else I mean, that brings up—

Peyton [01:15:11] Oh no, please, whatever you're gonna say.

Sala [01:15:13] You know, a little more though. I know if you haven't already gotten this impression, women were instrumental in all of this.

Peyton [01:15:20] Yeah, of course.

Sala [01:15:23] Still not really present on the statewide staff of CSEA. But I think they had just begun to make inroads. And I say that because we got to the point after the uniting was done, the bargaining units were set up, and we're heading toward the election of the exclusive bargaining representative.

Peyton [01:15:47] And that's for kind of when you're getting collective bargaining. And that's kind of like the early 80s?

Sala [01:15:51] That's when you have collective bargaining, because the uniting is done, what you don't have is the exclusive representation. We were still operating as far as representation went, we were operating the way CSEA had always operated. Because the people had not yet picked their representatives in an election. So, we're getting close to the election and CSEA began hiring, because there were going to be many more statewide staffpeople to now service a real union, and they were hiring women into those positions, and ultimately you could expect some of those women to then go into the higher levels, maybe even become statewide staff director, or assistant director. Okay, so here we are and we're all excited to death.

Peyton [01:16:52] And when is this about? Do you remember kind of like a decade?

Sala [01:16:57] In the late 80s.

Peyton [01:16:59] Great, cool.

Sala [01:16:59] Cause I had two stints of working there, you know.

Peyton [01:17:03] At the, kind of in the statewide?

[01:17:06] Yeah. Yeah. Working at UCR, two stints. One being school of education and then coming back to biochemistry.

Peyton [01:17:13] Oh, so there was a gap in between.

Sala [01:17:14] Yes, there was gap. Not a very long one.

Peyton [01:17:17] Yeah, what were you doing in between?

Sala [01:17:19] This and that.

Peyton [01:17:19] Yeah. Yeah.

Sala [01:17:20] So I... I think, no, I think I worked at that time. I worked for, as a temp, and then I even worked for several months for the temp agency. They had me handle their office.

Peyton [01:17:37] Yeah, because you were good.

Sala [01:17:38] Yeah, I was good. And the other lady I think was out on some kind of sick leave. It was very sparse, literally a one-person office anyway.

Peyton [01:17:48] Yeah, but you came back to UCR, the collective bargaining is ramping up...

Sala [01:17:51] So, I think it's like. The late 80s, and we're getting ready for the election, there were already some bargaining units, statewide units, that we knew we weren't going to have, okay, so you don't put effort into it. You know you're not going to get the jobs. We were, some of us were not certain about the, the UC, the scientists, the people like the research associates, and the other people who were professional scientists. They worked in laboratories, they did experiments, you know, they monitored things. And we weren't sure about them, you know, because again, there was a statewide organization for scientists. Yeah. And— maybe a couple of other units, but we figured we're going to get the big units. We're going to get the clerical. We're going to get the skilled trades. Oh, and the actual librarians were going to be off in a unit of their own. And I think in the uniting, as it turned out, I think the librarians—No, I think the library assistants were left in the statewide clerical unit, but the librarians were cut off and they were going to go with AFT.

Peyton [01:19:26] So there were other organizations operating on campus, recruiting?

Sala [01:19:31] Oh yeah. Like I said, I was friends with David McArthur from the AFT and knew Ralph from AFSCME. Well, a lot of people knew Ralph, and like I said maybe Ralph was crazy, but that wasn't our problem. And you had to run a union. Oh, let me tell you an anecdote about Ralph and Gladys, and it's kind of sad. Again, there was a young man named Paul Titus who worked in the library and he was under Gladys's supervision. To the extent that, you know, there was any supervision for temp, temp type jobs. Well, anyway, he let, he somehow he let his politics, I think, get the better of him. And he set up a situation where Gladys had to give him some kind of warning letter telling him that if he didn't stop doing x, y, and z, there could be discipline, he could lose his job, which was odd for a temp anyway, because they had no due process at all. They had no property interest in that employment.

Peyton [01:20:31] So she didn't have to give him that letter, but she was...

Sala [01:20:33] Probably not. Well anyway, he made a big deal out of it, and he got Ralph, he said, my union rep is going to have to talk to you about this. So okay guys, it's okay, you know, tell Ralph, and Ralph comes in. So Ralph comes in, and they start to talk about Paul's behavior. And I don't care if you use Paul Titus' name, cause screw him, he deserves it. And Gladys starts to tell Ralph about what went on, why she gave him this letter. And Ralph turned to Paul and said, is that right? And Paul said, yes. And... Ralph said, okay, you and I need to go outside. [Aside] And believe me, I've been there and done that. Oh, only I don't think I started yelling. I think Ralph may have started yelling. Gladys couldn't hear exactly what was being said, but Ralph and Paul came in and Ralph said okay, yeah, I think that's it. [Both laugh] I mean you might want to, you know, you might wanna believe in the workers and how they have nothing left to lose but their chains, but there are some things when you go, "the hell with you people, you need to lose your chains!" [Laughter] And after that, nobody i knew from CSEA would talk to Paul because he lied to Ralph so all the officers in CSEA he was persona non grata. He really was. He lied to Ralph, and that was kind of it, but we all knew there's no way Gladys would ever have done that if she did not have cause.

Peyton [01:22:41] Yeah, without reason.

Sala [01:22:42] Even then I think Paul got more rights out of the situation.

Peyton [01:22:47] [Laughing] He already had it good! Yeah, oh wow. Yeah.

Sala [01:22:50] But you know that was—he was persona non grata, I never heard about him.

[Both laughing] I mean he didn't go swimming with the fishes, this isn't the teamsters.

Peyton [01:23:03] [Chuckling] Sure, yeah, let's be clear, yeah, yeah.

Sala [01:23:04] But anyway let me catch you up because then the the bottom fell out from under everything. We got a call to come to Sacramento where we were told, and this was very shortly before the elections were to take place, we were called CSEAs pulling out. No, actually it wasn't that short of time, but it was a surprise. Okay, CSEA was pulling out, and they pulled out of pretty much every unit. Except for the professional scientists, which, just as a footnote, they went to elections and lost. [Exclaiming] well of course they lost!

Peyton [01:23:48] All that work.

Sala [01:23:49] Well, first of all, the Union of Professional Scientists, and that was its name, the Union of Professional Scientists was—.

Peyton [01:23:57] [Joking] UPS?

Sala [01:23:57] Yeah, it was very much, I think, organized in great part, by a man named Ron Blair. And Ron Blair had been a CSEA activist.

Peyton [01:24:08] Is that Ron with an R or Juan with a J? Like, is his name Ron, like Ronald, or is it Juan, like?

Sala [01:24:16] Oh, Ron. Ron with an R. Ron Blair.

Peyton [01:24:18] Thank you, OK. Ron Blair, OK, perfect. OK, sorry.

Sala [01:24:22] And of course, so Ron Blair already, you know, was unhappy with CSEA, so he kind of, I guess he started his own union. And then, so Union of Professional Scientists won, but I had to go back, we had to go back to our members and have a big meeting and tell them what happened. Not one of the best days of my life.

Peyton [01:24:53] Yeah i mean were you like the president when that happened? Oh man. Like how did that feel? I mean all that work that you've been kind of building.

Sala [01:25:01] Well, we were going to have a union, okay. Yeah, not all that work was wasted. Okay, then the emphasis turned away from organizing from CSEA to trying not to let AFSCME completely destroy the party. They sent people there. I don't know where they found these folks. They were just—goofed everything. One thing you have to understand, and this is something I hope that SEIU has finally learned about being a union in the county of Riverside, our ways here are different. And sometimes, even though people may be politically radical, they may not be on parade or, you know, they may not be working at it 24/7. Little quieter, little more proper, perhaps, a little more reticent. When you come on with the big power to the people stuff, it's not appreciated. You better have substance and you better have a lot of it. And the AFSCME people didn't. And on top of that—

Peyton [01:26:13] There's a lot of smoke and not a lot—

Sala [01:26:14] They had one, they had one woman who I think was an alcoholic, and she, well if she hadn't been one by the time she arrived, she was going to be one by the time she left, [both chuckle] and she got too personally involved with some of the, the AFSCME did have one activist who was really toxic, and the staff person got overly involved with her, to the extent that— And I was involved in this first-hand, which is why I can tell it to you, it got to a point where, oh, and then there was a man there who said things that were inappropriate. I mean, not necessarily sexually, sexual innuendo or anything like that. It was more like he talked to people in a way you don't really talk to people in Riverside. Okay? And he was not making friends and influencing people. It got to the point where AFSCME sent out, oh, it got to a point where my executive board came to me and they said, "Get rid of the AFSCME reps. Before the torpedo the election. We don't even care. We don't really—we're not gonna have CSEA. Oh, you have to have somebody, but they're they're messing it up. Get rid of them." Yeah, so I wrote a letter to Vernon Watkins who was the head of AFSCME.

Peyton [01:27:53] Like the statewide?

Sala [01:27:54] Oh, yeah, and they were gone. Well, what also happened too in the meantime is, I guess they could see that the AFSCME campaign was flailing, badly in the units that could have AFSCME representation.

Peyton [01:28:09] Yeah. In Riverside.

Sala [01:28:12] And they, no, statewide.

Peyton [01:28:14] Oh, statewide, okay. Yeah.

Sala [01:28:15] But also in Riverside, it was, you know, the bargaining units have to be statewide, but each campus, they can make or break a statewide election.

Peyton [01:28:25] Totally. Yeah.

Sala [01:28:27] So, there was a woman named Arlene Holt who was coming out from above. I think she was like, kind of next in charge below Vernon Watkins, and she came out, and she was having to do a lot of hands-on, which was okay. I mean, they should be sending higher-ups out for an election of that magnitude, but she was very put out with what she had seen, and, she used to have a lot contact with us. To try to help her out. But one time I was at a meeting, where—an organizing meeting—and I guess Arlene had already had enough of the other two women. And she made a crack in public mentioning my name, saying, "Well, thank goodness Sala is here so we can get something done." [Both laugh] Then this is in front of her staff.

Peyton [01:29:35] Her other people, yeah.

Sala [01:29:36] Those staff people weren't...

Peyton [01:29:38] Weren't super happy about that. Yeah. So then what what ended up happening? Like who ended up winning the units?

Sala [01:29:45] No, I don't know. I think it AFSCME won, well, for one, for like the custodial people and groundskeepers. Et cetera. It took them many, many years. The university just would not negotiate a contract.

Peyton [01:30:11] Mmm, yeah, yeah.

Sala [01:30:18] I mean, the UC could have taught Henry Ford how to be anti-union. Yeah, I mean they may not have hired goons, but the only reason for that is they didn't want to spend the money. [Peyton laughs] So, you know, there was an organization that came in much later called QUE. Its acronym was Q. I believe it was an independent union.

Peyton [01:30:47] Like, Q-U-E, or something?

Sala [01:30:49] QUE, and it attempted for many years to represent the clericals. I don't know if it ever got a contract, but I know someone who was a member of QUE, who is now like doing the adjunct professor gig at Cal State San Diego—in fact, he's the son of a UCR professor. His name is Nathan Elstrand, he's Norman Elstrand's son, and Tracy Kahn's son also.

Peyton [01:31:28] [A librarian pops in to let us know we have seven minutes left of the room rental] Hi. Yeah, sure. Thank you.

Sala [01:31:31] Nathan was a member of QUE.

Peyton [01:31:33] Was she British? Was she a British? Sorry. Sorry. It was just distracting me. I was like, oh. So they were... he was a member of QUE.

Sala [01:31:41] He was a member of QUE. And I remember that he, just to show you how bad things, how cheap UC is, he was at Davis for a while and he was running some kind of very small program. And yet, but he was being paid the salary of a clerk.

Peyton [01:32:02] Oh, yeah, so they're not interested in kind of encouraging that kind of work. Yeah, I mean, well, this has been like... really amazing.

Sala [01:32:09] And you know he has his PhD and ta-da adjunct. Oh, please.

Peyton [01:32:14] Yeah, of course. Has to run the gamut for everybody, but... I mean, over all of your kind of work, I think looking back kind of in CSEA, like were there any kind of like big wins you think you were the most proud of?

Sala [01:32:41] I don't remember the big wins. We didn't, UCR, let me think for just a moment, I'm trying to think of specific cases. You know, getting a contract would have been a big win, and we would have gotten a contract. We would have beaten it out of them, that's for sure. I have no doubt about that. The big win was often keeping people on the job when their livelihoods were being threatened. We had a lot of that. Either an arbitrator came and said, screw it, you have no case against this person, put him back, or we'd humiliate the whole department with an administrative review. And usually we already had gathered material. You see, one of the things that was successful for us, too, was we had spent time gathering the materials before anyone was even assigned. So whoever was ultimately assigned to investigate the complaints, there it is. And that was an important thing I also learned, which is front load their work. They will be more likely to see it your way if they already have your material there instead of having to go in going where do I even start asking the question. Of course, they would have the written complaint. But, the written complaint is worth the paper it's written on.

Peyton [01:34:16] Yeah, but you've created a structure that they...

Sala [01:34:18] There's now a structure and there is, should we say, when possible, corroborating evidence. Now, it's not always possible to corroborate evidence because even arbitrators, although they seem ready to admit everything into evidence, and then they say, well, I'll give it a to-do wait. They may frown on evidence they feel that you obtained improperly. For instance, confidential financial information that you simply hand—maybe an arbitrator might take it off, but handing it over to an administrator from another department, that might not be so good.

Peyton [01:35:02] Yeah. So there's kind of a tightrope that you're walking of how to help people, yeah. And then I guess, I mean, they're gonna kick us out of this room, so we're gonna have to wrap up. But I just kind of lastly wanted to ask, I mean I'm a new member of my union.

Speaker 3 [01:35:15] What union?

Peyton [01:35:16] We're just like the graduate student. I'm such a bad union member. I don't know the full name of it.

Sala [01:35:21] See, because at one point also, larger unions went into the public sector big time.

Peyton [01:35:27] Oh, yeah, yeah.

Sala [01:35:28] So I know that a graduate assistants union started up that was actually affiliated with the steel workers. It had an office here in Riverside over on Lamart.

Peyton [01:35:41] Oh, we're UAW 4811.

Sala [01:35:47] Oh, UAW, that's the one. I'll also contact a lady I know who's retired who can tell you about what we called UPTE. And that was, oh, UPTE was United Professional and Technical Employees. I think they came into the vacuum after CSEA bailed.

Peyton [01:36:10] Ah. Yeah. Did you ever find out why? Why they pulled out? So suddenly?

Sala [01:36:14] No.

Peyton [01:36:15] That's so crazy.

Sala [01:36:18] No, it was their—I don't know, but I think as long as I live, I'll remember the expression on the faces of the staff who were tasked with actually directing the whole organizing campaign. Their faces were pale. They looked like they hadn't slept for 48 hours. They were rumpled. They could barely keep from crying.

Peyton [01:36:48] Yeah. Poor things.

Sala [01:36:50] I know. You know what? Because I think they bailed because we would have won. And now what would have happened is we would have become, not everyone in CSEA liked us. Don't forget we had bargaining units in state civil service. And they didn't like higher education. And had we, I think what happened was somebody realized if CSEA won all the bargaining units where they had registered to be the agent. That was like....they were going to have be stuck with us forever.

Peyton [01:37:41] Yeah. They weren't prepared for that.

Sala [01:37:42] Yeah, and so they just bailed and they didn't bail because they thought they were going to lose, they bailed because they thought they'd win...We knew we'd win.

Peyton [01:37:54] Yeah. Wow.

Sala [01:37:55] I mean not that we were complacent. We knew we'd win. [Sala stands and stretches as we pack up]. Ooh. Getting up from sitting is always—

Peyton [01:38:03] I mean, I'm trying to be a better member of my union. I don't know if you have any advice for kind of young women trying to get involved in kind of union work, kind of some tips for success, for me personally, more than anything.

Sala [01:38:20] I don't know if I do, of course, if I wake up in the middle.

Peyton [01:38:28] [Sala refers to the archival material she had brought to the interview] Would you like to keep the, can you archive this stuff?

Peyton [01:38:30] Oh, I definitely, I could. Oh, thank you so much. I can just take pictures if you want them back. Or I can make copies and get them back to you.

Sala [01:38:37] That'll work, that'll work.

Peyton [01:38:38] Okay, that'd be amazing.

Sala [01:38:39] Because the copies, if I look at them, they might help me remember more. I am also going to talk to some people about calling you. I want to specifically talk to maybe Mooby Miller, who now lives in Bullhead City, because she was UPTE. And she could tell you about them. And she can also tell you about being a woman in the lab.

Peyton [01:39:04] Yeah, both of my, I have two housemates and they're both biologists in their labs. I mean, that'd be super helpful. I mean think this has been really, this is so stellar. Like thank you so much.

Sala [01:39:12] And then Marty Harris, who works for what we used to call Little CSEA, which isn't so little, the California School Employees Association. I think Marty retired. I'm not sure. I saw her not long ago. And we're on Facebook, but again, I'll ask both of them to get in touch with you and tell them why and what a gas it is.

Peyton [01:39:39] That would be amazing.

Sala [01:39:41] I hate when I think of the future, when things like this will still happen and young people will go, how long has this been going on? Didn't anyone ever try to do anything?

Peyton [01:39:55] But yeah, that's what we try to do with oral history, is try to keep that stuff alive.