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Interview; Angelo Callea; 04-27-1994

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Angelo J. Callea

Mr. Callea was a member of Local 43 (White) of the American Federation of Musicians, Buffalo, New York. He invited me to his work place, Local 92 of the AFM, Buffalo, New York, on April 27, 1994 for an interview.

Q: What I want first is the correct spelling of your last name?

C: Last name?

Q: First name.

C: Angelo. A-N-G-E-L-O.

Q: Uh huh.

C: G-E-L-O.

Q: And do you have a middle initial, sir?

C: J.

Q: J. And Callea, how do you spell Callea?

C: Callea.

Q: Callea.

C: C-A-L-L-E-A.

Q: I'm sorry. Date of birth?

C: Uh, 10/7/28.

Q: Uh huh, 28. Um, how long have you been in Buffalo?

C: Born here.

Q: Really?

C: Uh huh.

Q: And when did you join the musicians' union?

C: 43--I joined in 1946.

Q: Oh my goodness. Offices held?

C: Uh, secretary treasurer since 1976.

Q: Wow. 76. Besides being in administration, is there a, an instrument that you play?

C: Trombone.

Q: Trombone?

C: Bass and piano, and I'm an arranger and composer.

Q: Bass, piano. But, I imagine since '76, you've been pretty much absorbed in...

C: No.

Q: No? You still...

C: Active.

Q: You still get out and play?

C: Active. Oh yeah.

Q: Hmm. Do you...Is there a band that you're with?

C: Well, my band.

Q: You have your own band?

C: This is like a Variety Club Telethon Orchestra. I've been there for let's see...since 1967.

Q: [Tape Indescribable]

C: And I played the very first _____ telethon.

Q: Oh my God.

C: How many years?

Q: And you've been with that band since...

C: My band, yeah.

Q: That's your band. You've been with it since, for 20 some odd years?

C: Well, over...26, 7 years.

Q: Wow.

C: Maybe more.

Q: And you...

C: Also I've traveled with big bands like, uh, Tommy Dorsey, _____ Shaw, that kind of band. Here, I'll show you.

Q: Tommy Dorsey and what was the other bands name?

C: [Tape Indescribable]

Q: This is you?

C: Yeah.

Q: Can I have this?

C: Sure.

Q: Alright! Now I'm happy. Now, um, what kind of activity did you involve yourself in during the merger years? Do you...

C: During the merger I was just a member.

Q: Merger. Well, sometimes the best recollection, recollections come from just the members because, you know, you can't remember everything. And I've talked to people who were on the merger committees...

C: Yeah.

Q: ...who were officers at the time, and shoot, they can't remember everything that was going on.

C: I was at a big meeting as Sergeant-at-Arms.

Q: At the Statler?

C: Statler.

Q: You were at that one. I talked to Frank, in fact, I'm going to see Frank Primerano this, uh, this Saturday because I'm going to go see the show down at the BPO. Just a member. But you were at the Statler?

C: Yeah.

Q: You were the Sergeant-at-Arms.

C: Myself and another person you might want to contact. His name is Dick Riederer. I told him about you, and he said he, uh, he'd be more...

- Q: Dick Rieder?
- C: Riederer. R-I-E-D-E-R-E-R. He is now the vice president.
- Q: Here?
- C: Here?
- Q: How would I get ahold of him? Through this office or...
- C: You can call him at home, 886-5655, or his office. It's uh, uh, 695-3730. That's The Department of Labor. He works for _____.
- Q: Alright! Well, I appreciate that. Uh, I know a little about the Statler Meeting. Uh, correct me if I'm wrong. According to what I've heard, the reason it was called is that negotiations had been going on for a year and nobody really knew, nobody in '43 knew, uh, that, that was going on. It was just kind of plopped on the...
- C: Well, it was _____ the two mergers.
- Q: Uh huh.
- C: The, uh, the black local.
- Q: Uh huh. Can you describe, to your best recollection, what the Statler Meeting was like?
- C: The Statler Meeting was something like, uh, uh, they come up with some kind of a proposal to add to the officers. Uh...Are we on tape?
- Q: Uh huh. But, I, I, again, like I said, even though I've got you, on tape, I'll put it in typewritten form, and if you don't want it quoted, I can't quote it. So...
- C: Well, I'm just...
- Q: Yeah, sure. We're on, we're on tape. We'll get everything here.
- C: In other words, in their merger claim, they had, uh, they had had, uh uh...Something was mailed out to the members saying that the, uh, officers from the Local 533 were in the process of a merger would get certain salaries.

- Q: Uh huh.
- C: And that was what that meeting was all about, and _____, it was like totally absurd, you know, for the, uh, Union to have like double officers.
- Q: Uh, I see. So that was something that they had. See I was told that, that...You're mentioning a, a stipulation. I was told that one of the main reasons the Statler Meeting was called is that, even though everybody knew that the merger was mandated, they weren't aware that negotiations had been going on for a year. The 43 officers at the time, which included Rizzo and a couple others, they had been meeting with national officers along with 533, making plans, proposals, and all of a sudden it was just kind of dropped on the general membership as well as the new officers that were to be elected in, uh, '68.
- C: Well, the plan that they came up with is what that, that...Well, that meeting was all about. That's why they rented the Statler because it was so, it was so...
- Q: Uh huh.
- C: Important.
- Q: Uh huh.
- C: And you, and you needed the space for the most of the members. And they were...
- Q: And that was the main grievance.
- C: That was it.
- Q: That the, the uh...
- C: Well, it's financially like...It was like idiotic.
- Q: So they...
- C: There was no...The Union didn't have that kind of might.
- Q: So when it, when it...officers from 533 to get certain salaries...
- C: Yeah.
- Q: Hmm. So it would be like you would have two sets of officers.

C: Yes. That's _____.

Q: And was there a time frame put on that?

C: It was voted down at that particular meeting. It's pretty...That was a pretty hot meeting, if you know what I'm talking about.

Q: That's what I heard. Well, uh, that's understandable _____.

C: Dick can help you on that one. He's _____.

Q: Uh, do you remember when the merger was first mentioned to you all?

C: Well, if...What year is that minutes from? '68?

Q: Uh huh.

C: Right.

Q: That's when...This is when things got hot?

C: Probably '68. What's...Was that meeting at the Statler? I think that was in '69 _____.

Q: '68.

C: Oh no. Wait a minute '68.

Q: '68.

C: Yeah.

Q: So because, I mean, uh...

C: They had to come up with another plan.

Q: Yeah.

C: That's what happened.

Q: Do you remember...

C: I mean the reason why it was voted down was no money. Money wasn't...They didn't have that kind of money to have, uh, two sets of officers. It was absurd.

Q: Chicago. There were mergers going on in the early '60s, even before the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Do you remember in the early '60s the merger of Chicago Local

1028? I've talked to the president of the Chicago local. In fact, he sent me a lot of stuff like this which has been helpful. He's been great. In fact, he wants a copy of my thesis.

C: To the best of my recollection, we knew that we had to merge and that was it. And it didn't matter to them anyway.

Q: So you don't recall a date on that when it started coming up at meetings?

C: Probably the year of '68.

Q: '68. So really, there wasn't really a whole lot of talk about it...

C: No.

Q: In the...

C: _____ you seen some of those minutes. They were like, they were, like, uh, of the other local.

Q: So it didn't, didn't really become an issue until, uh, '68?

C: Well, the big thing was what I just mentioned.

Q: Uh huh.

C: Where they expected the members to go along with two sets of officers.

Q: Uh huh.

C: That was it.

Q: Uh huh.

C: As I, I recall, I don't, I don't think the, uh, 533 was really...

Q: They didn't want to merge.

C: They didn't want to.

Q: Uh huh. How did you all feel? Even though you knew you were, you knew it was mandated. You had to merge.

C: How did I feel?

Q: How did you feel? How did the general membership feel? What was your.

C: They didn't mind.

Q: They didn't mind?

C: They knew it had to come.

[INTERRUPTED BY PRIVATE PHONE CONVERSATION]

Q: Yeah. I won't keep you. I know you're a busy man. I won't keep you too much longer. Um, didn't mind, and that seemed to be the perception of the general membership as well as far as you can recall?

C: Yeah, well they _____.

Q: Yeah, no big deal.

C: Mostly there were some of our members that _____ belong to 533.

Q: Is that right? You played jazz. Do you remember any names? 'Cause I, I've heard that same thing, but nobody seems to be, to be able to remember any names, which is understandable. It's been a long time.

C: Well, I don't, I don't' think that at that time the local, their local, cared who joined, and we didn't care who joined here.

Q: Yeah.

C: I know that they didn't want to merge _____ because it was mentioned to me.

Q: Uh huh.

C: They were very happy and it was a small local, I think.

Q: Why do you think they didn't want to merge?

C: They were happy the way they were, you know. They were independent.

Q: Did, uh, the Club come up as far as, uh.

C: The Club was something separate.

Q: Yeah. Did everybody know that at the time?

C: Well, I think the, the uh, the majority of people who were interested enough knew. Like we use to go there, too. I mean, you know...

Q: Uh huh.

C: Jam.

Q: Uh huh.

C: It was a big thing to go to the Club.

Q: Yeah, that's what I heard. That seemed to be the place to...

C: Every Sunday, you know, they had pre-rehearsals _____. It was always open to anybody.

Q: So from your join...From the time that you joined 43 on there, you really didn't experience a whole lot of friction with the 533.

C: No way.

Q: No way, ha?

C: No way.

Q: Everybody did their own thing?

C: They were...Well, sure they did. You know, we did our thing with them.

Q: Do you think it's because you cater to different styles of music? Because 43 musicians concern themselves with BPO, society music, uh...Where as you got, you know, 533, um, dealing, um, almost exclusively in jazz. [Tape Indescribable].

C: I don't think that even...

Q: Do you think that...

C: ...that even entered the, uh...

Q: You don't think that was as big of a factor as I had found out? 'Cause that's what everybody seems to be telling me. That that's probably one of the main reasons why there wasn't a whole lot of friction. Your, uh, [Tape Indescribable].

C: Everybody respected everybody. It was like a mutual respect.

Q: Uh huh.

C: Had a lot of friends in that local, you know. We worked...

Q: I heard that...

C: We worked together with different bands, you know.

Q: That's what I've heard. I heard that even, even with some of the heated negotiations and pounding out the details of the plan, that you all went out and had beers together...

C: Well, yeah.

Q: ...afterwards. That things were pretty good. I've heard some nice stories.

C: Oh yeah.

Q: In fact, tomorrow I'm suppose to visit with Willie Dorsey, who I'm sure you know from 533.

C: Yeah, he was in on the merger.

Q: Uh huh, uh huh, yeah. Um.

C: After they did merger, I was the Sergeant-at-Arms.

Q: You were?

C: Yeah.

Q: So with 92, you were the Sergeant, um...Do you think the merger made things better, in your opinion than the perception that, that you... Do you think that...

C: I don't think so.

Q: See...

C: It was something that had to be done. As far as I know. You remember.

Q: So it really didn't make things better. Do you think it was...Do you think the economy played into it because that's something that I've heard. You got the Labor Management Act, you got the Taft Hartley Bill,

uh, which kind of was a turning point, I think, as far as live music goes, and according to what everybody tells me, there just wasn't a whole lot of work around, you know. Jazz faded out. Do you think that played a part of there being no work? 'Cause back in the '60s and, ah, even early 70's...

C: Well, the work was drying up, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

C: I don't know if that had anything to do with it.

Q: So you don't think that the, uh, merged union made things better, but it had to be done. That's the bottom line.

C: That's the bottom line.

Q: It had to be done.

C: Made it.

Q: I have heard that, ah, after the merger, um, 533 members were kind of scarce at meetings. There didn't seem to be a whole lot of interest or participation in, uh, in meetings. Do you think they felt swallowed up by the large membership of 43?

C: I don't think so.

Q: No? Do you have any idea of why maybe they, they kind of shyed away from activity?

C: Well, that I, I can't answer.

Q: Or did you not even think about it?

C: I can't answer because it was new, you know.

Q: Yeah.

C: What they did, uh, with their general meetings...We don't get our own members.

Q: Sure.

C: You know what I'm saying. See some of those, uh, minutes way back...A quorum was hired [Tape Indescribable]

Q: That's what I heard.

- C: Unless it was, like, into the pocketbook.
- Q: Yeah.
- C: Where you were, like, raising dues, or things, like, they come to.
- Q: A grievance that I heard, which was, um, a sore spot for 533 members in merging...Just to get back to the merger. There was one thing that I just remembered. Um, they had that work dues tax.
- C: They had it before we did.
- Q: Yeah. And they all said that you didn't have it, didn't want it.
- C: [Tape Indescribable]. We had it here one time.
- Q: Yeah, that was mentioned. But at the time of the merger, and afterwards, it wasn't incorporated. They were concerned...
- C: First of all, like you can't enforce that...
- Q: Yeah.
- C: ...without a single, uh, engagement, uh, by-law. You know what I mean? Where everybody's forced to, uh, _____.
- Q: Uh huh.
- C: So we don't have it, didn't have it in the by-laws. So you can't enforce it unless, you, you...In other words, if you don't know where our members are playing, you can't send them a bill.
- Q: Sure.
- C: I mean, it's more or less like the honor system. That's what it is. It's still in effect now. In 1985 [Tape Indescribable].
- Q: There was a complaint about, uh, also brought up, the insurance policy. Y'all didn't have one, did you? Or it...
- C: Yes we did.
- Q: Or was it as much as the 533 insurance policy? That was a concern. Do you remember?

C: Well, all I can tell you is that the, uh, members voted the insurance out.

Q: The 43 members?

C: No, no. Here let me explain this to you. When Local 43...It had a policy for \$500.

Q: Yeah. A \$500 policy. Because I think 533's was \$1,000.

C: Well, I don't...That I don't know.

Q: No. \$500 policy.

C: In the Local itself, like, uh, was the carrier.

Q: Uh huh.

C: In later years when the members start getting older and older, like they were dropping like flies, it depleted the treasure.

Q: Uh huh.

C: You know what I'm saying?

Q: Uh huh.

C: Then like when we, uh, uh, at one point, they come up with a death assessment. After eight deaths, all the members were assessed \$.50.

Q: Death assessment. That's interesting.

C: I could give you an idea about that. I still have...In other words...Then at the end of the, uh...Here, take a look at this. It was in '83 and '84. These are the people that died.

Q: Gracious sakes!

C: So we had to assess all the members after the eighth death.

Q: Wow. Look at that. That's a bunch isn't it.

C: Yep. And it got, you know, as the years went on, got more and more. So finally when we, uh, uh, went with an insurance carrier, everybody was, uh, we got the \$1,000. You know life insurance.

C: Uh huh.

C: But, because of the ages of the members. We're all like... Half the membership were over, like 60 years old. Things like that. The insurance company kept on jacking up the premiums. So now that meant we had to go to the members and inform of a dues raise. It didn't go here. It went to the insurance and finally got out of hand. Then we were dropped by it. We had so many deaths. The older people, you know, the majority, that the insurance company, like, dropped us.

Q: Hmm. What years are we talking about here?

C: We're talking from '85. Thinking '85 on up to, with, to '93.

Q: Do you remember, uh, what the insurance policy was like prior to that?

C: Prior to that, it was the \$500.

Q: That's it. So, so, at the time of the merger, it was still that \$500 policy?

C: [Tape Indescribable].

Q: Uh huh.

C: See the insurance went up to, see, up to, 93 from 85.

Q: Uh huh.

C: Then in '86, we still had it.

Q: How did your life membership work?

C: How's it work?

Q: Yeah, how does it work?

C: Originally...

Q: Back in the '60s.

C: Let's, let's say when I joined.

Q: Yeah.

C: Okay?

Q: Uh huh.

C: It, the _____ was like a contract, when you joined and, uh, you would be dues exempt after you reached 30 years of uninterrupted, you know...

Q: Uh huh.

C: In good standing, in other words. You wouldn't, uh, qualify if you were erased or something like that, unless you're dropped out for whatever reason, for more than a year. But if you had, uh, like continual membership...

Q: For 30 years?

C: Yeah.

[INTERRUPTED BY PRIVATE PHONE CONVERSATION]

C: Okay.

Q: You were explaining the life member policy in the '60s. How it worked. Thirty years...

C: Thirty years...

Q: ...and you were set.

C: ...and you were exempt, nothing.

Q: Nothing. Now when you, as part of the merger negotiation, if you remember, how did that...

C: That had nothing to do with it.

Q: How did it...

C: At that time, that, uh \$500 policy was in effect right up to it.

Q: Would you, uh, would you, uh...Did 43 merging with 533 honor the years of...Say you got somebody from 533. Now he's a 92 member who had 25 years in 533...

C: Oh yeah.

Q: Would it carry over?

C: Oh yeah.

Q: For five more years in 92, and they were...

C: Oh yeah. You had to do that.

Q: ...carried over?

C: Yeah, that was part of the merger agreement. You can't dump them because, like they, they had nothing to do with it.

Q: Yeah, I just wanted to clear that up. I wasn't, I, I...That's what I thought.

C: Here we go.

Q: That's okay.

[INTERRUPTED BY PHONE CONVERSATION]

C: Musician's Union...How you doing Dick?...Listen, I have a, a person here that...Remember, I mentioned to you? Uh, he's doing some kind of a study on the merger of the locals...

Q: Tell him my masters thesis.

C: 533. I did mention it to you at what time...Yeah...

Q: Can I talk to him?

C: Yeah, he's here. He would like to talk to you. [Tape Indescribable]. No, no. He's a student at, uh, UB, I believe.

Q: Buff State

C: Hang on a second. Dick Reiderer.

Q: Hello, kind sir. My name is Will Kayatin. I'm a graduate student at Buffalo State and, uh, I'm finishing my masters thesis and it deals with the merger of Locals 43 and 533. And, uh, I'm having a nice visit with, uh, Mr. Callea, here, who I pronounced his name wrong again.

C: Callea

Q: Callea. He's gonna chase me out of here for that. But I've been told that a visit with you might be helpful because, uh, you know, there's only so much you can get from the minutes. And, uh, there's nothing like the personal touch. In fact, there seems to be a lot of interest in my masters thesis. Uh, the National wants a copy of it. I've had correspondence with Chicago 10-208; they want a copy of it. There's a professor at Columbia University that wants a copy of it. So it

seems to be a pretty good contribution if I do a nice job and, uh, the more help I, uh, get, the better it'll turn out...You know...Yeah, so, uh, if I could call you, maybe this evening at home, unless you've got your calendar there. I'd love to come visit with you here at the office since I know how to get down here now. Uh, whatever's convenient for you. My schedule's flexible. I don't have any classes. I'm just finishing my, my, thesis then I start my Ph.D. at Albany in September. Um, is...Unless you know what your schedule's like, and you can tell me when to meet you here? Whatever's good for you, sir. 'Cause I can sit down here. I live at, uh, on campus at Buffalo State...Ah, no, no, um. It's up on Elmwood. Buffalo State. So about, what, three or four miles, three or four miles from here...Oh you do? What street do you live on?...Elmwood and Lafayette. Okay. Would it be more convenient to meet here at the, at, uh, Local 92?...Be better to meet at your house...Yeah, your house would be fine, if that's okay with you?...Yeah...When, when...No, I love dogs. I was going to be a dog doctor originally. Now I'm a historian [Tape Indescribable]. That's fine. When could, could I come? Is it, uh...Okay. I have your number and I will do that, sir. Yes sir. Look forward to talking to you. Do you need to talk to Mr. Callea? Ok, here you go.

Q: I think we just about covered everything. Uh, is there anything else you could think of about the, uh, merger. Any friction in the merger that stands out other than what we...

C: There was none whatsoever except the, ah, how, how the Federation, like set up this ridiculous time table of how they should be paid. Naturally, we had to vote on it _____.

Q: How did everybody feel about, uh, having a national intervention?

C: They didn't like it.

Q: Didn't like it.

C: But they knew it had to be done.

Q: Yeah. See according to the Federation, they gave you, oh both, plenty of time to work it out.

C: About a year.

Q: And that's uh, that's, uh, why they got involved.

C: Well, the people involved at that, at that time would, uh...In fact, there's probably only one guy left.
[Tape Indescribable].

Q: Yep. I think it was Hal Davis at first. Then, he couldn't get things going so they brought in....

C: _____ he was a lawyer. He was, I think, the vice president.

Q: Uh huh. He was on the Executive Board.

C: Was he vice president?

Q: Uh. [Tape Indescribable].

C: He eventually became president.

Q: Did he? I didn't know that.

C: [Tape Indescribable].

Q: Is that right?

C: Yeah. Nice guy.

Q: I think, I think that's about it unless there's anything else that you could think of.

C: That was it. I, the, uh...

Q: Any stories or recollections, or...?

C: No.

Q: That's pretty much it in a nutshell, ha?

C: There was no friction amongst the two locals. None at all.

Q: How do you think the black white thing played into it?

C: I don't think that existed.

Q: No? How come?

C: I don't know. Everybody knew each other.

Q: See, I'm from Dallas, Texas.

C: Yeah.

Q: And, uh, um, so, it, uh, it's, uh...The black white issue's very interesting to me. And even though, uh, I think the atmosphere's a lot more liberal up North, always has been, um, the black white issue still exists to this day, and it, and it's fascinating to me that a lot of folks that I've talked to have said the same thing, that there really wasn't that big of an issue when it came to color. Was that because you just had a good working relationship? Was it because, you know, you catered to different styles of music so you didn't have much interaction? Was it just that music broke the color line? What was it, in your opinion.

C: My opinion?

Q: Uh huh.

C: I would say that there was just like a respect for each other, musically and otherwise. I worked with a lot of mixed bands and you learn from them, but they learn from you. It's a mutual thing.

Q: Well, with that, we will close.

C: Okay.

Q: We will close.