

SERIES: Caucus: New Jersey with Steve Adubato
TITLE: Caucus Up-Close: Inside Carpentry
SHOW #: 2075
TIME: 26:46

STEVE ADUBATO, host:

Building a future in carpentry, next on CAUCUS: NEW JERSEY.

Announcer: Funding for this edition of CAUCUS: NEW JERSEY has been provided by the New Jersey Carpenter Contractor Trust, union carpenters and contractors working together, working for you; Johnson & Johnson, the worldwide health care products company; New Jersey Natural Gas, proud to support education in our communities; QualCare, Inc., a local-managed care company covering 550,000 New Jersey residents; and Verizon Communications.

JOANNA CAPLAN reporting:

Eddie Enderle arrives at his job every morning at 6 AM. As a union carpenter foreman he's responsible to make sure the construction site is ready when his crew arrives.

Mr. EDDIE ENDERLE (Foreman Local #620, Epic): I go through the building opening up gang boxes, I check their lifts, I check the scaffolds that they're on. I check the safety protection so that my guys, they're ready to go to work at 7:00.

CAPLAN: Carpentry today is a competitive career option, and having an education is truly the key to individual success in the industry.

Mr. JOHN ROBBINS (Project Manager, Local #31, Epic): You just can't walk off the street and just start building. You need to know how things go together. Going through the apprenticeship program, again, they learn hands-on so they know how it's done.

CAPLAN: Sabino Galioto finished his four years of training as an apprentice. He is now working on Eddie's crew at the Prudential Center, home of the New Jersey Devils, the Seton Hall men's basketball team and many other sports and entertainment events.

Mr. SABINO GALIOTO (Journeyman Union Carpenter, Local #1342): You have to go through an apprenticeship for four years, and you get qualified and trained in all these things, as far as like Hilti transit level, how to read blueprints, CPR, forklift riding, rigging. You get certified in a lot of things, and then it's good to have out in the field.

CAPLAN: But knowing how to build is only half of the equation. Having a strong work ethic is just as important.

Mr. ENDERLE: I'm pretty much looking for somebody that wants to work and wants to hustle. Say with a 20-man crew, I need to be productive. Every move's got to be in a positive direction.

Mr. ROBBINS: As a manager, most of my stress comes from getting the job done on time. We--basically we watch the job very closely, make sure everything's on schedule all the time.

CAPLAN: In this field, time is money, and making the best use of it impacts the bottom line.

Mr. ENDERLE: As far as finishing on time, I kind of strive on that. I mean, it's the bigger the challenge, the more fun it becomes.

CAPLAN: So, Eddie, how does technology make your job easier?

Mr. ENDERLE: Well, I can show you with this plum bob laser that we have here. In the past, we used to use a plum bob that used to hang off a wire. The wind used to move it. Now, with this laser, it gives me a point on the ground, and I can transfer the wall line directly up on the other end of this light.

CAPLAN: And that saves Eddie a lot of time. New scissor lifts and snorkel lifts also save time by allowing easier access to higher work areas. All of this increases what a crew can accomplish in a single day.

Mr. ROBBINS: We build different things every day. Now, one day you could be hanging a door, next day could be setting a panel, next day you could be framing, next day you're doing ceilings. It's not monotonous. It's something different every day.

CAPLAN: And that's exciting?

Mr. ROBBINS: Oh, it's great. It's great.

ADUBATO: Welcome to this very special edition of CAUCUS UP-CLOSE. I'm Steve Adubato. Joining me for an inside look at the world of carpentry are some very good friends. You saw him on the tape piece. He had a little bit of stubble there, and he looked good there, as well, Eddie Enderle, who was in the tape piece. He's a union carpenter foreman working on the Devil's project, Prudential Hall.

Maria Kukuc, correct?

Ms. MARIA KUKUC (Union Carpenter Apprentice, Local #2018): Mm-hmm, yes.

ADUBATO: ...is a union carpenter apprentice. Earl McPherson, a union carpenter who has completed his apprenticeship and now is a journeyman. And finally, you also saw him on the tape piece, John Robbins is a project manager at Epic Interiors, a private construction firm.

I want to thank all of you for joining us. By the way, Joanna Caplan did a great job. She looked good in the (mimes hardhat). Right?

Mr. ENDERLE: She looked good.

ADUBATO: By the way, Eddie, why is that it when I said I might've gone out on the job and I felt that I could've been out there with the guys, you laughed?

Mr. ENDERLE: Well, if I had a comparison, if I could take Joanna or--I mean, she stopped the job. Work would continue with you on it. Pretty simple.

ADUBATO: And you also said you didn't think I could be helpful. But that being said--right out of the box, someone says, 'OK, so Steve, you're doing a show on carpenters or union carpenters?' What's the difference?

Mr. ROBBINS: Training. We have our own schools the carpenters go to. Joanna's doing it right now, and the training. You actually go there and you actually build. You work when you go to school. You don't go and open up a book. I mean--which, she may have some book stuff, but basically you go build.

ADUBATO: So the apprenticeship is what?

Ms. KUKUC: Just...

ADUBATO: What do you really do?

Ms. KUKUC: They expose you to just about everything you will see out in the field, everything from blueprint reading and using a transit and how to...

ADUBATO: A what? I'm working on where the beams are in that house, right now. So go ahead, using a transit.

Ms. KUKUC: Yeah, just, it's a device that helps you, I guess, I don't know how to explain it.

ADUBATO: Jump in, guys. Help out.

Mr. EARL McPHERSON (Union Carpenter Journeyman, Local #2212): It's a device that helps you have a straight line, continuous lines, and have everything on a level plane, such as a small laser that you would use finding a stud in your home.

ADUBATO: Finding a stud in your home?

Mr. McPHERSON: Yeah. Which is on a larger scale, but...

ADUBATO: Which is actually a different show, but...

Mr. McPHERSON: ...transit, so that's what you call it.

ADUBATO: Let me ask you a question. This isn't true about you. I was reading your background.

Mr. McPHERSON: OK.

ADUBATO: Is it true that when you were 14, you not only knew that you wanted to go into carpentry...

Mr. McPHERSON: Yes.

ADUBATO: ...but you were doing what?

Mr. McPHERSON: I was installing carpeting at the age of 16 on my own. My uncle taught me the trade.

ADUBATO: Get out of here.

Mr. McPHERSON: Yes. Yeah. It was great. It was great, Steve, let me tell you, because my end of the carpentry is the floor covering, the hard surfaces, the soft surfaces that everybody walks on when they go in the Devils' stadium,

when they go into the hotels. When they walk out in any building, my specialty is something that somebody's walking on. And when I finish that job, I know it's going to be right, and I feel I great about doing it since the age of 16, and that's where I've been going with this.

ADUBATO: No regrets?

Mr. McPHERSON: Not at all. Why...

ADUBATO: Why's it been so good for you?

Mr. McPHERSON: It's been great for me because it provides me a great life for me, my family, my wonderful kids, my wife who's here also.

ADUBATO: Your wife's out in the green room?

Mr. McPHERSON: Yes, she is. Yeah.

ADUBATO: You're going to look good at home after this?

Mr. McPHERSON: Yeah. Well, yeah. You know, the guys...

ADUBATO: Hey, you expect a lot--listen, no disrespect...

Mr. McPHERSON: The guys...

ADUBATO: I understand you guys are tough guys, tough women.

Mr. McPHERSON: Yeah.

ADUBATO: You spent a lot of time in makeup.

Listen, Eddie, let me ask you this. As Earl was talking about this, it really struck me that he was talking about the floor covering piece, right?

Mr. ENDERLE: Yeah.

ADUBATO: And I was talking to Phil Cooney about this, you know, our partners, as we're getting ready for the show. Phil's talking about all the different aspects of carpentry, and I'm saying, 'No, no, carpentry. You got the hammer, you got the nails, you got the screwdriver.' Carpentry's so much more. What is it?

Mr. ENDERLE: The hammer and nails are kind of like on a back shelf. Screw guns, shotguns, exterior frame, metal studs--it's kind of changed from what it is, where you're looking at a, say, a two by four, now you're looking at a metal stud. The commercial end of it is totally different than the residential end of it.

ADUBATO: Has technology changed it dramatically?

Mr. ENDERLE: Yes.

ADUBATO: How so?

Mr. ENDERLE: We're talking about...

ADUBATO: Give me a for instance.

Mr. ENDERLE: We're talking about transits. Lasers. Plum bob lasers. Before...

ADUBATO: Plum bob lasers.

Mr. ENDERLE: Right. It was that piece that was on there that, when I was showing Joanna, that device that I was putting on the floor gave you a straight beam from the floor to the ceiling, straight line. Years ago we would take that with a plum bob and a string, and I would get up there and somebody would have to mark the floor. Now I can do that on my own, put that down, it gives me a point and it's dead level.

ADUBATO: What does that do for the actual construction of the building itself?

Mr. ENDERLE: Allows me to put a wall up. If I mark this partition on the floor here, they follow to that beam up there, it gives me a direct point right to the ceiling.

ADUBATO: But, John, what does that mean in turns of the...

Mr. ROBBINS: Faster. Going to get done faster.

ADUBATO: A lot faster, cheaper, more efficient.

Mr. ROBBINS: Yes.

ADUBATO: But doesn't that require tremendous training that may not have had to take place 20, 30, 40 years ago?

Mr. ROBBINS: No, not really. We teach guys right on the job how to use lasers.

ADUBATO: Right on the job?

Mr. ROBBINS: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Laser's not hard to use, you know. It may look like it's hard to use, but it's not, you know. Put it on the wall...

ADUBATO: And you...

Mr. ROBBINS: ...and he can show you, and show you in two minutes.

ADUBATO: Why did you have to say "you"?

Mr. ROBBINS: Because you're a carpenter.

ADUBATO: I applied--listen, I'll disclose this.

Mr. McPHERSON: It's a lot easier than a string.

ADUBATO: See, when you were 16, you were doing that, right? When I was 16, my Uncle Louie Racanelli, I was going to say he was good enough to give me a job, but the fact is my father forced him to give me a job. Give me a job, I think my father gave him half the money to give me the job. He was a carpenter. Great carpenter. He was the best. And I remember we were out on

the roof, and it was--it was in the summer, and I was working this job. And it was the third day on the job, it was like 100 degrees. And I'm on this roof, and I'm barely hanging on the roof, and we're doing the shingles, and how--why is that my butt was itching on the shingles? You guys know what I'm talking about? I don't know what it is, but I lasted three weeks--excuse me, three days on the job. My uncle Louie told my father, 'Here's your money back, all right, this kid's never going to work.'

Are there certain--there's a point to this story, other than the fact my Uncle Louie doesn't talk to me anymore--the question is, are there certain people that are just naturally better going into carpentry, particularly the union carpentry site, and who are those people? Because you were a teach--you had your teacher's certification...

Ms. KUKUC: Mm-hmm.

ADUBATO: ...and you wind up in this. Are there certain people that're just better than others?

Ms. KUKUC: I think you have to be willing to work with your hands, and you have to work hard. I mean, if you don't have a good work ethic--you can't walk on this job site and be like, 'Oh, I'm just going to swing a hammer or whatever,' and, you know, you think you're going to walk away at the end of the day, and then people make their jokes about like, 'Oh, it takes like four union carpenters to put up one stud' or whatever.

ADUBATO: People are clueless about that.

Ms. KUKUC: And you really just--you have to get in there and be willing to work. It does take a lot, physically and mentally, to do this job.

ADUBATO: The mental part. Let's talk about that, because there's a lot of--the apprentice piece is big, and a lot of misconceptions out there.

Mr. ENDERLE: Yeah.

ADUBATO: What are some of the biggest misconceptions beyond, you know, what--how you just described about union carpentry, the biggest misconceptions?

Mr. ENDERLE: Well, I think again you get back to that--you get back to the theory that, you know what, a union carpenter's getting a very big salary, they're going to hang around, you're not going to get a lot of production. I'm a union carpenter for 32 years. I'm very rarely out of work. Right now I'm working for Epic. I'm probably working 10 years straight for Epic Construction. I go to work every day knowing that I have to give him eight hours' worth of work for an eight hour paycheck. I'm thankful for today and hopeful for tomorrow. That's the way I go to work, and I don't have a problem going to work every day. I enjoy going to work. See, that makes my life a lot easier, whereas somebody has to get up in the morning, says, 'Oh, I got to go to work, and I really don't want to'...

ADUBATO: Do you love it?

Mr. ENDERLE: Yeah. I...

ADUBATO: After how many years?

Mr. ENDERLE: Thirty-two.

ADUBATO: Love it?

Mr. ROBBINS: Oh, yeah.

ADUBATO: How many years?

Mr. ROBBINS: Twenty-five.

ADUBATO: How many years?

Mr. McPHERSON: Twenty-five.

ADUBATO: Love it?

Mr. McPHERSON: Love it. Yes. Best thing going.

Mr. ROBBINS: It's something different every day.

Mr. McPHERSON: Yeah.

Mr. ROBBINS: It's not the same thing.

ADUBATO: How can it be different every day?

Mr. ROBBINS: Well, not to put other trades down, but, for instance, a mason, all day lays block beneath brick. We could--we start in the footings, we do the footings, you know, seal goes up, we exterior frame the building, we interior frame the building, we hang doors, do the ceilings, do the floors. We do everything. And every day is something different.

ADUBATO: Different every day.

Mr. McPHERSON: Yes.

ADUBATO: And as the technology changes, the job changes.

Mr. ENDERLE: Yeah.

Mr. McPHERSON: Yeah.

Mr. ROBBINS: Oh, yeah.

ADUBATO: But there's--there are different positions here, and I want to be clear, because there's a reason why we have all of you here.

You're--on your side right now, Maria, you're an apprentice.

Ms. KUKUC: Yes.

ADUBATO: And, Earl, on your side, you're a union carpenter, just completed the apprenticeship. Now you're a journeyman.

Mr. McPHERSON: Yes.

ADUBATO: And, Eddie, you're a foreman?

Mr. ENDERLE: Correct.

ADUBATO: And, John, you're project manager.

Mr. ROBBINS: Correct.

ADUBATO: Is that the--I don't want to call it the pecking order, but is there a career path, and is it based on seniority, expertise, what? What is it based on?

Mr. ROBBINS: Depends on how much you want to go.

Mr. ENDERLE: It's...

Mr. ROBBINS: Your goals. What you want to do.

ADUBATO: Did you know you wanted to be a project manager?

Mr. ROBBINS: No, I didn't. I had no idea I wanted to be a project manager. Again, I worked up...

ADUBATO: How'd you wind up--how you get--how you wind up going from this to this to this to this to you get to this point?

Mr. ROBBINS: Just worked my way up. Again, with the company I'm working with, Epic, they gave me the opportunity. You know...

Mr. McPHERSON: It all depends on just--it's just determination. It's when you know. When you know this is something that you want to do and it's something that you love, and you just go for it, from apprenticeship to journeyman to foreman to project manager.

ADUBATO: But don't you have to spend a certain amount of time in each position? You don't just jump to become the project manager, right?

Mr. ROBBINS: No.

Mr. McPHERSON: No.

Mr. ENDERLE: No. In a sense, you've got to work your way up.

Mr. McPHERSON: You work your way up.

Mr. ENDERLE: You come out of an apprenticeship, you're on the job as an apprentice, your next move would be, I mean, as working as a journeyman. If you want the opportunity and you want to get involved as, say, a foreman where you've got the responsibility of running a crew...

ADUBATO: You like that?

Mr. ENDERLE: Yes.

ADUBATO: Why?

Mr. ENDERLE: It's kind of my own job. I like to put the whole puzzle

together, so in being that position, I get to do it on my own and see how the--everything fits, I can...

ADUBATO: Managing, though? The leading, the communicating, the conflicts, the people?

Mr. ENDERLE: It doesn't bother me. Believe me, when I leave at 4:00, 5:00, whenever I leave that job, it stays on the job until the next morning at 5:30, 6:00. I don't bring it home. And that's--it's easy for me to do that. And a lot of guys can't do it.

Mr. McPHERSON: And he has a great job because a journeyman and an apprenticeship appreciates a guy like him, and we'll work hard for him.

ADUBATO: What do you mean?

Mr. McPHERSON: We'll work hard for him, 6:45 in the morning, 7:00, he says, 'Listen, Earl, I need you to go over and do this area here.' He's trusting us that we have the skills and the knowledge through our training to be able to take care of this project that he's asking us to do, walk away, go give another guy another responsibility, come back at the end of the day at 3:15 and it's all done. Makes him look good, makes me look good, and also makes the project manager look good.

ADUBATO: What's a journeyman mean?

Mr. McPHERSON: A journeyman?

ADUBATO: Yeah.

Mr. McPHERSON: A journeyman means, in all actuality, the one of the ones that actually goes out, does the work, OK? He's out there building the scaffolding, putting up the sheetrock, building the frames, taking the orders from the foreman and getting the work done.

ADUBATO: OK, now what do you owe--interesting, because, Maria, as someone who's in the apprentice side, I'm going to me ask you about being a woman in a--I'm not even going to say--is it a man--it's a pretty--increasingly diverse field.

Ms. KUKUC: Mm-hmm.

ADUBATO: But women don't dominate it, clearly.

Mr. McPHERSON: No.

Ms. KUKUC: No.

ADUBATO: What do you owe Maria, as someone who's just come out of the apprenticeship side, what do you owe her?

Mr. McPHERSON: Respect.

Mr. ENDERLE: Owe her...

ADUBATO: Do you also look to help out as well?

Mr. McPHERSON: Of course. And not only do we help to look out, but we help her in the training. The training that she gets from the New Jersey Carpenter Training Center is also extended when she gets out in the field with us as journeymen and also foremen. She just gets out there and even in something they showed her in the school, which she gets college credits for, she doesn't quite understand when she's in the field, then us, as journeymen, what we do is we say, 'Hey, look, well, come on, we're going to break it down, make it a little simpler for you.' Show her easy way to do it and get the job done.

Mr. ENDERLE: A lot of times what they're learning in the apprentice school is that you're sitting there reading a book.

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. ENDERLE: And you can't put into perspective how it goes together. And now she comes out to me out in the field and all of a sudden, you know what? That wall that she was actually looking at is now being assembled here in front of her. So it's a hands-on type of atmosphere out there. When she goes back to do her week in school...

ADUBATO: Mm.

Mr. ENDERLE: ...she's got a little bit more knowledge as to how that stud goes up, how that wall went in, the door buck was set. Those kind of things are going on all the time.

ADUBATO: Is this--is there a big part of the way you're describing this, the union piece of it? Because someone might say, 'Well, you could do the same thing whether a union carpenter or not.' True or not?

Mr. ROBBINS: Yeah, you can. You don't have...

ADUBATO: Well, why's it difference on the union carpentry side?

Mr. ROBBINS: Again, it's the training. On the non-union side, they're not trained.

ADUBATO: What about the benefits?

Mr. ROBBINS: We get the benefits. The benefits are great. I mean, Eddie's going to be retiring soon, and he's, you know...

ADUBATO: Nah, you're not.

Mr. ENDERLE: (Unintelligible). But I'm not going.

Mr. ROBBINS: I mean, to get...

ADUBATO: I mean, this guy's not going anywhere. He just told you he loved his job.

Mr. ENDERLE: I've been doing it 32 years.

Mr. ROBBINS: I mean, the pension's unbelievable.

ADUBATO: Pension, you get pension?

Mr. ROBBINS: Oh, yeah, annuities...

ADUBATO: Health benefits?

Mr. ROBBINS: and health benefits, it's all there, you know.

ADUBATO: So that's a big--this is interesting. That is a big difference between someone who's a union carpenter as opposed to someone who's not?

Mr. ROBBINS: That's correct.

ADUBATO: And what does that mean in terms of your own peace of mind for your--not just for yourself, but for your family? Was that a big piece of it for you?

Ms. KUKUC: Yeah. I wanted to have a career where I could say, 'OK, 20 down years down the line, I'm going to have something.' And that's a really big thing, because it's like, you don't--there's really no guarantees in this world. So I wanted to know that there was something there for me.

ADUBATO: Talk about the woman's side of this or being a woman. Is it significant at all?

Ms. KUKUC: I don't see what the big deal is. To me.

ADUBATO: You don't?

Ms. KUKUC: No. I mean, you know, there's--I'm just another person who wants to work. That's how I see it. And it would--and there are times when guys, like, you know, they still say things like, 'Well, you're a girl,' and I'm like, 'Well, thanks for noticing, but I'm here to work, you know?' Like, let me do my job and just look past it.

ADUBATO: Are they pretty supportive overall?

Ms. KUKUC: The majority, yes. Yes.

ADUBATO: Who was supportive in your family when you said--you had this teaching certificate, right?

Ms. KUKUC: Mm-hmm.

ADUBATO: You said, 'I don't feel it.' You told me before we got on the air that you weren't feeling it.

Ms. KUKUC: No.

ADUBATO: And you had this thing about carpentry. Was your family like, 'Go for it, Maria. We're with you'?

Ms. KUKUC: My parents are very supportive. They are. My mother still wishes I would teach, but they're both...

ADUBATO: Do you have your master's degree?

Ms. KUKUC: Yes, I do have a master's.

ADUBATO: And you're pursuing civil engineering?

Ms. KUKUC: Yes, now I'm getting a second bachelor's in civil engineering.

ADUBATO: You got a lot going on.

Mr. McPHERSON: Wow.

Ms. KUKUC: Yeah.

ADUBATO: OK, go back to your family again. I'm sorry I interrupted.

Ms. KUKUC: OK. Yeah, both my parents are very supportive. And I think, for my dad seeing me do this, he was kind of like, 'Hey, there goes my girl. She's doing something with her life.'

ADUBATO: Your dad did that?

Ms. KUKUC: Yeah.

ADUBATO: How big is that?

Ms. KUKUC: It's very big. I mean...

ADUBATO: That's a message to a lot of dads out there, and moms and daughters and others about sending the right message. Now, imagine you got this master's, right?

Ms. KUKUC: Mm-hmm.

ADUBATO: Doing the civil engineering piece. Union carpenter. That's a dangerous combination in terms of what you're capable of doing. Am I right?

Mr. ROBBINS: Oh, yeah, she can--she can do anything, apparently.

Mr. ENDERLE: Yeah.

ADUBATO: I know you guys--you guys do know you'll be working for her, right?

Mr. ROBBINS: (Unintelligible).

Mr. ENDERLE: I'm on my way out, so it's fine.

ADUBATO: Well, you're gone?

Mr. ENDERLE: It's gone.

ADUBATO: Now you're going to go?

Mr. ENDERLE: It's over with. It's over. I'm out. John may have a problem.

ADUBATO: Let me ask you about this, because we were talking about this getting ready for the show. You talk about it being rewarding, it's never the same job, technology has changed the job. Is it--benefits are great, all those things. We talked about the stereotype, of carpenter.

Mr. ENDERLE: Mm-hmm.

ADUBATO: Do you think it's changing? Do you think it's significantly changing in terms of people's perception of what a carpenter, or a union carpenter is, because they've come into contact more with union carpenter--union carpenters?

Mr. McPHERSON: Steve, I think that shows like this, more commercial, more exposure to the union carpentry level, it's going to do us a lot of good because, as you say, the exposure--everybody is going to know, we're just a hard-working person just like everybody else. We get up at 6:00 in the morning, we go to work, we come home. We have families to feed, OK? But we go to work, and we enjoy our job. And we love what we do, so that's why we need to change some of the stereotypes about this union carpenter. 'Oh, it's union break time.' That's not true. We go to work for eight hours a day and we work hard and we produce. And we have a quality product that's definitely one of the best.

ADUBATO: Folks, as you're watching this program, our intent is, really more than anything else, is to introduce you to what union carpentry is about. Logon to our Web site. We'll connect you to organizations that're out there that will not just tell you what it's about but, you know, there are people--and we're not an employment agency, but the fact is this: There are people out there, sometimes, graduating from high school or in college, with a master's, wherever you are, you're looking to find something that gives you a sense of value, a sense of accomplishment, a sense of belonging to something. This may be a career path.

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ADUBATO: What do you say--have any of you--have any of you gone out to the high schools or places where you've spoken to younger people about union carpentry? Has anyone been out there? Because I'm curious as to what are guidance counselors saying?

Mr. ENDERLE: Well, they're always looking to push them into colleges. You know what? 'You need that four-year degree.' And I can accept some of that...

ADUBATO: Nothing wrong with that!

Mr. ENDERLE: Nothing wrong with that. That's great, that's great.

Mr. ROBBINS: Yeah, just not--yeah.

Mr. ENDERLE: And that's fine. But that doesn't always fit everybody. I mean, I've got two years of college and I stopped because I never was comfortable with it.

ADUBATO: And by the way, you guys can get college credit.

Mr. ENDERLE: Right.

Mr. McPHERSON: Yeah. College credits, yeah.

ADUBATO: Aren't there college credits available?

Ms. KUKUC: Yes. I will have college credits, but...

ADUBATO: You--explain that to folks who may not understand that. How's that going to work?

Ms. KUKUC: Basically, when you finish the four-year apprenticeship, it's--I believe it's like clinical credits, where they'll say, 'OK, well, you could either have a construction management degree or you could go towards a civil engineering degree if you want to go to a four-year university.' And that was actually my push to get me into the civil engineering program. Because it...

ADUBATO: Who recruited you, by the way?

Ms. KUKUC: In what sense do you mean? Like...

ADUBATO: How did this happen? I'm really serious. You were going into your student teaching...

Ms. KUKUC: Yes.

ADUBATO: How did this happen?

Ms. KUKUC: Well, I'm...

ADUBATO: Is there an embarrassing part to this?

Ms. KUKUC: No, no!

ADUBATO: Because you seem really reluctant to tell us.

Ms. KUKUC: I'm originally from Chicago, and I knew I was moving to Jersey. And I wanted to basically just change my life, and when I was looking to move out here, I said, 'What can I do with my life that will give me a career, that I can say, 'This is something I can do for a long period of time'? And I just got on the phone and started making phone calls, and I called up 2018 when I was still in Chicago...

ADUBATO: You called up what?

Ms. KUKUC: Twenty-eighteen, the local I'm out of, and basically asked, I said, 'What does a person got to do to get into the union?' And I think my business agent was a little surprised when, you know, he's like, 'OK, you're a girl, but, all right, come in and take the math test.'

ADUBATO: By the way, everyone notices that you're a girl. Have you noticed that? It's very big. OK.

Ms. KUKUC: Yes, I do. It's kind of funny. And took the math test, did really well on it, and he was like, 'You're in.' And that's where it just started. It was just one of them things, I guess, fell into my lap. That's where I was supposed to be.

ADUBATO: Good for you.

Now, it's interesting. We talked about what high school guidance counselors do. I imagine that in vocational schools it's pushed more.

Mr. ROBBINS: I went to a vocational.

ADUBATO: You did?

Mr. ROBBINS: Yeah, in high school. I'm a fourth-generation union carpenter.

ADUBATO: Fourth?

Mr. ROBBINS: Yeah, out of local 31, yeah.

Mr. McPHERSON: Wow.

Mr. ROBBINS: All out of the same local.

ADUBATO: Did you know early on?

Mr. ROBBINS: I didn't know. But I didn't know what to do. And actually, to be honest, my father tried talking me out of it.

ADUBATO: Really?

Mr. ROBBINS: Yeah. Because he saw it changing. He saw the wood leaving, he saw the metal coming in. He didn't know how it was going to go, if, you know, tin knockers were going to put studs up, you know? He didn't know. He didn't know what was going to happen. He didn't--couldn't see what was going to happen in the future. So he was really pushing me to be an electrician or a plumber.

ADUBATO: Because that's more secure, or what?

Mr. ROBBINS: And I was like, 'Nah, it's what--it's what I want to do.' You know.

ADUBATO: You know, what's interesting here is that my understanding is that there are more jobs opening up--right?--in your field, there are more potential jobs opening up.

Mr. ENDERLE: Yeah.

Mr. ROBBINS: Mm-hmm.

ADUBATO: And also, the pay ain't bad, as we talked about.

Mr. ROBBINS: Right.

ADUBATO: When you did what you did--fourth generation, right?--what does your family say to you now?

Mr. ROBBINS: Oh, they're proud of me. You know, they're happy I did it. You know.

ADUBATO: Do you have children?

Mr. ROBBINS: Yeah, two. Boy and a girl, both in college.

ADUBATO: Both in college?

Mr. ROBBINS: Well, you never know. My son may come out and, you know, may want to be a carpenter.

ADUBATO: Well, she's got the master's degree, so it has nothing to do with it.

Mr. ROBBINS: You know, exactly. But...

ADUBATO: What do they think about what you're doing?

Mr. ROBBINS: Say that again?

ADUBATO: What do your kids think about what you're doing?

Mr. ROBBINS: I think they're proud of me, you know. Again, we have a good life, and it's all because of my--you know, because of carpentry.

ADUBATO: Someone watching this show right now, and you've all been very inspirational, more than you realize. Television can do that. We've all learned that from "Oprah," right? Someone watching right now is saying, 'These guys and this talented young woman have me curious. I want to check this out.' What would you say they should do? What do you say, Earl?

Mr. McPHERSON: Pick up the phone. Look it up on the Web site.

ADUBATO: Our Web site's hooked up to yours, but go ahead.

Mr. McPHERSON: Our were--look it up on the Web site. We're more than happy to bring in some new, fresh young members. We're bringing them up with the install certification program, giving them great skills, great knowledge, a great career, something that they can sit around just like the three of us...

ADUBATO: Being proud.

Mr. McPHERSON: ...being proud and having a nice family to raise, and have something to work for, to look forward to. If you're a hard worker, you're honest, you're a great person, you can really have a good life.

ADUBATO: Eddie, 30 seconds. You got the most seniority here. What's your message to all those people out there saying, 'Hey, wait a minute. I want to check this out?'

Mr. ENDERLE: The myth about the union carpenter being that guy just kind of sitting there collecting a paycheck is long gone, believe me. I'll match my crew up against anybody, without a doubt. We work hard. I go to work at 6:00 in the morning, I come home at 4 in the afternoon. I make a very good living, and I'm very proud of it.

ADUBATO: You guys are great representatives of union carpentry. We're proud to have you with us. Thank you very much.

Announcer: If you would like more information on this program or if you'd like to express an opinion, e-mail us at info@caucusnj.org and visit us online

at caucusnj.org.

The preceding program has been a production of the Caucus Educational Corporation, celebrating 20 years of broadcast excellence; NJN Public Television; and thirteen, WNET New York.

Funding for this edition of CAUCUS: NEW JERSEY has been provided by the New Jersey Carpenter Contractor Trust, union carpenters and contractors working together, working for you; Johnson & Johnson, the worldwide health care products company; New Jersey Natural Gas, proud to support education in our communities; QualCare, Inc., a local-managed care company covering 550,000 New Jersey residents; and Verizon Communications.

Promotional support provided by NJBiz, all business, all New Jersey; and New Jersey Monthly, magazine of the Garden State, available at newsstands.

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