

JA: Probably around 1940, it was, they were reorganizing. There had been some strikes earlier on in which I was not involved, because I was a coal miner before that and these strikes were invariably not successful and then they commenced to re-organizing under the guidance of Nigel Morgan <sup>Harold Pritchett</sup> who at that time was the Interantional Pæresident. And <sup>Hjalmar Bergan,</sup> George Grafton, who was dead and, oh, several others. Anyway I was describing the IWA. This was known as Local 180 of the IWA and it was divid<sup>ed</sup> in sub locals. We had a sub local here Chemainus, Youbou Lake Cowichan, Honeymoon Bay, Gordon River Camp and all the various camps, <sup>Bear</sup> Creek Camp, <sup>??</sup> Hass Creek, Port Renfrew. They all had their sub locals. At which they conducted their own little business <sup>in</sup> their own <sup>localities,</sup> taking care of grievances and so on. President, secretary and committees, etc. and then the Head office or the Local 180 of all this, of the Local <sup>was in</sup> Duncan, and monthly they would hold meetings in Duncan of Local 180 at which time delegates would come from all these other areas and sublocals and meet and discuss the various problems. The final decisions was always with the local but they conducted their own little local affairs in each locality, alright? <sup>auxiliary</sup> Now, so therefore, the <sup>auxiliary</sup> followed the same pattern. There was the Local 180 auxiliary and then each little town

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and village and camp, out in the camps, they all had their little auxiliaries, big or small, whatever. Women in those days, there were a lot of very interested women and supporting their husbands too. But there was also many that weren't. It's not every woman that supports their husband on a picket line you know. You probably know that from reading whatever you've read and so on. And not always did it work out well, you know. They didn't like their old man not bringing in the <sup>pay-check</sup>. A lot of them you see. But then again many others. So then one of the prime objects of these auxiliaries would be to educate the other women as to what was required and what benefits could be had by being organized in the union in order to get contracts and so on, which was unheard of then, in the early '40's. It wasn't until '46 that we really got a <sup>coast-wide</sup> contract, a master contract you see. So that was the main objective of these women, if you could get them all to talk to <sup>other</sup> other women and so on. That was <sup>one</sup> thing. The other thing was the social end. They would organize, oh at that time there'd be whist drives, dances, various things, in order to raise a little money to support themselves and so on, and to help out wherever they could. So that was done. They supported in that manner, socially as well.

SD: Was that used to raise money for the union as well as...

JA: No, not so much. It would be to support their own, shall we say, enterprises, in support of the union and...I'm searching for the word here...for instance they'd need funds to work with in order to support it. They'd have to send delegates, send people here and there, so they needed the loan money and they didn't have to depend on union funds. So they raised their own money with their own activities which were in support of the union.

SD: Right.

JA: Is that okay?

SD: Umhum. Just to go back a little bit, when you were in the mineworkers union was there also an auxiliary to that?

JA: No. That was (laughter)

another voice: there wasn't a mineworkers union, an organization...

JA: There was later on in the UMW of A, United Mineworkers of America, but ...

another voice: ...you weren't in that at all...

JA: No. No. I wasn't. Perhaps I could back if you want to know about it. And this was in the early '30's. Commonly known as the hungry '30's. And I might say as far as mineworkers was concerned, coal miners, the Depression actually started in the early '20's when we started to feel the pinch or lack of trade.....(telephone ringing) *un* the coal mines...I guess it doesn't matter...you can straighten this out later...We started to organize the

mine workers under a Mineworkers Union of Canada. That was the name of it. The last time there'd been any organization to my knowledge, was in...the big miner's strike of 1912, 13 and 14 when the union was broken. The strike was broken I should say, and the union faded out of existence, and did not come into existence again. And that was United Mineworkers of America, and then there was nothing in all the period I worked the mines there was nothing, until, it would be about 1933, 34 maybe, they started to organize under Mineworkers Union of Canada underground. Because if you were caught even saying union you would be fired, let alone anything else. So it was just the men being organized. The men were being organized in the cell system. Do you know what that is?

SD: What is it?

JA: Six or seven men would get together. I would know a person I could trust, I'd ask him, and we'd form a cell and there would be a leader of that cell. And there was different cells, although never more than a dozen or eleven, or a dozen men because if one of you got fired for union activity you could pinpoint it to those few in your group who squealed, to the boss you see. That was the idea of it. And then of course there was a secretary and so on...and you never knew who was in the other groups. The group leaders come together and made their plans or decisions...and took them to their

group, we'll call them groups, took them to their own groups who reported back our suggestions, had discussion and then again back they would go with a meeting of the leaders of each group. And they would form a decision and so on. Which was then carried on. This was not very successful because it was too slow. Men would get fed up, who'd paid 50¢ a month dues, men would get fed up paying these dues. Nothing was happening you know. You daren't come out in the open. You daren't do anything but just try and get as many men into the union. Well that why you found that some of them especially the weak-spined would be dropping off, you'd maybe get a few new ones. But the amount of men you could really trust and ask to join was not that great. So it wasn't too successful. Then the United Mineworkers of America come in and of course they come right out in the open and brought in their organizers you see, and began organizing. And they took over this work and it wasn't long before there was a contract with the mining companies of the area. Now I do know that of course naturally, the women knew, my wife over there she knew all about it, I was a group leader as a matter of fact. In fact I was secretary later...and in Cumberland, I think this is about where it got started, <sup>there were</sup> big mines there then, and I do think <sup>that</sup> there were some women secretly also active. You know, <sup>amongst</sup> the <sup>the</sup> wives and so on, wisely doing their little

thing, educating the women to the benefits of trade unionism and what it could do for them in the future and the <sup>the</sup> families. Hey, I'm getting back into shape (laughter). So this did transpire then but it never did get off the ground until the United Mineworkers came in and at that time there was a mine where I worked was shut down, as I mentioned before that the early twenties actually was the beginning of the Depression for coal miners and by this time there was not too many mines working anymore. They were closing down and so on, lack of trade. People were going to wood, oil, electricity, Hydro electric and even all your steam ships and railroad engines and so on were oil where they used to burn coal you see. So that was all even heating in the homes was fading out. So anyhow, I never got a job again, in a coal mine and I don't think I would have got one anyhow because I was one of a group...the boss always had a way of being suspicious you know, of who might be who, you know. He could tell by your attitude and all sorts of things and, this mine I worked at closed down and we opened another one and the men in Ladysmith were afraid they wouldn't get placed in this mine and the Nanaimo mineworkers would. So we held a meeting right up here of mineworkers, not union, just

somehow or another you get it out that the mineworkers are meeting tonight and they get into the hall there. And I was on a committee that went to the management and asked if we couldn't have our fair share of workers from Ladysmith employed, it was called the Reserve Mine out in the Indian reserve at Nanaimo River. That was why it was called the Reserve Mine and of course we were promised a fair share and so on but at the same time must be this/some of the ring leaders in here. So I never did ask for another job, and I never was offered one either, although I was young and husky then. And I went to work in the woodworking industry.

SD: May I just ask one question. Were there any women who organized the mineworkers there. I remember hearing about women like Mother Jones...

JA: Oh, that's away back. Oh, Mother Jones. I only have heard of her no more than you have and that's away back in the early history of the mineworkers union. That would be back in the 1910, 11, 12 era when they organized and finally came on strike.

SD: Was she ever up around here?

JA: I'm not too sure about that. No. I can't say and I wouldn't say without knowing for sure. OK?

SD: So, we're at your becoming a woodworker...

JA: And then of course there were again, after being defeated in several strikes you might say, not all, but there was no master agreement after and that sort of thing, we started to reorganize and then I became involved in that reorganization. I would say in 1940. And at first we too were more or less got to be rather cute about it, you know. You couldn't just come out in the open and so on. Although, the authorities pretty well knew who was who and so on. So then we commenced organizing, building <sup>the</sup> unions, building <sup>building</sup> and building. And we did just that. And here and there there was some little agreements signed with certain small companies that might be more interested in getting good loggers and good production than they were in whether they had a union on them or not. If they could find a good hooker or a good high rigger they didn't give a damn if he was a union organizer or not, <sup>they'd hire him</sup> I'm thinking of the old <sup>Lake</sup> Loggin<sup>g</sup>, was one of these examples. Another place up Courtenay way too where the same thing happened. But anyhow, then I got involved as the one of the men in Laydysmith here, <sup>along side of me</sup> there was a lot of <sup>others</sup>, and then the women's... I can remember organizing the women's auxiliary. We called the meeting...

SD: The men did?

JA: Oh yea, they called a meeting of interested women and

here's the way that happens. The men who were leaders in the organization of course they got their wives to come to this meeting, you know, we contacted all these women. And so then you had a nuclei of women who formed the...organized the auxiliary. And that's the way it went.

SD: Were these women also active in the CCF or other political organizations?

JA: Not necessarily so. I wouldn't say so. No. I can't think of any of them who were, I can't think of any who were really active in the CCF. I can think of a few who were in the CCF, like Barbara Wallace, present MLA. Her people weren't involved in the woodworking union and Barbara Wallace, / Mrs. Simpson who is dead and Anne Dear who is still alive, lives out in Nefone street? . She wasn't involved in the building of auxiliaries, but she was in the CCF. And naturally they were interested in promoting the unions too, because what is it, it's part and parcel of the same thing. Almost anyway. One's a political front and one's an economic front.

SD: What kind of work did the women in the auxiliary do during the 1940's? Can you give some examples of...

JA: Well, I just did give you some examples, you know.

SD: You've given me...maybe you could desc<sup>ribe</sup> the 1946 strike and a bit of what you told me off tape about that.

JA: Well, it would probably be as an auxiliary to the union helping in the way that women can help and social functions and providing food or coffee and so on, if anything's going on. But probably one of their prime functions would be trying to educate other women whose husbands were union members or weren't union members, it didn't matter which, into trade union thinking and showing them the benefits of the trade union movement to the working<sup>7</sup> people, to themselves and to their children and so on whereby they could acquire better living conditions, wages, working conditions and safety. I almost forgot that. In those days safety was a big factor in the organizing in the trade union movement because here's something for the books. They'll deny this right and left. But during the war the casualty rates on the B.C. <sup>coast</sup> logging industry<sup>u</sup> was higher than it was on the front in the war. Now that's hard to take but it was. One out of every three men could expect to be on compensation in his life. One out of every three would be injured and would come on to compensation. Either seriously, otherwise or fatally. So the <sup>thing</sup> was...one of the things was in the development of our union was to educate women

to the unsafe conditions that their husbands were working under and this is some way they can help and so on, you know. In other words, get them to support their husband. If you want just on an individual basis, 'yes, Joe, you're doing the right thing joining the union'. And this sort of thing, instead of raising hell with him for joining the union and also what it would cost him in dues and so on, and assessments.

So this was part of the role of the women's auxiliary.

SD: Did women struggle around safety conditions at all?

Were there any specific things that they did?

JA: No, not specific. But I mean this was just an overall picture, you know. It was one of the things that we based on our organization on, the working conditions, hours of work and safety, you see. So in this way we could get women to look at it in that manner, you know, then it would help us. Because you would be surprised how many women are against their husbands becoming involved, at that time, at that time, in trade unions. Because all they could see was a picket line, a strike and nothing to eat for the kids, or debts which would take them a long period to pay off, if there was a strike and so on. Another thing was, their function would be to also, raise money in various ways to help support because there would come a time we would, if we

anticipated a strike we'd be assessed for a strike fund. They could also assist here with money raising and so on. And that was done during the strike as well as all the other support that I mentioned before, socially and also, as I described before, how the local, was, functioned with the headquarters in Duncan during the six week strike it was. Six week strike. When <sup>the</sup> women had a...they had a sort of...what would you call it... a lunch kitchen if you like, call it that. Where they would provide a meagre meal, no, no, I shouldn't say meagre but a plain meal, that's a better word. A plain meal for the men who were there on the central committee because we did have to have a central committee to take care of the strike and also to form plans and so on, you know, as to what we should do, policy and program. What should we do, should we allow this or do this or do that or do the other thing? So these men daily met, I was one of them, in Duncan and then we'd go over there and get a meal [ <sup>at a very reasonable price, if you could afford</sup> to pay for it, fine ] 35¢, [ <sup>two bits,</sup> ] whatever. They would always get, you know, potatoes, a little bit of meat, vegetables and so on. So a plain meal.

SD: Did women picket at all during that strike?

JA: No, it wasn't necessary. No, I don't think so. It

wasn't necessary. There was plenty <sup>of</sup> men and it didn't get to the point of desperation which some strikes get where you'll see women out on the picket line on behalf of their husbands. You'll see that won't you?

SD: Did that happen in this area during...

JA: Not to my knowledge. Not in my time, no. We had the picket lines all organized both on the sea and on land. We had...because there was booms down there and tug boats would come in may be from the States and Seattle to take logs away and we had men organized with boats to go out there and well, they picketed the logs, they stayed out there. But especially if they saw, spotted a tug boat coming into harbour. Then they would be down on the boom and place picket signs all around. So that was, that part was organized. And then on land the entrances to the workplace and so on was picketed by shift all day, so many hours, and always there would be picket captains who were in charge of so many pickets and so on. And there was never any episodes or any violence. The companies didn't try to bring in strike breakers, scabs if you want, they didn't try to do that so therefore there was no violence and it only lasted six weeks so it didn't get to the point of desperation where you would, where women got out there and did battle too, like you see many times in some strikes.

And you see it on television now and again.

SD: Was there a march to Victoria, part of...

JA: Yea, that was part of it. The Trek, the big trek to Victoria, that's what they called it, yea. And we went of course, all the way from Campbell... all the way from up the Island, Port Alberni, all the way. And they all congregated in the various centres then on we went down to Victoria, see, with a car calvacade. That must have been thousands because...do you know Victoria? Well, of course you know it. You know the Parliament Buildings? I guess there was about six deep clean around the whole thing you know. It was a...I don't know how many men and women would be there. Not so many women but an awful lot of men. Clean around that whole Parliament Buildings.

SD: Women were involved on that trek were they?

JA: A little. To some extent. Uh, I'm trying to think about that one. No I don't really think so. No, I'll tell you, when you see...when you interview the next woman, if you do, *Duquette*, or *Anne webley*, you ask them if they were involved. Just off hand I can't, I don't believe they were because we fed everybody out at this army camp which was now empty after the war. But men

did the cooking and so on, you know. And there was... and as I said before, the war was just over, there was alot of men in our ranks, right out of the cook houses, right out of everything and they just knew how...and there was an army camp with all the cooking facilities, you see. They knew just how to do it all and they just fed us like we were in the army. And we lay on the floor.

SD: Were there women who had come into the union <sup>and</sup> the industry during the war as workers particularly in the mills, in the area?

JA: Women?

SD: Yea.

JA: They tried it and they went in...there was a few in... I'M talking about just this area because I'm not sure what happened further afield, but right here, there was two or three women went to work in a little logging camp there, and the loggers at that time really rebelled at the idea of women being in the woods with them. Because, for one thing, we have our natural functions don't we, and it was very awkward we'll say, for them <sup>to have</sup> to go and find a place, <sup>to</sup> pee <sup>out in the</sup> bush. And it must have been the same for the women too. But however, so, they didn't want women then. And women could

only function in the woods just in very few places, maybe like in those days what we called a whistle punk or something like that. Just signalling, you know. They couldn't <sup>pull</sup> those chokers with the big cables and wrap them around logs and jump up and climb trees and that...no, they couldn't do that. So that just petered out as fast as it petered in, you see. Then, it was tried in the mill. And Mr. Humberg, at that time, it was the Victoria Lumber Company, at that time, there was not a shortage of workers at that time, There was not particularly a shortage of workers. So, but, he started to bring women, I think it was in the planer mill, not in the big saw mill, I don't think women could have functioned there very well. Nowadays more because they can drive fork lifts and things just like, as good as a man, now, many of them are doing it right now too. But then it wasn't quite the same. I don't even know if they had those fork lifts. They didn't, in fact. They didn't have fork lifts, it was done by hand. But they got jobs in the planer mill and were paid less than their counterparts, and right away, now, I should state this point, that the mill was not organized. And there was discrepancies in the wages being paid to the various people, like Chinese and so on. The Chinese could, <sup>or</sup> young

Chinese with their wife and their family could be working next to you and he'd get less wages. That was rampant in the early days of the mines too.

Chinaman was a Chinaman, he got less. He wasn't as good as you but yet he did the same work. So anyway, the men in general looked at it as a threat to their position in the mill, in their wages.

Here they are being undermined, a woman's tak<sup>in</sup> that job. She's gonna get less wages and so he'll hire all women, you see. So we were told at that time

we had a pretty goodsolidness at the beginning of our organization here. at that time, we were told by men from Chemainus, now is your chance to organize

Chemainus Mill. I should tell you this, Chemainus was a very much of a company town and a lot of the men over there, Mr. Humberg and the superintendents they were little gods. They couldn't do no wrong.

But they weren't all that way. So they said, now is your chance. Their position is threatened by

women and so on so you'd better get in here and

organize. Now we'll get what this little lady's laughing at. (break in tape) <sup>A meeting</sup> was called of a

very few interested men workers, saw mill workers,

in fact it was in our house. You remember when it

was, <sup>on white street, Elle.</sup> <sup>Cloake</sup> ? Florence and

a few more of them, we had a little meeting in our house. And then another meeting was held in the hall down here where, away from Chemainus, you see. And there was a goodly amount of people turned up.

They're looking for something from you here, love.

We've got the microphone ready, see. (laughter)

SD: I think why she was laughing was cause you were talking about how one of the reasons for organization was that the men were reacting to women being in the mills...

woman'S voice: No, that wasn't it.

JA: Oh no, she wasn't involved in that stuff.

woman's voice: no, I don't know too much. Don't know anything in fact.

JA: Well, you just know what you've read and...

woman's voice: I know just what you've told me.

JA: You weren't involved in it, no.

woman's voice: It could have been a pack of lies, eh?

JA: So anyway, to carry on, then a meeting was called here in Ladysmith, in the Agricultural Hall which was a big hall and it was a good turn out. So then we tried to rent a hall in Chemainus but the company owned the hall. So there was no way they could rent a hall in Chemainus. But, we're <sup>getting's off</sup> the women aren't we? But <sup>there was no way we could get</sup> the hall

but Nigel <sup>Morgan</sup> at that time was the

Secretary of the International Woodworkers of America District One, I should say that, that was British Columbia, District One. And he said, well we can call a meeting on the school grounds, which is government property and there's no way the company can interfere. So a meeting was called on the school grounds in Chemainus and boy, they were just solid, the men, And he spoke and from then on a sub local was organized in Chemainus. As I described before we were <sup>a</sup> sub local there ...that was the beginning of the sub local in Chemainus. And then, they got going there of course, and were involved in a strike but they also had a women's auxiliary there I think. Although I don't know too much about that or who.

SD: What year was that, do you remember? That they organized in Chemainus? Was it during the war?

JA: Oh yes. I couldn't pinpoint whether it would be about '43 or '42, '43 maybe.

SD: Do you know what happened to the women who had come into the mill when they unionized?

JA: Well they were just laid off or what have you, you know, dropped out, maybe felt they weren't wanted or the work was too much or something. But the thing is this, they didn't rehire, they didn't hire any more women. No, they didn't. We hired women.

SD: Was there any discussion of equal pay for equal work?

JA: Well it was from our point but not with these women.

No, these women, I don't even know who they were, you see. But that was one of our big <sup>points</sup> in organizing the men was equal pay for equal work. And I can remember clearly being in this Chinamen's home and I can clearly remember he had a young wife and three young children. They were right there in the kitchen. And he said, he was a boom man incidentally, he said, "if we were to get the same wages as the white men then they wouldn't hire us. They would prefer to have a white man, you see. And that's when we told them this is where your union will stand solidly behind you. If you get fired just because of your race then there will be trouble. \*

SD: But there wasn't any kind of similar discussion around women...

JA: No, it didn't get to that.

SD: They were seen as a threat and ...

JA: Yes, that's right. It was seen as a threat to the...you know, <sup>lesser</sup> wages. And that was true, it was a threat to the men, you see. In a company town like that you've gotta understand that anything goes, you see.

And a woman who maybe doesn't have a job or just working in the candy store at that time for fifteen dollara a week, a job getting her...say...oh, at that time I don't know...I would have to wildly guess I guess, well let's say, guess at 50¢ an hour that looked pretty good. Four dollars a day, that's pretty good. See that's a lot of money. That was a six day week too then.

SD: Did women in the communities like in Ladysmith and Chemainus and the samll lumbering towns, did many women work or did women generally stay home with family?

JA: Oh, at that time, generally stayed home with families. Wouldn't you say that, El? At that time. There was not many women who worked out at the restaurants, and that, that was all girls, you know, single mainly. Oh you might see the odd married woman working but not so much as now.

SD: Is that because there weren't jobs?

JA: No. Well there wouldn't be as many jobs then but...

woman's voice: ...as I could see.

JA: ...but also...

END OF SIDE I

side 2:

JA: Well, there wouldn't be as many jobs then but...

woman's voice: ...as far as I could see.

JA: ...but also another reason was they didn't have the equipment in the homes, like automatic washing machines and deep freezers and vaccuum cleaners and...they couldn't afford them if there were such things, but there wasn't. Oh, so they had washing machines alright but they'd be the old hand type or something. And, well there was washing machines, more like the old <sup>Beatty?</sup> which was self-driven, so that women had more to do at home, you know. No electric stoves around then, so the women had more to do at home, so they just couldn't find the same time to go out and work as they do now. Now, they're bored at home, even if they've got two or three kids they're still bored. And you gotta go out a find a job somewhere and which they do.

there

SD: Were there differences in wages for married men and single men?

JA: No. Not from the men's point of view, no. The job paid <sup>the</sup> wages alright so if you were a single man doing the same job as a married man you got the same wages of course.

break in tape

...in my way, you know, it would never ever, and I'll

tell, it was trying times. Not only trying times but often I was away from home an awful lot, even right here, you know, we have a little office downtown here and you'll be down there and she'd never ever complain or put anything in my way at all. And so in that way the family is sacrificed, the family is sacrificed to a large extent by anyone who is really active, in those days particularly. Well I guess its the same today but only you were not organized today they're organized, and so on:

SD: Was there a lot of discussion among women in the community about the unions and the kinds of things that were going on in the union like the strike and so on?

Even if women weren't directly active in support work?

woman's voice: I really don't know. Well...

JA: There would be discussions wouldn't there?

woman's voice: There would be discussions...

JA: I mean here and there would be talking and someone would say 'I wish my old man would for Christ sake get back to work'. (laughter) Mary's <sup>and</sup> would be, you know, the opposite. You and I knew what we were trying to do. And doing it who for. Not only for us...

woman's voice: ... unclear...there was a lot that was

*Sympathetic*

SD: But I guess many women had a lot of responsibilities  
around the home and couldn't necessarily be active?

woman's voice: well, that's right, yea.

JA: We're not giving you really much on the women's front  
are we?

woman's voice: No.

SD: Actually... tape blank...