

SD: I want you to just give me your name.

BG: Oh my name is Elizabeth better known as Betty Greenwell.

SD: Where were you born?

BG: I was born in Manitoba (Nikowa)?

SD: And when did you come to British Columbia?

BG: I came to ^{British Columbia} in 1926, March the 15th I arrived. I arrived on a very foggy day, foggy morning. I was seven.

SD: Why did your family come here?

BG: Well, my father was a carpenter, and we had relatives here, and actually he came a year ahead of us, and renovated a large home on the 2400 block, turned into apartment blocks. It was a beautiful building they even protested when it was, you know, raised for the highrise there.

SD: Did he come for economic reasons?

BG: Well, I don't know if it was economic, you see it's 1925.

I think they recognized his talents and, you know, and the relative thing. And also, when I go back to Manitoba, ^{to} the area of Kelwood it's just out side of Nikowa, really... It reminds me so much of this area, the big National Park. I think, being from Stratford ^{-ON-AVO N} may have been a lot to do with him, once he saw it, coming here, there's no snow here, you know just like where he came from the climate is similar. And the water was close, I don't really know if that was the reason. It could have been economic, he had a carpenter shop there and he sold supplies and he built. He did a lot of building in Manitoba.

SD: Did you go to school then in Vancouver?

BG: Actually, I started school in Vancouver. ^{I was seven.} Although I did start school in Manitoba, like so many kids wish, the school burnt down. (Laughter) So, I didn't see too much of school, I remember going to the church's a bit. And then, Scarlet Fever, I didn't get Scarlet Fever very badly but my sisters did. So we were isolated in a farm, my grandparents farm. So, I didn't see much of school the first year. So I started over, in March, you could start February and September in those days.

SD: How did your family make out economically in B.C., did the Depression have a big impact?

BG: Well, certainly it had a big impact, yes. We were living at the time at 1st and Vine. Big mansions that are nursing homes, in later years, across the street, you know. Across the lane you were taking up casseroles, you know, the extremes were right there. And, my father found it hard, I can remember, like he was never on relief or anything. I think mostly because he was too proud, because, I can remember having pork and beans more than once in a day, and I said "Once is okay but twice!" (laughter) But, it did affect my mother, she never got over it. She.. the strain was too much for her.

SD: Can you describe that a bit more, how and why would the stress be so great for her?

BG: Well, I can... she was a very sensitive person, a very quiet person, she didn't express her worries, she kept things in

herself, you know. She was a very extensive reader, you know, and I just feel that the strain of not knowing was just too.. She had a nervous break down. She never was really quite the same after that.

SD: That's very hard. How many kids were there in the family?

BG: Well, and that helped her... she dwelt on that too. There was three sisters, and one died when she was six from the anesthetic that was given, getting her tonsils out. And she was sort of the binding unit of the family, and all of this. It was the real person that everyone loved. You know how it is, she was just sort of special to all of us. And I don't think my mother got over that either. And I suppose with the situation that she would dwell on that.

SD: So, how old would you be when the depression ~~be~~ hit?

BG: That was 28 when she died, well, I was born in 1919 so I was 10, in 1929. And, my parents didn't really get actively involved in any struggles really. My dad left the carpenter's union, I don't know just how the carpenter's union survived in those days. No, you saw the struggles of your friends, ~~Some~~ one committing suicide or ... you saw the CCF and the band they had a few blocks away from you, but this time I was living up by Kitsilano High School, 31, Tenth and Trafalger. And, you'd go to your Aunt's and someone had been in the demonstration and they'd broken the windows at Hudson's Bay, And you know, all these things you heard ^{about.} We didn't have a radio in those days, my dad just took the radio ^{out}

BG: To that extent too we were protected, isolated a bit. But, no you still, going to the Post Office and seeing everyone there. I went into the Post Office, I just happened to be going to the Post Office and they were all in there.

SD: That was in 1938, the occupation? Yeah.

BG: Well I think it was before that wasn't it? But, anyways I saw that too, whenever it was. I guess it was later, and I was almost ^{through} High School. That really.. All these things upset me because you know people want to work, and you know they're not happy, and you know they have no home, really. Like these people that,.. And then another... Even when the war started I tried to talk a fella I said, he was going to join the army, he was an older person, "wait, wait, there's going to be lots of jobs" I didn't want to see him do that, make that step.

SD: So, did you stay in school during the ^epression, or were you forced to get a job?

BG: Oh no, I finished High School, I went to University too. I had, we had relatives in Sherbrook Quebec, and they kept, they knew.. and then I had an Aunt in Victoria had retired from Nippon, she made her daily trip back and forth. So, everyone knew, how everyone was making out. So, this Uncle in Quebec would send maybe a gift, or sent money so I could continue on, this was the year when my mother had the nervous breakdown. So, I was going to quit, you know, stay home

BG: do the usual things you do when you stay home, .. But, I took senior matric so that I felt that they repeated everything twice, you know. And if I really listened in school I could do all the other things, I had to do. So, I took senior ^{matric} matric and then I went onto University.

SD: Was it unusual for a young woman to go to University in those days?

GB: Well, no I wouldn't say it was unusual, but the percentage to go to University at all was ^{very} small. I think 2600, ^{was} the University, I think it's 26,000 at UBC now, isn't it. And there was lots of departments that weren't there, you know. There was so many things - you couldn't do, by going there. And I had the option of going there ^{and that was it.} I had to make my choice in that environment.

SD: What did you study?

BG: Well, I took honours in Biology, Botany, that's what I took.

SD: So, were you able to graduate and get a job?

BG: Yeah, well, you see I graduated in '41. Jobs were around then. So, I missed out on that sort of worried period, because I was able to go to school. It was something I was going to do no matter what the economics was, I wanted to get ~~£~~ further education. And then I took teacher's training and I taught for a couple of years., up in Dawson Creek and ~~Out:~~ in Cloverdale. Then I got a letter saying I was expected over at the experimental farm in Saanichton, I'd filled out an application and forgotten about it and then I got

BG: a notice, why aren't you there. And that's the first I heard about it. ~~AND~~ So, I went over there and worked, until 49 until they didn't want my services anymore, until I got married.

SD: What was the experimental farm?

BG: Actually I worked at the plant pathology lab, which is adjacent to the experimental farm you know the experimental farm in Agassiz. Well they have one in Saanichton, just outside.

SD: MMM Is that is UBC?

BG: No its Federal. Federal Department of Agriculture.

SD: You described earlier during the thirties beginning to, I guess in a way monitor the events that were going on around you. Why would you say you began develop like a political or trade union consciousness?

BG: Well, at 17 I was also a church goer. Until I was 17, I never missed a Sunday, I went to Sunday School and got a diploma for my knowledge of the bible, and so on. Mainly because your parents do you know. And I just recognized the fact that ^{the} church was not really concerned about the people, at Christmas time we'd maybe through the girl guides take some hampers around, to your friends. I'd sit in the car because I knew them, but that's no solution. And yet they were concerned about themselves and their dollars and cents. And I thought this is it for me, this isn't the way to go. I really.. I was in touch with progressive people, but I didn't know it. And it wasn't until I went to University during, there was a Social Problems Club and that sounded

BG: good to me. And also my girlfriend had gone to UBC the year before, when I was going to Senior Matric. That was just a natural thing for me to, be there and ^{and} alot of others were there from Kitsilano High School ^{were there too.} It was just a logical place to go.

SD: You had mentioned earlier, that your father had an impact.?

BG: Yes, he was a carpenter, ^a builder and real talented person. He was the one they sought out when they wanted an oar for competition rowing, anything special he was sought out for that kind of thing as well as general building. If he built it it was going to last. But he had a double apprenticeship both in cabinete making and carpentry. And he was involved in the union in those early days. I don't really know, maybe he was just a member, I don't really know. He brought quite a few people from Manitoba. He encouraged them to come., to work with him. No, it was that core that influenced me I guess. And the mothers ^{and} would take the kids.

SD: What would the mothers do?

BG: Well, the main event that I remember is a picnic at Kitsilano Beach, you know. That's the one that really, it was just a small group, and I thought that was very important.

SD: Who organized it, this picnic?

BG: Well, I don't really know, just the mother's themselves, I guess.

SD: Was it all union people?

GB: Well, it was just this ^{very} small group. It wasn't even a

BG: dozen people I don't think. Maybe just because they were involved and lived in the same area, maybe they... something very informal, you know. But, to me it was very important?

SD: In what way, do you remember the impact it had on you?

BG: Well that they were together and that they did things together. You knew that they could talk about things together, you know. And the children were there too, you know, Having a good time. Burning my toe in the campfire. We could have picnics around campfires then on a beach.

SD: Was this a regular event, the picnics?

BG: No, they weren't, I only really remember that one as being special. We did it at other times, I guess. But that's the one I remember.

SD: What was the Social Problems Club at UBC?
interested in

GB: Well, it was young people learning about Socialism, and doing things together. They'd, I remember one time there was a relief camp, where the residence's are for families. Do you know where Acadia camp, it's where the early childhood development faculty is. Well, that area there used to be a relief camp, and they would meet with them and have little debates or discussions with them. And, what else did we do? We were always very busy going to hear different people that came to town, and having them come out to the campus. Anyone that came to town, we'd get them to come to the campus, so that anyone that wished to could hear them. We were just interested with the events of the day and kept in touch with

BG: and discussed and read progressive things and dicussed progressive things. And, it was necessarily that you agreed with Socialism, I think alot of them did. But, you wanted to learn about Socialism, because there were conservative people involved too, you know.

SD: Was it mostly kids from working class families that would - went to your club?

BG: I'd say maybe, maybe, but I'm not sure, because you don't know the families. One girl I knew from the Peace River was a farmer, my girlfriend's father was in business and he was a restura~~nt~~ owner who had to close down. That was another thing I noticed, it's happening today it happened ~~a~~ then too. Yeah, he lost his business.

SD: Was the University environment ^{very} conservative during the thirties or radical, was it an elitist environment?

BG: Late thirties early forties. Well they were very concerned about the war, I can remember us all sitting in the auditorium there, when they were making the anouncement, the place was packed, and you know that was all students. They were concerned, you know and .. I'd say the students were concerned because they didn't know where it was going to go, where am I going to go. Especially the boys, you know. Like I know in the botony department well some of them was invited to go to Malasia I think to a rubber plantation. And they were wondering if they should go. Well war had already broken out. And I said, "You had better take some military training

BG: before you go there" Because Japan wasn't in , you know.

They'd come to me and asked me my opinion and I said well you had better get yourself well trained if your going in that direction. Telling them really not to go, You know I didn't tell them not to go, but I, I wouldn't have gone there. Because I could see that Japan.. I think it was general knowledge that that's the way it would go. But, they didn't know when. And they practically starved to death they were imprisoned and they came home like skeletons those that did go. And some of them did. And some of them joined up like I said if I had my choice I'd rather join up and then I'd know what I was coming home to that I'd know I was coming home to University to finish. You'd have something to come back to right away.

SD: If you went to military x training?

BG: Well no, see some of them had the choice of going to Malasia, to the rubber plantation, others were wondering if they should join up,. And, well I said I wish I had that choice. That's what I would do if I had the choice because then I would know what I was coming home to I'd know I hadn't finished my University. Refresh your mind you know, because you didn't know how long you were going to be away. They used used to come and ask what to do.

SD: So you graduated in 1941, and you were looking for work, what kind of work were you doing at the farm?

BG: NO, I took teacher's training so right away I got a job,

BG: well paid up in the Peace River, where the Americans Army was building the Alaska Highway. Boom town.

SD: So were there lots of jobs for women ^{in teaching} that weren't available before?

BG: Well, there was lots of jobs, there was a lot of teacher's leaving the profession, they actually got frozen. Teacher's couldn't leave their jobs. The only reason I was able to leave my job was because agriculture had priority.

SD: So when did you start to work for the Federal Government?

BG: 1943. .. 1944 I guess. Summer 1944, I was still teaching, and ^{and} said as soon as my commitment was over I'd be over.

SD: And what was your job?

BG: Well, I worked with a fellow who, identified diseases with of plants, ^{of} crops and he published a book of diseases, of fungus diseases mainly, of plants. And just any plant in B.C. I actually helped him get the book out and that was one of my first jobs. And I, d culture different diseases, and he was the potatoe inspector too, he specialized in that crop. He was the one they went to if they were concerned about a shipment. Different things like that. And it was adjacent to the experimental farm.

SD: Was that traditionally a men's area of work?

BG: Yes, Yes. That's kind of interesting too. There was another woman in the lab, and when I was invited to go to the equivalent to the union meetings, you know they had associations. This lady said, "well, the women don't go." And she never did go

but I was invited I went. That's all I did, I wasn't given any responsibility or anything. But, I always went to the meetings. To do that was a big step. Even to be there was a big step.

SD: How did people react to you?

BG: Well, okay. I did my job, they were very good really. I played it cool. Another thing I did a lot of was photography. They had a beautiful enlarger and that became my job too. And, I enjoyed that.

SD: So, were you in a job that had been occupied by a man that had gone over seas before the war?

BG: Well, no I think they.. I don't really know about that. I think it was a policy to have students, they were short staffed, yes right. And I imagine that if the war hadn't been on I might not have gotten that job, it's true. Although I think a girl took the job when I left. But, she lived right, right there. Which was nice for her.

SD: Was that a lab technicians job?

BG: I was called a Agricultural Assistant 8, but, just as I was leaving they di^scontinued that category, so I was a scientist something or other, I don't know what, I was a scientist.

SD: So, there was a recognition of your education, some status.

BG: Oh yeah, oh yeah. I mean that's why they hired me.

SD: And, did you enjoy that job?

BG: Yes, I enjoyed it very much. The only thing is I felt very isolated ^{from} all this other activity that I had got involved in

as a student. I felt that way when I was teaching too, you know up in Dawson Creek. In Cloverdale I'd come home for the weekend, but you couldn't go to Cloverdale and back, gas rationing you know. You had to **board** in Cloverdale of all places. You couldn't live at home and go back and forth each day. It's hard to think of these things, you know!

SD: So, you ^{lost} touch sort of with the radical movement?

BG: Well, I didn't lose touch but I missed it, you know I missed it I really missed it. But, I did what I could do.

SD: Can you tell me what you did do, like you went to the association meetings, and...

BG: When I was teaching in Cloverdale, I would have the weekends if anything was going on in the weekends, you know I'd go. But I wasn't really involved, but I would participate.

SD: When did you then get involved again?

BG: Well, let's see. In Victoria, I had friends there and I had relatives. I kept in touch with things that were going on. If there was demonstration in the Parliament, and they used to have them in those days. I'd maybe go down in the evening and find out all about it and see what happened. It was really divorced from the work I was doing but, I had good friends.

SD: When were you living in Victoria, did you move there after?

BG: Well, I **lived** there from 44 till 49. In between, this was a summer job I got to start with, so **in** between I went back

to University and got courses for a M.A. And getting courses related to the job I had.

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BG: Actually, the Pathology courses I took after I got the job. You know I was doing things backwards. So, I went back to University for a year, I ~~went from~~... and they didn't want me to go, even though it was a summer job they kept me till around Christmas time and it was January that I went back to school. They really wanted me to go to Toronto, I was invited to go to Toronto and study viruses. But, somehow, I didn't want to. They asked me when I had made up my mind to do something else, really. That's what it was, if they had asked me sooner, I might have done that.

SD: Were you single at this time?

BG: Yeah, I got married in 49.

SD: Until that time did you have career aspirations, was this what you saw as your life work, or?

BG: Well, I just lived from day to day. I hoped to keep on working. I thought marriage is something you do as well. But, I didn't dwell on it. You just took what you could.. You know as things came.. You knew what it was like, like the tradition ^h were I was working if you got married you,.. That was it.

SD: Was that like an unspoken law?

BG: Well, kind of yeah.

SD: So, what happened when you married?

BG: That's when I quit, but, I knew that I was being.. That they had learned too much about my interests. No they didn't like me leading a double life, kind of. They didn't like to see me involved in these, well going to these meetings after a demonstration and things like that.

SD: Can you describe how that was expressed to you, or how you found out?

BG: Well, it was just sort of backdoor, they never came really out. And when the Botanist came from Ottawa, I just said that you know, that everyone has to do what's right. Because people like us at that time were the ones responsible for letting Fascism develop in Germany, you know. They were silent. And I wasn't going to be, you know silent. And, at this time my husband worked in South Wellington, up by Nanaimo, so I knew¹ had to, he had to either make a choice of a job or I had to make a choice of a job. I knew that I was either going to quit or he was going to quit, so we hadn't got.. I couldn't see him quitting either because, he was very devoted to the union and that kind of thing. Not so much for the job but because of^{his} union dedication.

SD: So, were you really angry or afraid when you started to feel this sort of pressure at work?

BG: I was angry. Angry! If I hadn't been angry I probably would have quit sooner. You see I just got married, I didn't say I was getting married, and they didn't like that

either. But, I figured that was not part of my job, you' know, being married and gone that route. But because they were doing it behind my back, angered me. I don't know, I guess you can just feel it, when things like that happen you just sort of... And in fact the fellow I worked with actually had a sort of a heart attack, he was that upset. So, I went and told him that I was married and not to worry, but, that was after the fact. It was only a mild upset, but he really... You know that made me ^{even} more angry.

SD: Did he have the heart attack because he was afraid of what would happen to you or was ^{he} under pressure too.

BG: No he was angry to, he was angry too and yet he, I guess he didn't know what he could do. He never said anything to me either, but I knew that's what had caused it.

SD: Was he a progressive man, too?

BG: Yes, he was, well he was ^{an} independant little guy, he was a bachelor, he was Welsh. He said what he thought and he was influenced quite progressivley with the things that were happening at that time. And, yet he read Jehovah's witness. You know he was sort of a mixed up guy, but he was honest., and sincere, very talented in his job, but he didn't get the best of credit for I didn't think.

SD: So what was happening, was it like the Canadian wave of McArthyism or...?

BG: Well, I was a member of the YCL and I hit the front page of the Province, so there was no secret!

SD: How did you do that?

BG: Well, I went on the Beaver Brigade, in 1947 they had this young people went to Yugoslavia and they worked. And I was really interested in travelling. But, the next year I helped to organize a group to go again, they called it the "Beaver Brigade". And, I had been saving up money to buy a car, but you couldn't buy cars, no cars. So, I'd like to drive, which I haven't got the licence yet. But, anyways I had this money, I thought geez I have all this money, and I'm getting these people to go, why aren't I going? So, I mentioned it and they said sure they were quit happy that I went. But, there was one fellow there had me read an article about Yugoslavia I guess he understood more than I did, maybe. But he was kind of trying to warn me without saying so. But, anyways I went and I had a wonderful time. We went to England, we marched in the Paris Parade, July the 14th, and there they had all the prisoners, the concentration people were there in their concentration dress, marching and slogans and it was just a fantastic. And then we went to **CZEKOSLOVAKIA** and we worked just symbolicaly at Liditzey? ^{Liditzeh, x} that's where they murdered the whole ^{→check SP.} community, then we went to Warsaw, and there was.. well where the ghetto was, the Jewish ghetto all there was a monument the bricks were still there, nothing was more than two stories. It was like that and you'd look down and there's a line of clothing and there's all rubble. You didn't quite

know where they were living. But, anyways we went to a Young Workers Conference there, that's where we went. And from there we were going to go to Yugoslavia and this is when Yugoslavia changed their, kind of broke with the Soviet Union, and well we didn't go. We didn't know it there was going to be another war, a civil war, it was just a place you stayed away from. So the we went to Hungary instead. And we worked a bit on the ^{Doonitesa} Doonites Canal there, actually we were waiting for a ship because we were to go.. you know you traveled by boat, no planes then. So then we waited for another ship and we finally left GENOA. We went to Italy, through the Alps, and we spent a day in Vienna and while we were waiting for the Polish Ship at Genoa we went down to ~~Athens~~ Rome, we stood up in the train all night to go down to Rome. You know, the trains were just packed, people moving back and forth. And then a moonlight trip through the Mediterraneans, stopping at Marseilles, and off Gibraltar there, it was a wonderful trip, but an extended trip. We were SEVEN weeks longer because we didn't go to Yugoslavia. And we actually were in a hold of a boat with a lot of these sort of.. displaced people who were coming to the United States. We were in bunks, just open area bunks! No rooms, just like that that's where we were. But we didn't seem to mind. So this was looked upon as something not so good, I guess. To have made a trip to Chekeslovakia and Poland.. HUNGARY.

SD: So, ^{did} you come back and report on your trip?

BG: Well, I got leave of absence to look at agricultural things too. So, I made up a report, I was requested to make up a report. So, I made up a report, and I had gone to the Botanical Museum in London and they were very interested in the trip I was making and you could see the rubble there. And they were still getting organized in 48 and they are still getting things straightened around after the war. They were very sympathetic and I had a nice visit there. And so I was supposed to be doing things like that, and in Warsaw instead of taking the interpreter with us, we thought oh, we can find the Social Worker ~~from~~ Montreal and I, Oh we can find our way, and we never did so I missed out on that interview. So I, was kind of.. you know it was kind of a hard thing to actually do, even though I promised to do it. It was a kind of a thing that maybe I shouldn't have promised to do. They didn't really discuss that with me, because I really let my anger come first I didn't really listen to them first. Maybe I should have, to see what they had to say But I knew this was why they were doing it. So, But I was going to move on anyways, this is the funny part of it. They could have saved themselves all this. I stayed longer because I was angry.

SD: Okay, so where had you met your husband.

BG: Well, he was on the trip. (Laughter)

SD: Uh ha!

BG: That's where I met him. Yes, he was sent by the... I don't know if he was sent by the Island trade union movement or the Nanaimo trade union movement. He was sent by them and the Yugoslav Group in Nanaimo. Because the trip was supposed to visit Yugoslavia, so they had sort of sponsored him too.

SD: So you came back and you had decided to get married?

BG: Yeah, well the next year I got married. 1949.

SD: So, how did your life change after you were married, did you move, or?

BG: Well, I moved up to South Wellington, it changed quite a bit. I didn't work, except for a short time. Well let's see, 1950 I guess I worked in the Nanaimo Indian Hospital for a short time, I was mainly a dish washer. I mean I looked after the cleaning up, I worked in the lab. A very menial job, but they were going to train to be technician in ... in the work they did, it was a T.B. place that ran tests and they were going to train me. But at this time my daughter was born. And soon after that the mines closed, and we came to Vancouver, so I never went back, to that.

SD: Okay, I guess it was in the period from 49 to 52 that you were involved in the L.A., okay, could you tell me about that?

BG: Well, the miners have a wonderful tradition as you know and over there in Nanaimo, May Day was a holiday, May the 1st, And they had a parade every year. And, they sponsored people

I can remember Joe White (ford)? for Alderman he was in the parade. You know very active and because I supported unions and my husband was very active in it, I joined the L.A. And it didn't play a major role, it was kind of a social thing. I was certainly the youngest one in it. But, they did have a delegate to the Women's Institute which, just as I was moving they were interested in me getting involved in, ^{because} they were being threatened. And then also they had equal status at the Nanaimo Joint Labour Council. They sent delegates, so this is ^h where I ended up was as a delegate to the Joint Labour Council. I guess maybe, I don't know maybe it was 1949 I joined I don't know. But anyway's, I ended up being Vice Chairman of the Labour Council and I thought this was really great I don't know where else auxillary members get this equal status, at the labour council. So, that's one thing that happened that I thought was important.

SD: Okay, can I go back and ask you a bit specifically about each of these. Do you know when the women's auxillary was established for the mine workers?

BG: Um, it was, I don't really know, in the thirties I guess. In the thirties, I'm sure, it had been there a long time. The union was recoginzed about that time too.... They just had cells of five, it was organized under ground. I'll get you an article about that, just a minute....

SD: So, in terms of the mine workers history do you know what

kind of role the women's auxillary played in helping them get that initial organizing going? Did women talk about that at all?

BG: Well, Dusties mother talked about that a great deal. In fact you'll find her in the archives 1912 Strike. She and her husband were very involved. Like Dusties Dad, was actually the underground secreatary. So that you know she was interviewed not long before she died, just in the 70's. And she was still talking about it, it was something she was shot at in extension, so she ... so she said "I'll never forget that, I'll never forget". Like her sister, we went to her 80th Birthday last Sunday. Her sister "Those days are past " Of course she was younger, when these things happened, nine years younger and it made that difference. So you know, Dusty's Mom knew it all and she knew everything that was going on. A lot of it happened in their home, and they fed the organizers, and so on. They were very involved, and those facts are easy to find.

SD: So, why,. It is very unusual that an auxillary had that kind equal status, did they have equal status at union meetings?

BG: No they never went to union meetings. But, Dusty's Mom and I, they met on Saturdays because they had three shifts, so Saturday was the only day they could all be there. So, we'd be outside the door, when the union meeting came out... But that was Dusty's Mom you know. Not all the other Mother's were there, or wives. So that.. they didn't go to union

meetings, no they were separate.

SD: And then why did they have that kind of status at the Labour Council? How did that develop?

BG: Well, I guess.. I think there was that kind of equal feeling. Miners are very close, you know, they are down there in the hole together, their lives depend on each other. You know, there is a very strong comradeship, even one could be a conservative and one a communist, but the comradeship is there. You know, it's for everybody's benefit.

SD: How would that carry over to the women?

BG: Well, I think they shared. Just like Dusty's Mom they knew everything that was going on. I mean where else would they go? Especially in a place like South Wellington. There's beer parlours in Nanaimo, but, you know, that's seven miles away.

SD: So, is it like a really small community?

BG: Well, about 350, I think. It's..South Wellington is small, Extension is small, but, you could still travel back and forth.

SD: Are they company towns, though?

BG: Not really, because they'd have a miners' bus. And the miners that lived in South Nanaimo they'd come out, they were scattered a bit. I think, Extension was certainly a miners' town in 1912. I think people lived mainly where they worked, at that time. But, as the mines went around, there was a mine right in Nanaimo on the Island there, outside Nanaimo.

They mainly lived in Nanaimo.

SD: So, as the mines grew there was more of a migrant labour force of miners coming in?

BG: Yeah well, sometimes.. Well I know that the house in Extension where Dusty's Aunt lives and where Dusty was born, it's still there, she still lives there. That house was actually moved, they tore down the house and brought it with them, when they moved they brought the house with them. You know a small miner's shack is what it is.

SD: So, I'm still really fascinated with this equal status, because I talked to a woman in the IWA who said she was just really opposed to the miner worker women having, the auxillary women having any right to be at meetings. She thought it was just terrible.

BG: Well, did they do that, the IWA?

SD: No, no way, and the rationale that she gave was that these woman don't work in the industry how do they know what the miners experience and so on. I was really impressed by the auxillary's being allowed to be at meetings, so I'm really curious about how...

BG: Were the IWA members allowed to listen in.

SD: Yes.

BG: They could, well that was a step.

SD: Yes, and that was as far as it went, they couldn't vote, they couldn't go to Labour Council meetings, for example nothing like that.

BG:

BG: I don't know if I would ... want them, I would like to see them, I'd like to see a separate vote. Maybe, I don't I feel about that. **But**, I would be all in favour of them being at that meeting, to be informed. So they know,.. you know cause that's that unity, the electrical, that's what the electrical workers thats why the women^{got}involved at that time.

SD: So, were there other auxillary's that were ^{delegated} ~~elected~~ to the Labour Council, or was it just the Miners?

BG: No it was just the miners. But, it was ... What else was there? It was a joint Labour Council, so it was every.. you know, almost everything that was in the.. all the different unions. You'd have to ask Dusty that question.

SD: So, you were elected to..

BG: I was the Vice-Chairman. And I had that position when we moved to Vancouver.

SD: So what were your duties then?

BG: Well, I really was a free-lancer. (Laughter) I chaired the meeting if the Chairman wasn't there, and that, I can only remember doing that once and I remember because I was pregnant, and I thought, "Oh, God" (Laughter) Well, that's the one occasion that I remember doing it, so occasionally I chaired the meetings. But it was a good group, they supported the B.C. Peace Council and they had their first, get together here in Vancouver in fact it made news on the front page of the Sun, ^{WASSERMAN} Wasserman was over stationed in

Nanaimo, that's where he had his early days. When he saw Dusty had come to town or Ed Webb, the Chairman of the Miners' Union, he'd say "What's up, what's up"! The Chairman of the Miner's Union, I think he was Chairman of the Joint Labour Council too, if I remember right. But, Wasserman would be right there, to see what was happening. (Laughter)

SD: What would the auxillary do? What were it's activities?

BG: Well, they met regularly and really it was kind of social and yet they'd report back from the Women's Institute, and at that time they were having the National ^{Convention} there, in Nanaimo, or a B.C. Convention. So, you know, they'd report on that and I'd would report on what we were doing. But one thing we did, they had a branch of the Congress of Canadian Women over there, and they sponsored a Crisis Conference and it was really great. And the miner, well this is really the L.A. that gave their support to that. So, you know, I was only there for a short time really. I saw the tail end of the L.A. really.

SD: Okay, they had social gatherings, they would hear reports from conventions. Would they talk about upcoming contracts or anything like that?

BG: Well, not too much. I don't think they were much of an issue, there was no strikes or no things were pretty calm. This was 49-50, there was concern about the mines going to close down. But, there's nothing you could do until you knew if it was.

Tape 2
Side 1

SD: Was there a fight against the mines closing?

BG: No big.. No.. Just No, it was just closed, and this was when McMillan Bloedel had their Harmac Pulp Mill.. Were going to take most of the work force.

SD: So was there pressure from the Internationalⁱⁿ the States against the Canadian wing because^{of} its being identified with left wing people or anything like that.

BG: No, not at that time. The Cold War started in 1948, I think. Winston Churchill went to the States there. When was that? I was in the Parliment Buildings in London when they^{were} discussing the Marshall Plan. That's another thing I did.

SD: Okay, so then you moved to Vancouver, there?

BG: Yeah, see the mines closed in January 52, and at Easter time we came over and I stayed. And then.. I phoned Dusty, and there's only one phone in South Wellington, the store, they got him to come and phoned me back and he had a chance at a job. He worked out of town, putting up these transmission lines along from Squamish up and the transmission line in Surrey. He was a steel worker at first, for IBW. So, I was quite happy to move to vancouver. That's where my parents were.

SD: Actually, I wanted to ask you a few more questions about South Wellington. What were the living conditions like there? Can you describe them?

BG: Well, we had a very nice home and Dusty's father had died

in October the year, 49, so that we were living with his Mom. But, I can remember when my daughter was born and I had to go see a doctor here in Vancouver. I'd come from the hospital here to Vancouver to my Parents place, and the doctor was quite disgusted, you know, Why didn't you go home to your husband sort of thing. And I said "Well, the idea of having hot water and having plumbing all these things seem very attractive to me". Cause South Wellington still had outhouses. And this is just seven miles out of Nanaimo, the doctor was sort of, you know he could, "Well I guess its true" But he didn't believe it.(?) And we had the well out side, but we did have the pump at the sink, so that you got the cold water. But, you had to heat your water first, for anything like washing, clothes, no bathtub. No there's no bathroom.

SD: What about electricity?

BG: We had electricity. But, it wasn't.. I just don't know when we got that, they didn't have it for a long time. During the thirties I know that they didn't have electricity. Cause I can remember part of the organizing of the unions, the police came to the door of his parents place. And he was all by himself, he was 15, I guess. And he.... I remember him describing, "I went to the door with the lamp." (Laughter) And he was shaking. The lamp was shaking, so, you know they didn't have electricity then. I don't know just when they go it.

SD: And how was the health care?

BG: Oh, they had baby clinics, I went to a baby clinic in Nanaimo.

But, I had to go ^{to} it. But, I was only there... the baby was only six months old when we came to Vancouver.

SD: And how about accidents in the mines, was that a big issue for women?

BG: Well, it, In the past it was Nanaimo area and Vancouver Island has the worst record in North America I think. I know that Dusty, not his family, but, well the neighbour, next door neighbour lost someone. I know that the generation before had lost members.

SD: What about disease, from the mine?

BG: Yeah, from the coal dust, yeah.

SD: Were these issues that women would talk about at the..? Like the community facilities and health and safety.

BG: Well, a lot of these things had happened, like they had showers right at the pit, so that they didn't come home black. Those conditions had been won. A lot of these things had already happened when I got there.

SD: So, you came to Vancouver and he was in IBW. (YEAH) And you were going to tell me about the experience with trusteeship and blacklisting.

BG: Yeah, well, I wish.. I have this material here someplace. Another thing I that I'd like you to see, if you haven't seen it is the Constitution of the L.A. You'd think it was written today. Have you ever seen it?

SD: No.

BG: I thought I knew exactly where to find mine, to show you.
But, I still have it.

SD: Okay I'll, I can check with you. I think I may have seen
an earlier one in the archives that was in the 40's.

BG: Yeah, well it would be the same one. But you read that
and you'd think it was today. They talk about peace and
you know,... Every time I read it over I marvel at how
far sighted the women were when they started out. But,
I guess it was just before WW11, the late thirties that
they did it. It's around then that they formed.

SD: So, Vancouver and the IBW.

BG: Well that was ... Happened 53-54-55 somewhere around there,
because they knew that we had just moved here, they knew
that we had a new baby, the 2nd one by then. They knew
exactly ^h where we were at.

SD: Who is they?

BG: The people that came in trusteehips.

SD: Okay.

BG: You know, to try and buy you, what they do. But Dusty was
one of fifteen that was suspended, for no reason. I mean he
went to the union meeting, but all he did was go to the union meetings And...
The ones that really go hurt worse, like George Gee who
was the Business Agent, Don Wilson you could get more
information on this from Dusty really. But anyways, they

didn't, trying to save their jobs, and they were just kicked right out of the union. Especially George Gee, and so they got the support of the women. And Kay Whitings, I don't know have you met her?

SD: No.

BG: She was the president, she's around Burnaby, she did a good job, at that time. And, we had a little publication, we served coffee, you know it was just a group to really give support to the men. Actually to keep the women ⁿinformed, it was a one issue group, really, I guess. I'd like to have seen it kept going but when the situation was over, well it ceased to exist.

SD: Okay, was the trusteeship of the ~~entire~~ local?

BG: Yeah.

SD: Okay, and then this group of people who were suspended, did the local then continue without them?

BG: Yeah right. Like Dusty was still a union member, but he couldn't attend union meetings. But, he could still help keep people informed or you know, they would come and get guidance from him. He knew all along what was.. he was too dedicated not to know what was going on. But, he served his 50 years, they did try to get rid of him. He worked um.. And some of them did just drift away, you know. But, he worked on the School Board in the summer\$for awhile. Because he didn't get enough work in the union. And I remember one time they said if you don't pay up your dues

and bring this form your[']e out. And yet that form was at the School Board office. So, what do you do. So, I phoned up the girl at the School Board and explained that you have this form but he's supposed to show it at the union office and I believe what happened was that she sent a photostat copy of it, somehow or other she saved the day. He was paying double dues, he was a member of the IBW he wasn't going to walk away. And when the 15 years was up, and he went to his first meeting, they nominated him for president.

SD: It was a 15 year suspension?

BG: Yes.

SD: And did that mean that he couldn't work in the industry?

BG: Oh no, he worked in the industry all the time. They tried to discourage him not to, like they phoned him up and offered him a job cleaning up heavy oil for a couple of weeks out at IOCO and "YOU wouldn't want that job would you?"

SD: Because it was like a hiring hall?

BG: Well, no they have a seniority list and you phone it up. So, as long as you stay on it. So anyway, he thought should I go there or go to the School Board? Anyway he went there, and well he worked for B.C. Hydro till, he's going to retire at the end of October. That was you know, that was the way he go back into the work. And he met.. Different people were sympathetic, that he you know, didn't know about. He didn't have to go to war, in 41.

Because he was a miner, they were exempt. But, he joined up because he was anti-fascist. And one of the people remembered him, he was transporting the troupes back and forth across the Inlet, the English Channel. One of the officers, the previous officers recognized him. He was in the Medical Corp so.

SD: Okay, when you say that the women got together to support these men, which women were they and was it a formal structure it wasn't an auxiliary was it?

BG: It was called a club and we had a chairman and a treasurer, you know we had officers. And I'd say a lot of them were those ^{whose} men that were being attacked, when I think of who the men are, a lot of them but not all of them. Like Kay Whiting, the president, her husband wasn't threatened at all.

SD: So was this club of women only?

BG: It was the Electrical Workers' Womans Club.

SD: And did it represent all the women, potentially represent all the women?

BG: Anyone could join. But, those that were most effected, I'd say were those that were really there. But, the others were there. Like I say the President's ^{her} husband I don't think was threatened at anytime, he was in another branch of the union.

SD: Was this club for women of all different locals?

BG: Well, I'd say so, I'm not sure. The locals, it would be the Lower Mainland locals though. Like when you say locals, there is six locals, but some of them are Northern B.C. So it would be the Lower Mainland.

SD: Okay, what role then did this club play, did you meet with the men and talk with them, did you raise money.

BG: Well, they worked together, the men instrumental in it happening, so they certainly worked with us.

SD: So, why did they start it?

BG: Because of the urgency of the situation, and the importance of having help, and the importance of the woman knowing what's going on. Giving support to each other, as well as to the men.

SD: Did families go into crisis because of what was happening?

BG: Oh some people got ill, emotionally so upset that they were ill.

SD: So, this kind of network was really essential for them.

BG: Yeah, it was important, yeah. And they hoped to win. They had really thought it was very unjust and it was pretty unjust.

SD: Why was the trusteeship unjust?

BG: Well, the Cold War, I guess. It wasn't just the IBW that had it happen to them, you know it's the influence from the states.

SD: Okay, so.. Oh yeah, you were saying that the reason the trusteeship happened was because of general anti-communism,

and the leadership was seen as a left wing leadership.

BG: Yes.

SD: So were most of the women involved with the ^{se} men, ^{the} wives and so on were they fairly politicly active themselves, or politicly conscious?

BG: No, some of them didn't know anything. They just knew, that you know the job and the union, supporting their husband. And this is why, it was important to give support. And some like George Gees' wife, you know, and the family was really affected and well. The lack of education for one of them when he was cut right off. Joyce was a talented musician, but she didn't go on, at that time, I guess she ; has now, but.

SD: So, how would you give support? What kind of things would you do?

BG: Well, we'd serve coffee, when we'd travel around like that. And we'd get together and have a little publication to let people know just what was happening. And try to keep people up posted.

SD: Did the women write for the publication?

BG: Well, it was their own publication, and a women's publication.

SD: Do you remember what kind of themes there were in it, or what you talked about?

BG: I was supposed to be the editor but I was very poor at that job. Sometimes even recipes on. The women were all invited to submit things to it. So it was everbodys publication, really.

And I tried not to change anything. I don't know if that's the right way to do or not. But, that's the kind of thing it was.

SD: So would women write letters about their opinions about the union?

BG: Well, just articles about what was happening. On.. when the union situation, well I guess they'd be talking to their husband and that.. And just different people and how they felt about them, that kind of thing. Someplace in this house I have those things, I just have to find them.

SD: Were you actually able to help some of the families where this kind of crisis was going on? Did it bring people through together.

BG: No, I think the fact that you kept meeting, and knowing about where it was at. Well then people did, you know just being there sometimes was helping, wasn't it?

SD: How did you help to organize the fight inside the union?

BG: Well, I wouldn't say that we did that. But, they'd have dances, oh very big dances, to raise money. But, then, those were the people that knew why it was being held. That kind of thing and that took a lot of effort, and work, planning. Especially, a lot of them had never had anything to do with anything like that before. It was all something new to them. And the men worked with them, you know. It was a joint effort. I think that when it was a dance, it wasn't the ladies. It was a joint effort.

SD: Were you trying to reach the membership? Like the broader membership?

BG: Yes, we were trying to.. Those dances would do that, you see. People would come, because they were sympathetic. And then naturally would learn more about it.

SD: Was the hope that the membership would end up fighting the trusteeship.

BG: Well the hope was that George Gee would keep his job. You know, it was a fight for George Gee and the other members, the other fourteen members.

SD: And what happened finally with that?

BG: Well, George was out completely, some got ten years, some got fifteen years.

SD: And did the club stay in touch, did people stay in touch?

BG: Well, no it was a one issue thing. But, I think there was that friendship, that friendship was still there. Even today, that friendship is still there.

SD: Was there an internal union trial, or something like that?

BG: Yeah, oh yeah, each of them went on trial. But you'd have to ask Dusty about that part.

SD: So, after that were you involved in any other auxiliaries'?

BG: No, you see, Dusty was with the IBW, right off.

SD: And there was no auxiliary?

BG: No. Everyone once in a while I would bring up the subject, it would be nice to have one. No, that's as far as it went.

SD: When you were in the Mine Workers' Auxiliary did the men in the union, generally support their wives being involved in the auxiliary, or were there mixed feelings about that?

BG: Well, as I said, I joined near the tail end of it. It was an acceptance, you know, this is what the women did. There was no opposition that they sent delegates to the Joint Labour Council, and that they participated in the May Day celebrations, whatever they did.

SD: Okay, that's it for my questions, did you have anything that you wanted to add to ..

BG: Well, I was thinking about it before, and I was thinking of the early days, and Nanaimo, working with the Congress of Canadian Women, and the Labour Council, and the Electrical Workers' Women, but, those were the main things. But, when I was working in Saanichton the big thing was that I ~~went~~^{went}, you know. But, I've always participated and that would ^{have} been a professional organization, I think I belonged to about three of them. The Plato Pathology Club, the Agricultural one, the Professional one, the B.C. one, the Agroligist, they started up when I was working. So, you know, I belonged to all of them, but, that was it.

SD: Great. You mentioned that you were in the South Wellington PTA.

BG: Yeah, and..

SD: Why was that.

BG: Well, that's the one group that was active in that community,

BG: and it was mainly women. And that was their link with Nanaimo. I remember I ran for office with the Nanaimo PTA Council, I didn't get elected though. But, the local groups sponsored me to run. And they'd have speakers in, and they'd have a little raffle each time. A lot of it was social, but, they kept in touch with what was going on in the school, and the community. The same here where I live, the Franklin School. The PTA here was the community organization, we were the ones that got the sidewalk on the overpass, got the stairs down from the overpass. Got this light at Skeena and Hastings, for the children to cross, got the fencing up for the school when the bridge was made so that kids couldn't run under into the street. It's a community organization and infact one thing that they did here was stop the bus increase. I didn't realize how important it was to this area, until another lady that's involved was telling me. They still talk about when we stopped the bus increase. We were involved with the B.C. Home Schooling, the provincial PTA, and we went over to Victoria, three of us, I was one of them. We presented a brief and I think the reason they were concerned here, this is one area that the kids take the bus to go the school. At that time they had to go to Brittania High from here. And from Boundry Road and Edinborough that's a long way. It's more than two miles, which is the limit. You know if they lived any other place they'd have a bus. Infact the

BG: Eton bus used to make a special run to Templeton High School. Instead of going just to Refⁿrew Street, it would go to Nanaimo and Hastings, so that the kids in a way had a School Bus, but they had to pay. But, it made a special run, and in the evening three thirty or whatever it was, that ~~bus~~ ^{was there for them to make that EXTRA jaunt.}

SD: What year did they fight the increases, do you remember?

BG: This was the year when they didn't increase the fare for kids.

SD: Is that recently, or?

BG: No. That would be about the time that Templeton High School became a High School. Just before that, because I guess early 70's. Maybe earlier, I don't know we did so many things.

SD: That was great. Okay!