

EM: . . . what I was starting to say is that they, when they started hiring the women on the streetcars, the union suggested that they give the girls a working card, and the men said, "No, if they're going to work on this job they'd pay as much as we do," which is kind of a put-down, so we did become union members because the men felt that we were going to pay less. But I was just wondering where you wanted me to start. I can go back to the Depression.

SD: What I'd like you to do is give a bit of your background, like where you came from, when you came to British Columbia, or if you were born here, where you were born. A bit about your parents' occupations and when you started to work, okay?

EM: Yeah. I was born in Roland, Manitoba, I've just been back, my daughter's interested in geneology. I went to, as far as high school, which I was very fortunate, it was in the depression, and I graduated in 1934. I did get a job with Eaton, I think every kid out of school that's where we started work, in the Depression, which was just before Christmas, I guess, for about six years it was. We came out here to Vancouver in 1935, and very bad times. There was just hardly any work. I got a job in Woodward's. Before that I worked out back of the university, there was a tea-room out there, and I was supposed to get 20 dollars a month, I was living in, of course. And when he cashed in he could only afford to give me \$15 for the month. We managed,

BREAK IN TAPE

SD: We were talking a bit about your mother, can you talk about her?

EM: Oh. She was a schoolteacher, and she met my father in Roland in a small school and she was the one that got us to move into Winnipeg. And eventually out to Vancouver, it was her doing. She did substitute when I was young, in Winnipeg at schools, then after, I don't know why she stopped the substituting, she worked at Hudson Bay in the kitchen. It seemed to me she was always working, the jobs that my father had were not -- he worked at Eaton's and got laid off during the Depression. Then he delivered coal and the winters were so severe back there. And her idea was that she was so concerned with his health, but I think that she was a very strong personality. She didn't work when we came out here and she died in 1948. It was about, well, she had a cancer operation, she had a mastectomy in '38, I guess, and it was ten years later that they found out that it was in the bone.

SD: So you grew up in a family where the woman worked?

EM: Yes.

SD: And it was expected that the woman work.

EM: Oh, yes.

SD: What kinds of attitudes were there generally about women having a right to work in the community you grew up in? When you were young?

EM: Well, there was so few jobs, if anybody was working they were lucky, or they knew somebody. I worked at Eatons when I came out of high school and I got a job before Christmas in the, um, I haven't thought about this for a long time, in the mail order, wrapping parcels. And there were girls down there who had been going down every year, for seven years, just getting work before Christmas, that's how tough jobs were. And I was called in after Christmas, which was a surprise to me, and I wasn't even, nobody talked to me because they felt that I knew somebody in the department, that's why I was asked back. But I hadn't, I think it was my work, it wasn't that I was fast or anything but I was thorough. No, anybody that could get a job, there was so few, the laws I guess wouldn't allow you to work if you were married.

SD: When did you marry?

EM: I married in '38.

SD: And were you working at the time?

EM: I was working at Woodward's and they let me out because I did get married.

SD: How did that happen, did they give you notice?

EM: Well, he just said, he was sorry I had told him because he would've liked to have kept me on. ^{Maybe} If I had lied to him, hadn't told him that I was, I can remember that. But at the time my husband was working at fumigating, and then he went up to work in a mine, and was out of work before the war started. Which started here in August of '39.

SD: So you were both out of work?

EM: Not really, he did get a job. He was in the reserve army, and he helped in that way. And my mother and dad had a big house which was a roominghouse, where everybody lived in rooms, then. Or the clothes closet that was made into, that had a little stove or something, you always had to go into the bathroom for the water and that. But that was acceptable then, because . . . I don't know, I guess everybody wasn't, but there were so few people with jobs it seemed to me that it was accepted, this was the way you lived.

SD: What were the working conditions^{like} in those early jobs that you had? The hours, and the pay, and . . .

EM: Well, everybody worked 48 hours a week in those days. Oh, I guess they were pretty bad, because I got a job one day in Eaton's, in the cafeteria, and I came out of the door with a tray of something and it broke, so she put me in the sink. You know, and I was a young girl at the time. And I wasn't asked back. You know, you just had to shape up. In those days, you, you got paid for what you did. Nowadays, it seems to me that they're . . . I'm not putting them down because we've worked for these conditions, but now it seems to me that they, sick pay and holidays, which is what I worked for and I feel very strongly about, lots, you know, two or three holidays a year, I think it keeps the people healthier, and more able to work and produce more, but, we had to prove ourselves

EM: (cont) more in those days. It's pretty hard for some of the people to accept this, you know.

SD: Were the jobs that you had in the stores mostly women's jobs, mostly women workers there?

EM: Oh, yeah, a man, I guess, wouldn't've worked in the kitchen really, would he, when you think of it. There wasn't any men around. I worked in the bindery, and I've, the boss owned the store that my parents were working in, and I didn't allow him to put his hands on me so I didn't get work anymore. I enjoyed that work, but that was the end, and I think there was much of that, you know, when those women had to. . .

SD: Was that in the 1930's that that happened?

EM: Yeah, oh yeah. That was before I was married.

SD: After you had been laid off because of your marriage, what did you then do in terms of finding employment, did you look for work, or . . .

EM: I did but there was nothing. It didn't matter what I did, I felt that I needed something . . . especially when my husband left the fumigating business, well after he came down from the mine, as a matter of fact, it was so dangerous up at Brittania, the whole inside of that mine was mined out. And there were people being, he was coming down with two weeks holiday because he had been next to the man that had gone down the sluice. Have you been out to the Brittania mine? Oh, its beautiful, you should go see it, its a museum. I had my daughter in October of 1939

EM: (cont) He was already in the army by that time.

SD: Did a lot of men join the army both because of the sort of patriotic reasons but also because of the lack of jobs?

EM: Mostly because of the lack of jobs. I'm sure it was, because ~~there~~ was men standing around the streetcorners here in Vancouver with a tin can wanting someone to give them a nickel so's that they could . . . and they were organized at that time, you know, and that was before they went down to Saskatchewan, ^{and} the RCMP rode them down. They were on to Ottawa. Mostly because of lack of jobs and something to do and I think most of the war did what they were going into, but it was exciting, it was impossible for the ordinary joe to go to Hawaii, like we can today.

SD: How did women react to the war beginning, in terms of their husbands signing up and . . .

EM: I guess there was a lot of talk, a lot of build-up. There had to be, you know, because we felt very patriotic, I'm not any more, but, we had to save the world, I think. My husband was in the reserve and he was, ^{I don't know,} just, army crazy like kids are with soldiers, you know. He just had to go over. He was in this army service corps and he changed to the Forestry Corps so he could get overseas.

SD: Had you been involved in trade union activities?

EM: No, I didn't know anything about trade unions before I went to Boeings. And he was already overseas by that time.

SD: So when did you go to Boeings?

EM: Uh, 1930, no, I went back East with my husband before he went overseas and spent a year in Quebec City so it must have been 1941 when I came back from there and went to work, because I didn't know whether he was coming back. By that time the war was pretty, well, you didn't know who was coming back. Lots of them getting killed.

SD: How did you get hired on at Boeing's, what was the procedure?

EM: Well, you went down to, I don't think I went to Boeing's, I think there was a place where you registered, and they expected the women to do their patriotic duty. She wasn't, she was really prone to hire me, maybe I was too well dressed or whatever, in the paint shop, that's all she had was just openings for the paint shop. And I said I didn't care, I would go there, but maybe there'd been girls that had tried it and couldn't make it because of the smell, and . . . and it was heavy work. And I said, "I don't care." So she told me how awful it was and that made it more interesting to myself, I suppose, and, yeah, we were doing men's work there. Very heavy work.

SD: Can you describe what the work was? What you were doing?

EM: Well, in the beginning, we just went in and stripped paint off the angles and all the metal parts, and loaded up trays for the painters. And then I became a spray painter. I started at 45¢ an hour, at Boeing's, and I worked up to 90¢ as a Class A Specialist spray painter, eventually. That took about a year, I guess. I think

EM: (cont) I was only there about a year. I had to ask for that Class A Specialist, I was doing twice the work that these two fellows were and they were getting the 90¢ which was the Class A Specialist wage. And I had to ask the boss, I had to ask him, and he said, "Do you think you qualify?" And I said, "If they do, I do." And in a couple of months I did get my 90¢ an hour.

SD: It was hourly rates, not piece work.

EM: Oh, it wasn't piece work, no.. A ~~ey~~ you were hired from 7:00 to, what, 9 to 5, there were three shifts, you got hourly rate.

SD: What did you do as a spray painter? Did you have equipment that you carried around, or . . .

EM: No, there was a waterfall, and these parts were brought in and put on big trays, and we took these heavy trays off, put them on a turntable, in front of this waterfall, which was supposed to take the dust and stuff away. We also had masks. They were bigger parts -- we were in the smaller parts, and we'd turn them over, and paint them ^{on} the other side, and . . . we had a pressure pot that was up here in the hole above us on the rack and we had to learn to clean the guns and take care of that pressure pot, which we did.

SD: Did you work in teams, or alone?

EM: Oh, we worked alone. We put one coat on and we were sent over to get another coat on by another person. They eventually brought in a conveyor belt, which was near the end of, before Boeing's closed up, and that you had to be fast.

EM: (cont) Men weren't as able to do it. I saw (laughs), it was quicker, more of a rhythm thing, and ~~to~~ you'd get it. ~~It~~ It was being painted by paint, you know, spray, but it wasn't doing the job and you had to finish it as it went past you.

SD: Were women integrated all throughout the different jobs in the Boeing plant?

EM: Oh, yes, yes. Well, there were so few men, the women were doing the jobs, riveting, whatever, going into the planes and some of them were pretty dangerous.

SD: Were there training courses, or on-the-job training?

EM: It was on-the-job. Any of the departments, any of the places where you worked you'd get on-the-job training.

SD: What was the attitude towards women going into these war industries? Was it sort of that, "Well, this is temporary for the war,"

EM: Oh, absolutely, this was just doing your patriotic duty, yep. As a matter of fact I was working on the streetcars by the time the war was over, and I had been working there for some time, and that was supposed to be the end. And the people just came up and insulted you, why, just telling you, you know, you're just taking the job away from a man. For a couple of years it was just steadily, really, you know, "Are you prepared to keep me in the manner in which I am accustomed to?" You couldn't say that to everybody but this was the way you felt, you know. What right -- they didn't even ask me if my husband had come back from overseas, or what, it didn't matter, you just -- "now, get off

EM: (cont) that damn job!" There was a lot of women, too, mostly women, that. . . because I think they hadn't taken the opportunity to do what you did and I think it was more jealousy and envy.

SD: During the war at Boeing^s was the attitude really strong within the women there that they were doing this for the war effort, or did these women also talk about how they needed the money and it was an experience for them in their own independence?

EM: I don't think anybody considered anything about the experience. Our experience before the war was that prosperity was around the corner, but I don't know, there wasn't really any hope for anybody to . . . I had dedicated my life to becoming a nurse, and, there was no place, there was no jobs. If my parents had had the hundred and fifty dollars that I would have had to pay for my books and then my uniforms, I would have probably been doing housework, because there wasn't the jobs when you got through with these things. Unless you knew somebody and then probably not. I think its much like it is right now. It's getting like that very definitely, part-time jobs are. . . I had a friend that his parents were able to put him through for a teacher. He went to normal school and he taught for a year, and he was offered a job in a service station, that, what was it \$5 a day or something? And he took it because he wasn't getting paid as a teacher, they gave him pigs and potatoes, and, you know, that was what you got paid when you went to these

EM: (cont) little places. So that was the professional.

SD: What was the supervision like at Boeings, was it very heavy?

EM: I can't speak for the other departments but I know that ours was because we were in this room that was, that had these big heavy doors, fire doors, on them. I understand that there were a lot of them that would get into a plane and go to sleep, not do the job. I know the shipyards were well known for going there, and going in and playing cards all day, and all that. Some of them even would punch the timeclock, and go out and do another job. And these were kids that should have continued on in school, kids that left school to do this work.. And parents who had allowed it because they had had such a hard time when they were. . . they weren't going to let their kids suffer. This is one of the things that I find was very wrong, was a lot of these kids, you know, that had the rebellion there, the dope, the drugs and things.

SD: Were there any special facilities for women that the employers provided at Boeing? When this largely female work force came in.

EM: Toilets?

SD: Yeah, restrooms, toilets, daycare, anything like that.

EM: Oh, you're kidding. We had toilets, I guess, because there was mainly women there, the men were all overseas. Oh, no, there was nothing allowed. I mean, there was no comforts, you went there to work and you did the job.

SD: Can you talk a bit about the conditions, like you mentioned earlier that it was very hot in the paint room.

EM: Uhm, the paint shop was a very big place, it was a very important place. We had masks on, and I can remember a supervisor coming around and, of course, they were very hot to wear and we'd have them hanging down here, and he, we had to watch to see if anybody came in, strange came in, we didn't put our masks up which was very foolish because it was a lot of dust. So that was supervised. That was our safety, but that's about all I can think of.

SD: Was there any union activity going on at Boeing's when you were there?

EM: Well, all I can remember is that they were trying to unionize it. There were people coming around talking to us and, not ever having been involved, or not even knowing what my husband's opinions were on it, because he was never in a union job, I didn't, I just didn't know. I was a little bit concerned about even talking to these people, or even wanting to know. Until I, until the situation happened that we were locked out, by the government, which was an unknown thing for them to close down a plant. It must've been quite a threat to them, to close it down for a week. And when we came back we had this, this whaddyacallit, coffee time, it wasn't coffee time, I think it was five minutes, and it was once a day. And I can't say it was doubled but I know that production, was up so much that they kept it up. We were then allowed

EM: (cont) to have this little break in the morning.

SD: Did the break make a difference in your day?

EM: Oh, yes. It was just like, you just got renewed, and away back you went because you would get four hours steady working was just, you know. You could go to the toilet, which some of them made two or three trips, I guess, maybe that's where they had their cigarette, I didn't. It just -- yes, it made a difference to everybody, we were able to talk to somebody in the shop, you just didn't come in and go to work.

SD: Were there other kinds of issues that people tried to build the union around?

EM: There must have been, in the other shops. I know that with us, this was it, of course, I wasn't there too much longer after that and I don't remember if, there was no, during the war you were not, they didn't raise wages. If you stepped up in the production or got yourself a better position, yes, but 45¢ an hour, that was the wage, that you, because it was the patriotic thing to do.

SD: What did you do about childcare while you were working?

EM: My mother took care of my daughter. ^{I lived} in their house, which was a roominghouse, and she took care of my daughter while I was at work.

SD: Did you have to work different shifts?

EM: Oh, yes, three different shifts.

SD: How did that affect both your working conditions and also

SD: (cont) your being able to maintain a relationship with your child?

EM: Um, I didn't seem to have any problem with the relationship with my child because my mother allowed, I took over when I came home and there was no question about who was responsible. I don't remember having too much problem with the relationship.

SD: Were the swing shifts really exhausting, though, or did you get used to it?

EM: The graveyard shift, of course, was something. By 2:00 it would quiet down until there was hardly anything, I think we all practically went to sleep and then we'd waken up about two hours later. We didn't go to sleep, but, ..afternoon shift I didn't like because your whole day was wasted, but you took them and you did the job then. Day shift I think was a little harder, I think you had a half hour, in order to make the shift the right length, well everybody worked eight hours ^{only} and we had a half an hour for lunch, and the cafeteria was about half a mile over here (laughs). So you ate your sandwich, you brought one, because you didn't have time to go ^{and buy one} and sit down, there was no way. So . . . I forget what the question was.

SD: Oh, I was just asking about the effects of shifts on your work. Also, I wondered about other women, did the other women talk about trying to get on evening shifts or night shifts so that they could see their kids during the day?

EM: You couldn't do that. You worked one week, days one week,

EM: (cont) afternoons a week, graveyard, and you had to make your arrangements for your children. If your parents lived in town, or if you had someone that could take care you were lucky.

SD: Did the women talk a lot about kids? The problems that they were having with them?

EM: I don't remember people having too many problems with their children at that time. Somehow it doesn't, I don't know what, I haven't even given it too much thought. I think after I talk to you I'll probably come up with some things.

SD: Were there any other issues that the women talked about at Boeing? For example, dress codes, maybe in the plant or anything like that.

EM: We had a, overalls that covered us, they were from our neck right down. And we had to wear kerchiefs over our heads. And we had to take our rings off because the compensation wouldn't pay anything if you got a ring caught in any machinery. And we ended up coming to work on Monday with our rings on cause we'd put them on over the weekend. I lost mine because I stuck it in my wallet and lost the wallet somewhere. Our clothes, [and] I'd always liked to dress, I think anybody that wears a uniform probably dresses, and likes to dress a little better, because it's a complete change. In those days, we had a style, every year it was different style, and everybody wore the same thing. It's different today and I think it's great, you can wear what you please.

SD: Why did you decide to leave Boeing's and get another kind of job?

EM: Well, I don't know whether it was slowing down too much. My main reason was that they'd put a fellow in as head of the department that couldn't read English and he came to me and asked me why wasn't I, then I think I must have felt then why wasn't I allowed to be the shift boss if I was having to do the work. He was, I don't, there must've been wrong with him something health-wise, or he would've been in the army of course. I just, I just felt I couldn't work under him. But you had to give notice, or have some sickness or some debility to get out. During the war you couldn't just quit your job. And I had been considering this, streetcars, it was just fascinated me and there were girls working on that job. And I just really wanted to try it. So I did.

SD: When did you change jobs?

EM: 1944. I left Boeing's in May of '44 and I was hired on the Hydro in November 1944. That was the last class of girls that was hired. Previous to us being hired, they had hired a group of men, some of them having come home from overseas, but it didn't seem to work out because they still needed to hire another class of girls. There was 11 of us in our class.

SD: Just going back for a minute, you said that when people were unionizing at Boeing's, that it was underground, why was that?

EM: Well there was so little known about unionism. Just, it was serious business, and when the government would close down a plant because of their activity, then it must have been quite serious.

SD: What procedure again did you go through to get hired on the B.C. Hydro, did you have to go through the National Selective Service again, or directly through the company?

EM: I went ~~through~~ the company. And we had exams and then were chosen from these IQ tests we took.

SD: Were there any regulations about the kinds of women they wanted to hire at all?

EM: In the beginning they wanted to take on women that were 25, and their husbands were overseas, but there were many women that had no husbands overseas and some of them were younger. But they didn't have that much choice, really. The work force was small because of so many men, and women, by that time, overseas, too.

SD: What were the women hired to do?

EM: They were conductorettes. They were on the back end of the streetcars, taking people on and taking fares. Giving signals.

SD: What would it mean to give signals, what would you do?

EM: We had a cord (laughs). We opened the doors and we gave two bells when everybody was loaded and our doors were closed and the motormen drove off. One bell meant that somebody wanted to get off, and we stopped. Three bells was emergency stop. Something had happened and that was your signal. And the cord went right through. And four bells

EM: (cont) was the back up.

END OF SIDE ONE

Tape I Side 2:

EM: And the motorman drove off. One bell meant that somebody wanted to get off and we stop~~ped~~. Three bells was emergency stop. Something had happened and that was your signal. And the cord went right through. And four bells was the back up. ~~When~~ he had to back up, you hung out the back window and gave four bells when all was clear. (Laughs) It was a fantastic job, we were on strike in 1947, I guess, for a month, and everybody got to know each other and it was, it was a tough, it was heavy work. We were then trying to get less hours or, we, I learned about unionism on the streetcars. But I didn't become very involved in it. I think after most of the ladies left, I could have, but I didn't have to then, because I was probably kind of special. I didn't get anything extra but, we really I think kept quiet just so we would keep the job.

SD: Going back to when you were a conductorette, would you have a lot of contact with the public because you were collecting tickets, and that kind of thing?

EM: Oh, yes. There was always somebody standing out around the back of ^{the} a streetcar, talking to you.

SD: And what were the conditions and wages like?

EM: Well, the wages, we were paid equally to the men. Had from the beginning. When they decided I wasn't in the first class but I understand when they hired the girls that the union suggested that they give them a working card instead of the union card. I think they did this in Winnipeg because the girls didn't stay on very long after the war. They just disappeared. So that we, the men just politely said, "No way, they're gonna pay as much as we do, if you hire them on in our jobs." I don't know how much the union dues were then, not a lot, but in comparison I started working on the Hydro at 69¢ an hour. We were paid 35¢ an hour breaking-in time. So then the union said, "Okay, if they pay as much as you do, they get a union card." So we've been protected from the beginning. But apparently the company has been more than satisfied with the work that the girls have done. They never even gave it any thought of letting us go, or even considering it.

SD: What were the attitudes generally of men to these women coming in to work on the streetcar? Was there openness or hostility, or . . .

EM: By the time I came, not really. I know that when they started hiring the girls after I had been on for 29 years I know what happened there, and it was getting used to having the girls around. And also the girls having to get accustomed to the attention that they're getting, and not taking advantage of the situation that they had. And I think that this is what we had to do. And there were

EM: (cont) many of them that couldn't handle it. But I think the majority of us enjoyed it, working with men, many of them in which was always considered a man's job. I was told that many, many times. I didn't think so, but . . .

SD: You were hired towards the end of the war. Were there any signs of impending layoffs when you got the job?

EM: No, nobody was laid off. Every man that went overseas, his job was kept for him. So we never took a job from the men. And of course, when everybody started coming home, they needed extra, so there was no need to lay off. And a lot of the girls had left by that time, some of them just came on for a very short time.

SD: Why did people leave? Why did women leave?

EM: Of course some of them left when their husbands came home. Some of them found the job very difficult. One girl in our class got sick riding backwards, she couldn't (laughs) . . . And the old streetcars used to swing around. I think just like any other job some of them didn't want to do the job. It wasn't easy. It was quite difficult, really heavy work. Those handles that we used to have to pull open to open those doors, I wasn't on the job any more than, well, not to exaggerate, but I would say no more than six months, when there were clothes that I couldn't get in to, because this dress came down, the sleeve came down to here, and when I had that jacket on, my muscles were so, I got developed so much around, the shoulders, there was clothes I couldn't get into

EM: (cont) and it wasn't fat cause I never got fat, till
ten years ago. (Laughs)

SD: And was your husband overseas all this time?

EM: He was overseas for almost six years.

SD: Right. So you pretty well needed to work as well.

EM: Well, not really, because he was allowing me a certain amount from the war, but it was my mother's idea, you know, that if he didn't come back then I should have something going, should be in the work force, and she was able to look after my daughter.

SD: And was he supportive of you working?

EM: Oh, yes. How supportive you can be when you're that far away from anybody, the marriage didn't last, of course, he came home and there were many problems, that some people solved and some people didn't and some people stayed and . . .

SD: How did the union relate to the possibility of women being on the buses in an ongoing way?

EM: I find it difficult to say union. ^{It's} basically each man that belongs to the union. There was a man quite high up in the union that was very resentful of us being here. He's writing his memoirs now and I asked him if he has anything in it about the ladies: "Oh, gosh, Edra," he said, "I forgot. Write something up and I'll put it in my memoirs" (Laughs) He was against them but he grew to care for us individually. And he had a lot of influence. But I know at meetings he was very resentful of the women being or having any part of it, it was a man's job and a lot of people like

EM: (cont) to keep things the way they were. They'd still be driving horse and buggy, you know.

SD: Did the men come out and say that in the union meetings, "This is a man's job, these women shouldn't stay here after the war"?

EM: Um, I didnt hear it. And it wasn't so much the men saying this as people who got on your streetcar and had things to say to you. You didn't really find out how the men felt. You knew individually whether any of them accepted you or not. The girls were very good, we had to be, we had to be better than them. We worked hard, we could load, and the thing, the idea was how fast you could get to the end of the line (laughs). And there were girls that were well-known that the guy didn't even have to stop the streetcar, the people just jumped right on and away you went, and this was how you were judged. But you had to be better, or you didn't make it.

SD: Was the union active in that period of time?

EM: Oh, yes.

SD: What kind of things were going on with union activity?

EM: Well, we got shorter work hours. I should have looked into this before I started talking to you because I, it's, I know that we were on strike and I know the things that we accomplished within the . . . the wages, and a lot of the conditions, but I didn't go into it. I think you could go to our union and find out. As I say I did not become terribly involved, I went to meetings and I, there was one girl that, when they were going into one-man opera-

EM: (cont) tions, fought quite strongly for us to drive a streetcar. Which I don't think that they were even considering us when, you know, when you drive the streetcar, when they take off the back end, or, they were just a one-man operation, that the girls would eventually go. But they said, "Well, let them. They won't last." And the same with Victoria, when we had to go to Victoria and say, "Can women get an A license," which should have been for everybody. But we had to go to Victoria to get accepted.

SD: What year was that?

EM: That was about 1950.

SD: What was the woman's name who fought really hard to get on as a driver?

EM: Pearl *Wortham*.

SD: Was she in Vancouver?

EM: She was on the job, yes, she was working for us, and it was through her and she went around and made sure we all went and got our training. "Whether you're gonna stay or not, go and learn how to drive a streetcar. And then get in and drive that bus." So we did, and she made a training for it and, it was, it was a step up.

SD: Did the union allow women to become drivers? They didn't fight it all around changes and job classifications?

EM: The union? Oh, no. No, they, we were union members by strongly now and quite entrenched in it. No, I can't say that we . . .

SD: Did they help you in any way establish yourself as drivers?

EM: Oh, we were trained by the company, it would be the company that . . . and nobody resented it by that time, by this time, you see, we had been on for six, seven, going on eight years, and it was just, *they'll go* they were dropping off. One of my friends had saved enough money that she bought a turkey ranch up in *Kelowna*, These are reasons, you know. And it was always a temporary job, with all of us.

SD: Was that because that's how women saw their work?

EM: That's how women saw themselves. Somebody'd come along and marry you, and take care of things.

SD: Were you a single parent by this time?

EM: Yes.

SD: So did you see your future more as being tied to having to work?

EM: Uh, yes, having to work, not tied to it. I decided that before they allowed ^{us} to drive a streetcar I decided ^{that} I was going to apply for another job and I went down to the Police Station and applied at the *Police Station* for a lady cop. And she was going to take me right on because she thought this was great, get somebody right off the streetcars, you know, come in to a police job, and ^I found out that that was the first test that they had ever asked a policeperson to do. You had to go down to *City Hall*, and I had applied around October and it wasn't till May

EM: (cont) that I had my interview, and in that time I found that it wasn't welfare, social work, like I thought it was going to be, it was strictly cop. And I took the exams, four of us passed, and they accepted a girl that I had told to go down. She didn't last too long, she was really cop. I was asked three months later to come, and they would accept me, but by that time I had found out what it was like and I was driving a streetcar by that time and also, I would then have to go back into shift work, which, my daughter was getting older now, and, but I was going to have to work, yes, do something. When she got married, I decided to take a course and do typing and get my business education. I had university standing but no business thing, and then I decided, I don't want to go and sit inside of an office, not now, after this. And it was just ^{then} when that I decided that, I wasn't working there just because I had to, I like that job. I like being outside. I like the association of the people.

SD: When did you get your university education?

EM: I didn't have my university education, I had my high school, I didn't take a business, what do they call it . . .

SD: OK.

EM: Yeah, university.

SD: When the women first began to drive the buses, how many women were there approximately?

EM: There were thirty of us broke in on the buses, and I would

there would only be about
EM: (cont) say ~~about~~ three years before it was down to
stayed that
about eight of us, I would say that length of time, for
any length of time. And there were about six, seven of
us that retired off the job.

SD: What were some of the problems on the job? You had said
that the conditions were pretty bad, the conditions of
the roads, and . . .

EM: Yes, that didn't just involve the girls, there was a lot
of men that when they had to tear up the old streetcar
tracks, consequently we had to take an auxiliary route
which would be the next block, which didn't even have
curbs or any, the blacktop on them was so thin that it
wasn't even built to carry buses, and the amount that
were going down there, and they didn't take care of that
before they started tearing up the roads. So there were
many people that were off bad backs and shoulder pulls
and . . .

SD: That would happen while you were driving?

EM: Oh, yes. Down these streets that didn't qualify actually
for that heavy equipment.

SD: Were there other serious problems like that in terms of
the working conditions ~~on your~~ job?

EM: No. Toilets (laughs). That's about all. And they didn't
have, they did build some at the end of the lines and you
had keys to get in and, double ones, and then in the years
that there was only a few of us ^{they took off the double one} and we had a key and you
could lock it from the inside. I can't think of, the

EM: (cont) conditions were, in teaching, and I think in teaching the younger ones, is that you make your own conditions. Your attitude is how you're going to handle, and . . . You're driving through traffic, however you want to do it, and you're dealing with people, and I found them just fantastic, very few problems with the people.

SD: Were you under a lot of pressure in terms of time and getting your route done?

EM: We had a schedule to keep, yes. Some people, they have ulcers because of it, some people can work it out, it's up to you. I think that that was one job, there was nobody looking over your shoulder, seeing how you were doing your job. They knew by your reports, passenger reports, your accidents ~~reports~~, whatever. If you, if you had too many of one accident, or one type of accident, or if you had too many sleep-ins, if you had ^{whatever,} ~~to~~ . you were called up and given a case review. If you had any problems at home, there were many people that were helped by the Hydro, through many conditions, I think they're still doing it.

SD: So you sort of had to have an internalized sense of discipline?

EM: You had to take care of yourself, yes. You worked it out yourself. In training I would tell them that they're gonna hate the kids. "Oh, but I like kids, no, I'll have no trouble," and I said, "You're gonna hate 'em." And if you don't accept that fact, then you're in trouble. You're gonna get to like them, you're gonna know how to handle

EM: (cont) them, ^{but} in the beginning. Also with the old people.

Oh, they couldn't understand why they could hate the old people, but you can be late and have a packed standing load, and have to stop and stop ^{to} pick up an old person because they're there. You can resent them being there, and they won't hurry. The more nervous you are, the slower they get, because they sense these things about you. So it's conditions, these things are gonna happen to you now, if you're gonna accept them and work them out then you're okay. But it's gonna happen to you. A lot of it was psychological, I felt.

SD: Were there any specific problems that the women who were driving had, that the men didn't have?

EM: Menstruation. (Laughs) I found that men had to go to the bathroom, most of them, every time they got to the end of the line, and that was one of the ^{I guess} problems with a lot of people if you didn't have good kidneys. And like I say, how can I say, except that some of the girls had a feeling when they started to drive that the men were, were doing them in, that they had so many people because that fellow was running sharp and he was, you know, trying to get to me. I never felt paranoid about any of them, if I was busy, too busy, it was my problem, I hadn't driven, or I had wasted a minute someplace, but it was a lot of pressures in driving. Something you just had to learn to handle.

SD: You had said earlier that there were problems with insur-

ance when the women came on.

EM: The insurance company came in, it wasn't trouble with the insurance so much as that they had said that if they're going to go to this one-man operation, there was somebody driving before and somebody else taking tickets, there were two people on the vehicle doing the job, and if they were going into one-man operations, and in particular buses, which would have to -- the streetcar was on a track, and you weren't steering, they said. But the insurance company decided that they would give the men 17 years of an average, and in about 17 years there were many of the fellows dying at the wheel of that bus. Actually, passing out. There wasn't too many bad accidents because they felt a seizure and a lot of them having heart attacks at that time. When they gave the men an average of 17 years they also gave the women six months. I don't know if they were being facetious or not but that was a fact, they said that they would let them go ahead and drive because that's all they'd last. They won't die, but they'll, the women could quit where the men had to stay because they had families and children and wives that wouldn't work (laughs).

SD: Most of the women who worked on the buses, who stayed there, were they married women, or single?

EM: Um, single, I guess. Had been married, there's one of the gals that was married, had a husband, which was okay. Yeah, isn't that funny, it's hard to think back on the

EM: (cont) gals that stayed. The two of us that were left were both divorcees and had never married again.

SD: So in some ways the stakes were pretty high for women who were working there to be able to keep those jobs?

EM: Yes, you worked for it. For instance, when I started driving and I got on this Oak Street car, which had from 16th Avenue on Oak right down to Marpole, was a single track and had switches that you, you went the 15 blocks and you went into the switch and you waited for this guy to come from town or whether you were going the other way coming from Marpole, and you exchanged these staffs. And the first time I showed up on one of those as a driver the looks I got, oh my god, there goes the old Oak Street line, you know, it's bugged now there's a woman on. And I've worked to make sure that nobody ever had to wait for me. You just had to be better in those days, there was no other way out.

SD: How did you deal with childcare during this period of time, were you still living with your mother?

EM: My mother got sick and I had to find a place to place my child. I tried to find a place that I could move in and have her, and there was no way, the housing was nil. I could barely get a place, I had to pay, as a matter of fact, to get an apartment. When my mother took sick and I couldn't even live at home anymore. And I had to look for some place for my child and I got, it was sickening. There was people that you went to and you knew the

EM: (cont) situation wasn't right, it looked nice because you had made an appointment. And I got a very nice woman, who is still my friend, to take my child. She had five of them and I think my daughter made six, she had a very big problem of keeping it down because she was excellent with the children. And she took her. But it was only for three years and I felt that until my daughter became 11, at least I didn't feel it was fair for me, at that time I still didn't have much of a choice of shifts, I was sometimes working till eight o'clock at night, and I wanted to make sure, where she was. Then we moved into an apartment together, and everything was ok. I have no problem with her, she's been married 22 years now.

SD: So did other women have to make similar kinds of arrangements, at that time to deal with their kids?

EM: Um, I guess Vilma had two boys and I think that they were a little older than my daughter. There wasn't the care that you have now and I'd hate to see them going back to what we had to do, really, because the situations were those playschools very bad, and I think that they have for the children where a woman can go and drop her child and come and get her after work, she can keep that responsibility, and not have to leave her. There were times when this woman felt that I shouldn't be taking my daughter as many times as I did, so I would take the other children too. Because I didn't want to divorce myself from her, there was no way that I was giving her up. I didn't, there was no need

EM: (cont) for me to. But she felt that my daughter had more advantages than the other children, and therefore it made a little more difficult for her to handle the other children when I brought my daughter back, she probably bragged about where her momma had taken her (laughs).

SD: Did you receive equal pay as drivers, from the beginning?

EM: Yes, right from the beginning.

SD: Do you remember the structure of the union? Was there a shop steward structure?

EM: Yes.

SD: And how would that work in a situation where you had drivers dispersed all over the place?

EM: Well, the way it is now, we can always go to them. We knew who they were, and . . . I guess you could find these out. I've been retired for three years. (Laughs) I'm more in the old part of it. Well, it worked fine because you'd go into the bullpen and they were usually around there and they're available.

SD: Do you remember, you mentioned before there was a strike in 1947? What was that strike around, was it establishing conditions? Was it sort of a post-war strike to . . .

EM: I think so. It had a lot to do with wages, because everything was going up. And also, I think at that

EM: (cont) time we were fighting this one-man operation, very strongly, which, I think we made a very big mistake, but then you can't really win against a big company. We never felt that anyway, because they just got around it, instead of making the streetcar a one-man operation they introduced the buses. And that was ^aone-man operation and we would still have streetcars and we felt it was a great loss, that we lost the streetcars. I think mostly, the strike was about 35 days, and it was mostly that, and the hours.

SD: When you say hours, do you mean the number of hours you worked?

EM: Number of hours, yes.

SD: Was there ever a problem around split shifts?

EM: Oh, yes. There was a percentage of straight shifts, which meant no lunch hour, coffee break or anything else. I worked those mostly. But there was "specials". In the early times they called ^{them} "specials", and they went out in the morning for a couple of hours and in the afternoon for a couple of hours, so you'd have six hours off between shifts. ^{But they} they weren't eight hours. And according to how many hours you had in that shift, if you had seven hours in the shift, you would get two days off in that sign-up. And if you had six and a half hours, if the two shifts added up to six and a half hours, you worked

EM: (cont) seven hours. If you had a seven hour . . . yeah. If you only had about five and a half hours you got no days off. We used to sign up every two months at that time. And a lot of these things. And when we were changing, getting down to 44 hours and 41 hours, we had to, it was difficult in transportation, they can always say a lot of things don't happen because in transportation you can't do this and other jobs you could. There was always that excuse. But I see that they have accomplished most of the things that we've been fighting for.

SD: Were there other issues, like vacations, pensions, that kind of thing?

EM: Oh, yes. We had two weeks -- I was on the job 20 years before I got four weeks holidays.

SD: That's changed.

EM: As a matter of fact I was on 21 years because ~~it~~ didn't come into effect, when you were 20 years on the job you got four weeks. We only had two weeks holidays, and they could be 22 months apart, it was a possibility, because we were signing up, we had, one, two, three, four, five, six, and there was an A and a B -- oh, no, it was three, in each one. Two, three, A and B. Whatever you were. You were in this group, and they were along groups of people, and this group A and I signed up the

EM: (cont) first day and then B and 1, so this was first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth signed up. By the time you got down to the last ones, if you put in earliest in the Fall you'd get January probably, because the holidays went through the whole year, there was so many of us. And the next year, 2 would sign up first, A, B, C, D, A, B, A, B,. And then the third and then when it came the fourth year, this B's would be changed over, so that actually every third year you got second choice. The A was signing up second. If you were in, if this was you here, the third year you got second choice, so you maybe get Summer holidays, it depended on how long the list was. So that the holidays. . .

END OF TAPE

SD: Were there any issues that came up in the contracts that were specifically related to women? For example, was equal pay written into the union contract?

EM: Well, that had to be, yes. Equal pay, it wasn't just for women, we were a number. My number was 999, and I wasn't considered male-female on the job.

SD: They paid by the job?

EM: Yes.

SD: Were there any other issues that women pushed in the union, like maternity leave, for example?

EM: No, we just kept very quiet and did our job and, it wasn't until these newer gals, you know, after I'd been on the job for 29 years, that these conditions came about.

SD: Did women attend union meetings then?

EM: Yes. I think there was only one of them that really became involved in, in an issue, but not to become one of the officers or anything.

SD: What kind of issues did she get involved around?

EM: Oh, we didn't have any issues, male-female issues, really. I can't remember ^{us} wanting . . . our uniforms were the same, we had a zipper on the side instead of the front, till I got that changed to the front because they couldn't put, they couldn't make them properly because of that side zipper so I told them, "Well, put it in the front," and they were aghast. Oh! Anyways

EM: (cont) there was, the uniforms were ^{kind of bad} when the girls were coming on I made them understand that when they took this job these things were there, and don't go asking for a frilly blouse to wear, please.

SD: Oh, really.

EM: Cause some of them had little meetings and decided they were going to do something about this awful uniform.

SD: Did the women bus drivers spend time together at all?

EM: I made my own friends and, we, this Pearl Wattum had reunions. She's quite a gal to organize, and she and I got reunions going and she had a big home at one time and they were great. But it was a closed shop, there was just a certain amount of us and it was great to meet them. And the first one we had was I think a 15 year reunion, and we had many of them after that, but not anymore. But there are still friends that I made, and will be lifelong friends.

SD: Were there any other major struggles within the union other than the 1947 strike while you were there?

EM: Well, we had a ten-day strike and I don't remember what it was about, because I had just started with the company, and not being union-oriented I don't remember what it was about.

SD: While you were working there did your attitudes towards trade unions change? Working in a unionized situation?

EM: Oh, yes. I think the explanation that I gave you about the rest period that we got at Boeing's, that did it, actually. It was important, very important, that we have unions.^o and, ^WWell, I've said it to many people, who argue about unions now, I think that they've done their job, now, I don't know, and I think they still are. But it's like ^{ke} the ^BBusiness and ^PProfessional ^WWomen's ^CClub.^o that I belong to, I see less and less need for it because of the work that they have done and had done in the past.

SD: How was the leadership, were they interested in encouraging women to be active in the unions at all, or was it a non-issue for them?

EM: I think it was a non-issue for them, because, I don't think in all the years that I worked that they would have, I think if I had run I would've got in but it would've been a personality thing rather than knowing, and I hadn't become involved all that much in the union activity. It's just that I did appreciate and I fought and I talked mostly to the men and made them understand what it was all about. Especially these young people, when the NDP came in and hired, for two years they hired 20 every Monday so that at one point there was 75% of the men on the job had less than two years service. And I had to do some talking because there was no way they

EM: (cont) could know the issues, I feel. And I think that a lot of them through me realized that history was important, because of how you got it and why, and what the issues were. For instance, they decided that they were going to hire university students for the summer, and let more people have summer off with their children. And part-time. And I had a very hard time, they were thinking it was great, you know, the young fellows. But in all the years, the men on this job had kept it free from part-time workers. They decided too that when they lowered the pension age to 60, it's still compulsory at 65, you can stay to 65, and the company then again said, "Oh, well, that's fine. We'll let them have it at 60, but we'll bring them back to do a morning shift, again or afternoon shift," which is just, allowing the company to get their foot in and get this part-time work area which was very bad, especially in this job, they could've hired a hundred men to work steady and the rest of them are all part-time workers and they could deal with them as they please. And this is one of the reasons that I talked because I was involved with sick , I was on the sick committee, and chairman at one time, and so I knew so many of the people on the job, I worked with the United Appeal, they gave me the ten days off and I would collect for the United Appeal. And being only two

EM: (cont) women among thirteen hundred men they all knew who I was, anyway. I think I was a part of the training section, too, they'd say, "And there's a woman on this job," and I would run into some of them and they'd say, "Ah, there she is!" You know, cause you're always, never going to work at eight and finishing at five, it was always odd hours and all.

SD: You said you were on the committee, which committee was this?

EM: Uh, sick committee.

SD: Was that a union committee, or . . .

EM: No, the union allowed it. We just kept track of who was sick and had a group that visited, and let people know. I had a meeting once a month and had the lists of the sick people and see if they needed anything or . . . and alert the union.

SD: Were there any social events?

EM: This was not the kind of a job that, you don't, I just finished saying, we didn't all go to work at the same time, we didn't work in an office. You ran into somebody this month or next month^{when} you signed up on a different run you might not see them again for a year. So that the B.C. Electric was great in urging people to belong to things and helping them in whatever they were working in, whatever groups, clubs, lodges. They

EM: (cont) encouraged football, they had classes in first aid and you could learn to fly. All of these things, they were always there to help and put forth things. Soon as the B.C. Hydro came in that was the end of all of that. They didn't care whether you slept the rest of your time after you finished work, or, the B.C. Electric were interested in the people that were interested in other things, were the ones that advanced, I believe. So, any social . . . it was your, whatever you did, there wasn't that much organization really.

SD: Did the few women who were left working as bus drivers, did you push for other women to be hired?

EM: Not right away. It wasn't until, oh, I guess about 19 -- what, I have to think now, I was 29 years on the job. Say 30, 43, 70, I guess it was around 19-- I didn't talk to anybody but I did try to get the company to involve the women. It wasn't their policy, it was before. We were always afraid, there was always someone wanting to get interviews and asking some of these questions. You had to be very careful what you said. As a matter of fact, I used to okay it through the union when the company would ask me if I would talk to a reporter. Then it got so they could trust me and knew how I felt, I was honest, in any case, but I had to explain to the gal that was interviewing me, which was usually a woman,

EM: (cont) that if she said, "Do you like your job?" and I said, "Yes," and "Do you find it difficult?" and I would say, "No," I said, don't say that it's easy because the men are trying to get the pension age lowered, they're trying to tell everybody that it's a difficult job and it's so easy for her to say this, which, I hadn't said, but it sounded like it. Just because I liked it and said, no, I didn't find it difficult didn't mean that it was an easy job and that . . .

SD: You'd mentioned earlier that at some point you did begin to push for them to hire women, and argue that.

EM: Yes, as a matter of fact, I went up to the general manager and, the men weren't staying, the company was sending the supervisors out to the end of the line to ask the drivers, "Why are the men quitting?" Some of them were quitting with 17 years service, just leaving, just couldn't take it anymore, the Social Credit Government, Mr. Bennet, Wacky, had cut down the service so much that there was only, there was less than six hundred drivers in the city of Vancouver. And by the time he left, he said at that time that he was going to, it was going to be down to five hundred drivers and every man would know he's done a day's work. And then, I think, and I said this when they were sending these supervisors around, that there's no point in telling you because there's nobody going

EM: (cont) to do anything about it if I tell you why they're leaving. The situation was so bad, the passengers were angry, the bus drivers were angry. I was on a run on Victoria Drive and there's people down below Broadway that all ride the buses, there are certain places in town where they don't take their cars downtown to work. And you left Broadway and you were full, and you went past all these stops with all these people standing, waiting. And they had waited, you were the 7th bus to pass them. So I went up and told the company, and I said it was time we did something about this! So for three days there was supervisors at about three different stops and some of the head men in the company, were down there, standing at these bus stops, you saw them, and you were so relieved because you don't like, you know, it doesn't matter, maybe bus drivers look like they like to pass people up. And, so I thought, "Good, we're going to get some more buses down here," and the next week, nothing had been done, same thing. If you got, if you were able to pick somebody up and they told you that you were the seventh bus that they hadn't been able to get on, and I went to the company and I said, "What goes? Why hasn't something been done?" And they said, "Nobody complained." They're going to get their 25¢, 35¢, 50, whatever the heck it is as long as the

EM: (cont) people accept^{ed} this, so I used to tell them, to tell the company, you know. Write in, write in, get your relatives to write in. They won't do it as long as you're going to stand there and wait for all these buses. So the situation at that time was quite bad until the NDP came in and straightened it out and bought all these buses and, gave them service, it's going back to what it was because it's already being cut. Even the busy ones. It's sad, that's one of the reasons why I left, I said I'm not going to stay and watch the Social Credit do what they did before, and they're going to do it. And the kids said, "Oh, they can't, this is a great service," and I said, "Watch it, as soon as they come in they start; they've done it before. They won't fire anybody," I said, "They won't have to. You'll die. They'll kill you."

SD: Were the NDP or the CCF active in the union? Were there union affiliations discussions or anything like that?

EM: I don't think that, if there was it wasn't talked about. You just had to be careful, cause you were communistic, a Red or something, if it was.

SD: When you look back on those years of having worked there, what kinds of things do you feel are sort of the most important things that you've gained out of it, in terms of both women and the trade unionism?

EM: Well, I think that whatever I've gained out of it has been mostly my association with people, I don't think I could ever work on a job that didn't involve people again. And I do, I felt that even if I wasn't active in the union I did, I was. In a way. I went to the meetings and, I think it must have been our history. I was brought up in a family where I was the only girl and I had five brothers and, I didn't learn to drive a car until I started driving buses because there was never, if anybody was going to drive that car, it was the boys that had the opportunity to do it. And I guess I kind of accepted that without realizing it. And I don't think it was that big a problem because I was going to learn, I will learn. It's just . . . it was a great job, I still enjoyed it when I left the job and I've never really missed it. I go out and ride a bus now and it's kind of nice to talk to them about the old job and everybody remembers you.

SD: Were you a member of Vancouver Working Women, the organization called Vancouver Working Women?

EM: No. Business and Professional Women. BPW.

SD: What was that? When was it formed?

EM: It was formed about 80 years ago and it's a very, uh, business and professionals, I just got my card here. I just got my card in the mail today and I stuck it in

EM: (cont) here. It's a very influential in the government, in the provincial and federal government, and there are some very, very clever women in there. You can't join it unless you are working, but I still belong because I was working at the time that I joined. If you'd like to go to a meeting, I think you might, I would sponsor you.

SD: I might be interested in going, yes. And what was the purpose of the club, what did it do?

EM: Oh, it started out as business and professional women which were teachers and nurses and office workers and at the beginning, and some of the ladies are still there, this one little old lady that just died she was over a hundred years old, and just marvelous. We hear the history of how they have been so—they're the fighters, there was no unions in their business, and they have honestly done marvelous things to bring these, what it is now.

SD: So they've fought for better conditions?

EM: Yes. I'm very sure that there isn't very many of them that were union, but, still, that they did get the situations, the conditions, better, and they worked through the government.

SD: And you were involved with this club for the period of time you were working?

EM: No. I just, in the last few years, before I left,

EM: (cont) I've only belonged for about five years.

SD: What was it like for a young woman growing up, when you
then
were a child and^va young woman, in terms of the kinds
of attitudes towards women and their role in society,
and norms for girls?

EM: Well, I was brought up in a houseful of boys, and only
one girl, and, I think where I always wanted to drive
a car and of course I had to wait for my turn which never
came because there were boys that had to take their turn
in driving and I had to do it on my own. My brothers
took me out eventually and said I didn't need any lessons
because all I had to do was learn to slow down. So I
didn't get to learn too easily. I did on my own, because
I was very conscious about it. I was . . . dumb. I was
the
Ysister. My girlfriends were all dumb, stupid, and. . .
I'm not feeling badly about it but I'm sure it must have
had some effect on my growing up and my attitudes, and
my proving that I have some worth anyway.

SD: What kind of a morality was there around the way girls
were supposed to behave?

EM: That was pretty strict, of course, we had to be modest.
I think it's rather nice to be modest too, but not to
have the rule set down. I guess the first time in his-
tory that girls had short hair, and short dresses, and
were allowed to wear pants. I can remember my mother

EM: (cont) getting her hair cut in our kitchen, my father, everybody at that time had clippers and hair scissors and either your mother or father cut your hair. And it was quite a traumatic experience for everybody because we were watching and watching the hair fall and it was really, really traumatic. I wasn't allowed to have my hair cut in a shingle and really short because I had all these brothers and my mother wasn't going to have me looking like them. My father was quite a strong Methodist, he wasn't allowed to dance or play cards, but we were allowed to. There were long winters in Winnipeg, and cold. And he did allow us. But I was never allowed to have dancing lessons, he said I could get tough enough on the street without taking dancing lessons (laughs). I still love to dance.

SD: What kinds of dress codes were there around young girls?

EM: Well, I guess I was a little bit too young for the Charleston and the really short dresses, and the belt around the hips but there was, up until I would say about 20 years and maybe less than that, there was always one style and every year it was a different style and you wore that and everybody wore it. We obeyed fashions and we obeyed . . . as a matter of fact I think it was my daughter that said after she had finished high school, she said, "When did the kids start questioning their parents and questioning

EM: (cont) everything. You know they didn't, they ["]did -- not obey, but did, according to the mores.

SD: What about wearing pants?

EM: Oh, no. They were wearing pants at that time, I think it was, but it was kind of a breakthrough. I was allowed to wear beach pajamas but I know I didn't have any pants which was the sore to myself, because I would have loved to dress like everybody else did.

SD: What about during the Second World War, was that a big shift, women could wear pants cause they were working in industry?

EM: Well, by that time women were wearing pants, and of course the war work made a big difference. We went to work in our overalls, and even then, as I say, there was a special style for each year and that's what you wore. The dresses went down and everybody got a longer dress, or shorter. Now, I think it's so great that everybody just wears how they feel, what they feel, ^{how} they want.

SD: After the Second World War, did women go back to wearing dresses, out of pants and into dresses?

EM: Uhm, I haven't noticed so much, ^{hi} in these last couple of years that I've been wearing dresses more. And I know that there's many people that up until ten years ago never did put pants on, and have found it more comfort-

EM: (cont) able, even the elderly ladies, which I think is great. You had to wear what your age said for you to wear. Even yet I'll hear women say, "Is that too young for me?" I don't think anything is too young for anybody if they feel like wearing it.

SD: Also, things like drinking and smoking, was that permitted?

EM: Well, I guess when I was a young girl nobody smoked. If they did it was behind closed doors, it was not accepted in the '20's, '30's. But it was at that time getting to a girl was never allowed to on the street corner but they could after dinner, in the house.

SD: What kind of attitudes were there ^{among} women of your generation towards birth control?

EM: Well, they were outlawed. I don't think ^{that} they were legal. I know for myself that when my engagement went into the paper, these people contact ^{ed} me and I was insulted. I just thought it was terrible that they should come around and talk birth control. I think how prehistoric and mid-victorian I must have been in thinking because it was one of the problems and they talk about abortions now, if they only knew what went on in those days. And even then, the majority of them were married women that were having the abortions and under the conditions and the lives that were lost because of it, and they're still going to have them.

SD: What was it like for women who were left at home when the men went off to war in terms of social life?

EM: Well, there was nothing arranged for them. There were, each one of the army units or air force had auxiliaries and I think mostly what they did was knit socks and, that sort of thing, if you went once a week. There was no organized place for you to go, there was no building or room like the club areas that they have nowadays. There was nothing really for the women. If you went out, as a matter of fact, your neighbors were sure that you were going out, if you were going down to a show or to meet a friend of yours, you were probably talked about, I don't know. But there was nothing organized. The men in the army were looked after more, which I suppose, they were the ones who were fighting.

SD: So was there a real fear amongst women, married women whose husbands were away, that people would imply somehow that they weren't being faithful if they decided to have any kind of a social life?

EM: Oh, you just, yeah, that's really what it was all about. And if you did go out there was always a majority of women, unless you went where there were soldier areas, which you didn't. It was a public dance, actually, ^{that,} if you went there. There was no future, really, for you, and nobody realized that they were going to be away ^{that} length

EM: (cont) in any case. It was always a temporary thing.

SD: So did women try and spend time together socially, ^{to} try and give each other support while their husbands were away?

EM: I'm sure they did but it was always on a one-to-one basis, there were never groups of women that got together, which was sad when I think of it now. I belong to groups that have auxiliaries and we do. And maybe those areas were open for me at that time, but I didn't know. The hours that you were working and the difficulty of the jobs that you ^were on made it impossible almost to belong to anything. When I was on the streetcars, we worked five days and had a day off, and so the day, you had Tuesday off this week, and Monday off next week and Sunday off the following week, and nobody could keep track of you in any case. And you were probably too tired, you had your child to come home ^{to} and take care of, and so these things were not that easy to get into. But as I say there wasn't anybody really organizing these gals because it was a, at that time, the feeling around was rather tense and, I don't think you could get a group of people around, they'd think that you were subversive and doing something against the government (laughs).

SD: After the war, was there any attempts by any of the unions or any groups at all to resist being laid off in the

SD: (cont) areas where they worked?

EM: No. It was just the feeling that you, you went home now, and we don't need you anymore, as a matter of fact we don't want you anymore. The men are coming back and. . . but the jobs were left, I don't think there was a company, Andy my brother worked for the Coca-Cola company, he came back to his job, and everybody on the streetcars. One fellow came to me and he said, "Do you know why I quit when I came back from overseas?" and I said, "Because I was on the job," and he said, "Yes. I was kind of foolish, wasn't I?" He said, "I considered it a man's job and when I came back and saw the women doing it," he said, "I wasn't going to have any truck with that one." And this was the feeling. And with the people that, on the street, that, and when I found the women of my age I felt that may be they were resentful of me having that job or resentful of having even had that experience. I don't know but we, I think we are harder on ourselves than anybody else, the women are against themselves.

END OF TAPE