

Edna Sheard Tape 1

SD: I just wanted to begin by going over with you before we actually start the interview what the tape could be used for which would be, to go into the archives at Simon Fraser, to go into the B.C. archives, some broadcasting work for example, Co-op Radio I've done some programs on the labour movement and women's involvement there and then lastly for use in publications like articles in Kinesis, I'm careful where I publish, I publish in places that people are interested in this kind of history and then also I'm working on a book on women in the 1930's and the 1940's so if that's acceptable to you, then we'll proceed with the interview. And I'll be back in touch with you as soon as any major project I'm involved in I tell the people whose material I'm using.

SD: I'd like to start by asking you what your name is, where you were born, and when? Maybe we could begin with that and then move a bit into talking about some of your childhood experiences.

ES: Well I was born in Bracebridge Ontario on Sept. 22nd or 21st since my birth certificate has to say that. Sept the 21st 1900, I was the first of three children, I have a brother and a sister, my parents were ordinary working people, my father worked on the...in the camps and he, ran the river as they said, on the logs, woodworker and of course he, he was working saw mills and that kind of thing. When I was seven years old I started to school, in Bracebridge I only

ES: went a short time until I was nine. And then my parents decided to move west. We went to Manitoba, *Deloraine* Manitoba, We lived there for three years, previous to that time my father was a drinking man and almost lost his family completely but didn't, quite. He never drank after he came west but, he got very religious. After we lived in Vilareen for three years we moved to Vancouver, in 1911 I think. Just I had an ordinary childhood, brought up very religious of course. And then on into my teens, and I refused (to go to school any more.) to live at home anymore? *↳ to go to church anymore*

SD: Why did you make that decision?

ES: Well, It was very embarrassing I couldn't go out with my girlfriends. On Sunday I had to stay at home and read the bible or I couldn't even read an ordinary book, I had to read the bible and sing hymns. I'd go to church 3 times on Sundays. The mission was called the Holy Rollers later of course. It was the ^{Episcopalian} Mission. My mother was already a very ill woman, she had what they call Bright's Disease, it's kidney trouble, I didn't know at that time but she became pregnant. And my Dad of course believed in divine healing and wouldn't let her go to a doctor, she was , became very very ill and he was forced to call a doctor. The doctor took her into the hospital immediately and aborted her. However he couldn't make her well, he said she had six weeks to six months to live. She lived almost three years, and then of course she died. My father being very good (to her) Just promptly

ES: Continued

told me that I was unable to stay at home anymore I had to go and make my own living, because he couldn't afford to keep me. I was 15 just almost 16. So, I went to housework, in fact I went to housework just before my mother died. She sat in a chair for three whole years, unable to get around, but I had a sister and a brother and they helped. So I went to housework, my mother made me two aprons with bibs on them, ^{she} did them so nicely, ^{she} was so proud to do them for me. However that's beside the point. I went along from there ^{till} ~~to~~, I had girlfriends very nice girlfriends but I, anytime I went to ~~STAY~~ at home inbetween jobs, I had to be in a ten o'clock otherwise the door was locked and I couldn't get in.

Daughter: How old WERE you when you first started to go and do housework, 13 ?

ES: No. 15. My schooling I didn't, Yes, I was called to her deathbed from a job I was on, as I said my brother and sister ^{both at home} and helped with the work you know, So that I could go, But my father told me then, I expected you know that when I got -- I quit the job that I was working at, I was a nursemaid a that time because I naturally thought my father would have to have somebody to keep house. So that's what he told me that I would have to go and work I couldn't stay at home.

Daughter: When you were doing housework before your mom died, were you staying at the houses ^{where} you were working?

ES: Yes, I was living away from home.

SD: What were the conditions like then?

ES: Well that was, I only got to 7th grade. I wanted very much to be a nurse, but there was no hope for it. A friend of ours took me to the hospital and tried to get me in somehow or other, with that amount of education. But they had just made ruling^s that ¹ had to have grade 12 or maybe grade 10 at that time.

SD: What kind of work did you do as a young woman as a domestic, as a nursemaid?

ES: Well as the nursemaid, it was a Member of Parliament Smith, and that would be 16, near... Kitsilino Park, just beyond that, great big house, And there was a little baby, and there ^{were} ~~was~~ two children older than that, that I had to look after. I had to do the baby's washing, I had to look after the two older children. I had to see that their meals were brought in, there was a cook, a chinese cook there. He was a very nice little fella and was very fond of me, and was good to me, I took sick, I got the flu and at the same time I had a ^{felon} ~~throb~~ ^[small abscess especially under or near nail - Oxford] ^{synonym: whitlow} on my finger that was very bad. When the doctor came to the lady of the house Mrs. Smith, she called him to go and see me. And of course he told me I was very sick and when he saw this he said " You had better come downstairs" and she had a special nurse. That nurse sat me

ES: down on a chair and they took a pair of blunt scissors, stuffed ^{it} right in my finger and cut the whole lower half of the nail out. The nurse was ^{holding} my other hand and the tears were coming down and the nurse said anything you know. And the Doctor said " You'll be alright now dear , you're a real brick!" I said " You must have thought I was made of brick!" Laughter However I was still working there and I had to take the baby's diapers and boil them everyday on the cook's stove ^{and} he was furious he said " No, No, No Edna" he didn't want those diapers boiled on his stove in big pots. But anyway, now where will I go? Then I got a call in the middle of the night. At that time there were, was a strike on, on the street cars they were. This is 1916, a big strike and we had what we call jitneys, people who had cars would give you a ride into to town for 5¢ or 10¢ I think, 5¢ I believe. You could get a ride most anywhere but you had to pile in there helter skelter as they came along and stopped you climbed in. I was out ^{between} 1 and 2 o'clock ^{at night} going to my mothers, and I was terrified, absolutely terrified. I remember they were very nice never talked to me until it was just about time i had to get off - out , and I told them I had to go the other/side of Main Street up to Fraser it is now. They were very nice ^{There} was some little remark about being out at that hour of the night, or something, but I was just too terrified ^{to} listen. My mother died that morning, still sitting in a chair. And you know, Oh it was so terrible, my

Cont'd. father down on his knees, you know crying and " Do you see the lord Annie, Do you see the Lord?" wanting to know so badly what she could see that he might not be able to see . Oh that just, Oh it just froze me to think that he could be so cruel. So selfish, [!]it was a terrible feeling. [!]

SD: As a domestic can you tell me a little bit about what the conditions were like in terms of your sleeping space, your living space, what kind of food that your employer's would give you?

ES: I had a few places that were not the nicest, but I always was able to eat the food that I cooked for them. I never had a place where it was different. I had some people [;]who were not as nice as they might have been, But I had two homes that were especially nice to me ^{This was not when I was 16} [^]this was later on. I worked at Smith's; then I answered an ad to a Mrs. ^{SP- Meannes} Mead-no sorry that was later , It doesn't matter. I worked in this place and they had a grandmother staying there , a new baby coming any day and a little girl. And I had to do all the housework, all the cooking, plus I had to wash that baby's ^{pioué} coat everyday starch-and iron it. The ^{check} grandmother wore a ^{pioué} white skirt I had to do that , [^]and one day I was caught looking out the window at the school kids coming from highschool and I was told, "] I'd better keep away from the window and never mind looking out there I would do far more work if I kept my face out of the window . " [^] you know that was just the miserableness of those

cont'd people.

Daughter What was the wages like?

ES: Ten dollars a month, plus room and board , I worked for ten for quite a long time.

SD: Did you ever have any time off, like Sundays?

ES: Oh, yes Thursdays and every other Sunday.

SD: Did they try and supervise who you spent time with?

ES: No, when I was off I was free.

SD: Did you spend time with other young women who were domestics?

ES: Not at that time no. No, that was later on , years later.

But there was none of those jobs that were really nice when I was young. However I got married when I was eighteen.

SD: The people you worked for intitially what kinds of thing did they do for a living ?

ES: Well,... Just a minute if I can get a name of that person.

McDonald... the lady of that house was married to a German, who was not at home, He was overseas and I figured out later that he was quite a Prominent German and that he was in the war, you know ..in the war, making ^amunitions and that kind of thing. The McDonalds were coal people here in Vancouver, when they used to take coal on the big trucks you know, that was in 1916-17 and you got loads of wood; you got loads of coal. Great big huge trucks and they used to take you in tons of coal and put them in your basement. And that was the way your house was heated, in those days. But, McDonalds were a big coal outfit. And, the Smith's I told you were, he was a Member of Parliament.

ES: Then I worked for a family named Minns. He was a big salesman for who I don't know.

SD: So these people had money?

ES: Oh they all had money, yes oh, sure. But then you could get a domestic for ten dollars!

Daughter: Did they ^{have} lots of people to help, a lot of other domestics?

ES: No, just myself I did the cooking always.. I don't that I had many place^s where the woman of the house did anything. ×

Daughter: You mentioned that the Smith's had a chinese cook.

Did they have any servants besides the cook?

ES: No, ^{No--} I did the dusting certain days of the week and other chores, you know, and looked after the children. Yes that was a big part of it, but I wasn't there too long, and I wouldn't go back. Of course I didn't get anything ^{any pay} for the time I did spend. No I wasn't there a full month so I didn't get my pay. Even though this friend of my dad's who went to the mission went with me, but they were very adamant.

SD: He was a Member of Parliament.

ES: Yes.

Daughter: Were you aware back at that time that there had been a union?

ES: No, I knew nothing absolutely nothing. I don't know how I ever managed to hold a job down, doing the cooking and the work because I was so green.

Daughter: I guess you would not have had that much contact with people of your upbringing.

ES: I had no contact with anything. I'll just mention something here that happened to me when I was 17. I was at Broadway and Main Street and there was a campaign on for the vote for women. I was passing this doorway and this woman spoke to me, I guess she'd be about thirty-five or something like that and she said "would you like to be able to vote?" I said "Oh certainly." She said " Do you believe in the vote for women?" And I said "Why I imagine so." Well, she said, "Just come in and sign your name." And I signed my name, Now, she said, "Put your age down too." And I put down 17. She said " Oh, my dear, I'm so sorry, you couldn't vote, you're not old enough."

SD: Yet you were working .

ES: Yes! So that was my first knowledge of voting even!

Sd: What kind of things when you were a domestic did you do in your free time?

ES: I'd go home and visit my family. ~~I~~ Always had a girlfriend. In those early years I didn't have a boyfriend. I didn't have a boyfriend for a long time. I used to meet my girlfriend, we'd go to a show, and perhaps we would go and have a cup of tea after at one of those little ⁵ restaurants on Granville Street. What was the name? A Chinese restaurant.

SD: When you were 18 you got married?

ES: Yes, I met my husband when I was 17. I got married in Sept. 1919. I still wasn't 19 until the end of the month, so I always said I got married when I was 18.

SD: How did you meet him?

ES: I went to, well these girls I chummed around with had parents in this mission, you know, in this church, who left the same as I did. They had a party, there was a big family of those people. They were German extract, they had a party one night, and they had a bunch of brothers, and several sisters among them. And they invited me to come. At this party were two young men, who was my husband and his brother. That evening during the party the brother asked me if I would go out with him, which I agreed to. And before the evening was all through, he had gone, one of these girls told me that he was a terrible drinker. So, ^{the} next day instead of letting it go, I told my cousin who I was staying with at the time, that I had made these arrangements. And that I had just been told that he was a terrible drinker, and what should I do? Well she said, "cancel, I'll phone for you and cancel." So, that's the way it was. However, a short time later I met the older fella, who was Charlie Martin and.. I went out with him. Much to my sorrow I later found that he was the drinker of the family and not this young fellow. That was Malcon, Malcom hardly ever drank. Later, I went with Charlie for a year and he was quite ... well he liked the way the Russian people were .. conducting their country, and that he believed that was the way to, you know, live. He said " I'm a communist" Well he wasn't but he still said that he was a communist. Really socialism wasn't spoken of so much then.

ES: However I thought that was wonderful, there was so much independence about what he was saying, you know..Wanting to have a union, and wanting better wages, and wanting so much for people, you know. This appealed to me a great deal.

SD: Did you begin to go to meetings or get involved?

ES: Yes, I'll tell you that. I went around with Charlie for a whole year. And.. most of that time I was engaged to him. And in 1919 I married him, We married. And of course he was still telling me all about being a communist and everything. And I thought that was wonderful. However I found out that he was drinking very badly too, you know. But, it wasn't quite so bad in the very beginning. We married and ... his sister got the flu, Oh, previous to this when I'm still 17, the flu hit here between '17 and '18. The big flu epidemic, and I volunteered^e as a nurse, wanting to be a nurse still. Voluntered, ^{at} the model school ^{which} was opened as a hospital, because there was no room in the hospitals for these people. 11th and Heather, just the other side of Heather, is the old Model School. So I went there, and..I only worked a week there, it was the most wonderful experience in my life, you know. I had to wear a mask, I was provided with a white apron, and a nurse took me down the hall and she said, " This is the room you'll care for," and she opened the door and she shoved me in and she backed out, she didn't stay with me!

ES: She didn't say what I was to do and there I stood with this mask on my face. And there were forty ^{patients} end of tape one side one.

SIDE TWO

ES: I went in and I looked at them, at first I could see they were different nationalities, you know. I saw a Hindu with a beard and there was Chinese, Italians, and away over in the far corner ... No I'll tell you something else, after. I saw a man whose wife ^{was} I a friend of and we had a worked in a biscuit factory for a short time, previous to that. Anyway, I saw this Curly, he was a Greek, and I just flew over there and I took, I lifted my mask and I said "Curly" I said "Hello", "oh" he said "Am I ever glad to see you!" He said, "I can't get any cigarettes, I can't get anything in here!" and I said "Look. They pushed me in here and I don't know what to do!" "What do the girls when they come on at this time do?" He says "they get water, and they get washclothes, each one gets a washcloth and freshwater and you wash their face and their hands, and make them comfortable before supper." Well I did that, I started, the first man was a school principle who was off his rocker, he was delirious you see. And I started to wash him, I could manage to wash his face and hands, but, he says "Nurse, feel my back, the germs are all over my back, they're in lumps, feel them, they're after me, they're going to do something!" No, there was nothing on the man's back you know, he was just completely delirious. Anyway I got through with him,

ES: I ^{went} to the next bed or two and I came to the Hindu man, and I didn't know whether to wash his whiskers or to wash around them. (laughter) I didn't know what to do, so I washed his hands and I washed here and there on his face. He was very sick too. So I got through with them somehow or other and then there was other people come into serve them you know. I was there for five days, and down I came with it. I was real sick, but that doesn't matter. They were very wonderful to me, they sent me home in a taxi, and uh.. saw to it that, of course I had to go to my Dad's place you see, it was the only place I had to go to. And my sister came down with it at the same time, and we were both in bed together. And from the hospital they sent food for us they sent soups and uh, medicine and they were really wonderful to us. My sister went completely off her head, it was quite an experience. But, Anyway, during , after I got well, Charlie was still around and he came one evening to take me out. Of course I didn't dare have him home because my father would have nothing whatever to do with a man coming around to see us girls. He said his sister was very ill, she had the flu, and his mother couldn't take care of her she had a little boy and she was already pregnant with the next child. They had to have somebody to come and help look after and nurse her. So would I come? I went to look after her, and when I got there bag and baggage to stay, why the doctor had come and they had to take her to

ES: the hospital, and the fact that she had to go to the hospital everyone knew that it was finished, that she was finished. There was not in Vancouver, I don't think there was one woman who was pregnant who got the flu that lived. It was sure death, if you were pregnant, and I have never heard anybody able to contradict that. I have said it many, many times, but I heard of many, many woman that died.

SD: It must have been a terrifying time.

ES: It was, it was terrible! Anyway she died. I think I got a job somewhere else. Anyway when Charlie came in from the next job he was on, he used to go follow the camps all the time. He was a logger, a highrigger.

Daughter: My husband is as well.

ES: It was decided that we would get married. And that he would go out on another job immediately. I would go to work again at another job. And then when we were finished in the spring, that was, oh I don't know just what time. Several months. At the end of that time we were married, I went to North Vancouver to work for a Doctor Martin, my name was Martin, Mrs. Martin. And Charlie went out on another camp job, when he came back home I quit my job, I was there for three or four months, three months anyway. And we packed up and we went to the prairies, to Castor, Alberta.

Daughter: YOU mentioned that you WORKED in a biscuit factory.

ES: Yes, that was one of the times that uh, I got work apart from housework. I actually can't remember, I think there

ES: was an ad in the paper, and I answered it. But, it wasn't much of a job. But, I got acquainted with that girl and of course knew her husband, she was married to this Greek, She was English, and she had married this Greek. And he was a very fine boy, very nice. I only worked there for, -we packed the biscuits and wrapped them., different kinds. I don't remember, it wasn't a very long session. I don't remember that I quit or I think it was kind of a layoff.

SD: So they would hire women on....

ES: Just when they needed extra help, and I think that was the way it was.

Daughter: What were the wages like there do you remember?

ES: I don't remember the wages. It couldn't have been anything but better than housework. (Laughter) ^{It couldn't} possibly ^{have been} anything but better. It wasn't a very nice job.

Daughter: Did you have to stand on your feet wrapping.

ES: Yes, you ~~didn't~~ sit down all day, I don't remember there ever being anything to sit on.

SD: How did you feel about doing factory work, instead of domestic work?

ES: Oh, it was very nice. But as I say it didn't last long enough.

SD: Was that one of the problems was that were not other kinds of jobs other than domestic situations?

ES: Not for a person who didn't have any training, really. Well then the prairies. Shall I go on to there?

SD: Do you have any questions Star?

Daughter: Yes, I'd like to hear, if possible just a little more about, how you felt about the domestic work. Did you have any feeling that it was sort of a good kind of work to do, or worse than other kinds of work?

ES: Well, you see I didn't do any other kind of work, you know, Except that little one with the biscuit factory. I don't think I .. and domestic work was only, it was just a stop gap to exist until I got married. You know, that's all a girl had to look forward to. That was it, I had no means of training for another job. I wanted to be a nurse, but there I was, I couldn't. I had different friends they used to go, I remember one time ~~in~~ between jobs I think it was after I met - no I was going with Charlie. A friend of my cousins asked ^{me} if I would go and look after a friend of hers or a sister-in-law of hers who had just had twins. And I was just so thrilled, I immediately got there and I just had the most wonderful time with those babies, you know. And I always remember that I was bathing them one morning and their Aunt came to watch me, and I did one, and then I did the other, you know. And it was so wonderful and .. one of the women said " Well, Edna's a very fine girl. But she may not be so wonderful on the looks, but, she has the most capable hands I have ever seen!" (laughter)... It was very nice, I thought it was a wonderful thing to have capable hands. Well, I always felt I didn't have the looks so what I had something. Somebody said to me onetime that I had beautiful hair, and I thought that was great. But I really can't say more

ES: about ~~the time that~~ that time, I worked as a house-
work later on , I can tell you more later about that.

SD: How about Charlie, did he feel okay about you working, when
you were married? Was it acceptable.

ES: Well, it was accepted at that time, because I was only going
to be there until he was free ^{for us} to go to the prairies. After
that of course I didn't work when I was with him.

Daughter: Was that because you didn't want to or because he
didn't want you to.

ES: Well, we went to the prairie and as I was going to say, He
went into partnership with a brother who had a soldier set-
tlement, ^{It was} no Donald. ^{he did his drinking too.} ~~Non~~ this fella ~~didn't drink.~~ But, he had
got a farm, he didn't have the wherewith ^{make} all to ^{ments.} pay. But
Charlie had a certain amount from working in the camps, you
see. And he went down therewith a handful of money and was
able to pay the downpayment on this farm. So they were in
partnership. We had some horses, some sows, and very scrubby
things they weren't good horses (they were) one bit and the
other one was a mare who couldn't foal anymore. And oh, it
was just the worst kind of ..

Daughter: Three greenhorns going form the city to the farm.!

ES: That is true . Well Donald lived on the prairie alot because
of his asthma. He had to live down there. He did alot of
farming but Charlie dih't. Charlie hated farmers and farms.
However, as I mentioned before when I was at the class that

~~ES:--my-mother~~

ES: night my mother-in-law had said when I left for the prairies,

"You don't want to go down there and fill the house full of children, do you?" And I said "No, well no." and so she said "I'll tell you what to do," and she told me about some suppositories to use., so that I wouldn't get pregnant. She was a very good woman you know, and she didn't believe in this kind of thing, but she didn't want her son saddled with a bunch of babies. He was 31 and I was 19.

SD: So there was some knowledge of birth control.

ES: Well, She had knowledge. I had no knowledge of anything like that. But, she had a nurse who was a friend and I think she found out about it. But anyway, there was suppositories you used. I guess they were all right, I don't know. But, I only got a little box of them, you know. So, it was the most horrible, lonely place in the world. And what we lived in, was a little tin, corrugated tin house. One big room and one tiny bedroom and a little bedroom at the back. And my brother in-law slept in the tiniest one and we had the other one. And we didn't have the wherewithall to get proper food you know. Just didn't, we could ^{buy} macaroni and potatoes Turns off stove.

ES: We had a terrible, terrible little ^{low} stove, it was just about that high, and there was a little oven here, but ~~at~~ the fuel, the ashes ^{from} the coal and the wood that was burning, mostly coal, would keep sliding down into the oven and I had to bake bread you see. It wasn't big enough to ^{put} much of a big batch in you know and I'd have to put in ^{two} or three

ES: ~~leaves~~ and try and cook it as long as I had time.. as long as I could you know., till I thought ~~it was~~ ~~not~~ dough - ~~yes=knew~~ and put the rest in after that. ~~Nobody~~ ~~mind~~ And our meat was rabbit. They would snare the rabbits, we seldom could buy meat. There just wasn't any money. Agnes was born in 1921. So, I was so lonesome, so miserable,.. "if I only had a baby, if I only had a baby" and I ~~threw~~ those darn suppositories away, a half a dozen of them I think, and I threw them away and told my husband that they were all finished. (Laughter) So of course I got pregnant the next time. And in April, along came Agnes. And I drove 9 miles, twice I drove there when I was seven months pregnant and I thought I was going to have a miscarriage or something. But anyway, I drove 9 miles, and she was born at 4 o'clock in the morning.

SD: Did you have Agnes in the hospital?

ES: Yes.

SD: Did you have a midwife with you or a doctor?

ES; Oh a doctor. I guess I had a fairly ordinary time, but, it didn't seem that way to me. SO, we were on the prairie long enough to know that we couldn't live there, you know. We just couldn't, but of ~~as~~ course we didn't discuss it. It wasn't a case of discussing it, because he'd talk with Charlie , since my present husband would talk with his brother. They didn't agree either, they were at logger heads too. We saw a beautiful stand of wheat just smashed

ES: before before it was ready to cut, smashed with hail.

Just flattened to the ground, no hope whatever to get any thing out of it. And the other parts of the farm was very bad gumbo, they called it. Nothing would grow on it, wheat would be that high when it should have been up here you know. Well, the cows start spring early because calfs, I think we had only two out of seven or eight, something happened to everyone of them. The first most beautiful calf that was born, was born to a two year old Heifer. That was calfed a year early... It was born and the men left it there instead of bringing it in to the house to keep warm, they left it there and when they come to get it it's legs were frozen. Another beautiful calf, it was a good looking calf... The cow licked it all off all but a little bit of mucus over it's nose and mouth ^{and it died.} It just seemed that everything was against us, you know, it was a terrible situation.

Daughter: I guess Charlie wasn't used to farm work. How long had he been doing logging for?

ES: All his life. Since he was 16 or 17. He'd been in the camps all that time.

Daughter: Had he any contact do you know, with the International Woodworkers of the World?

ES: Yes, I think so, but I'm not sure. My present husband belonged to them also. Just briefly, you know because he came out west here.

SD: There was organizing in the woods then.

ES: Oh yes, there was.. The camps were just getting organized because Charlie used to have to take his own blankets and that kind of thing. I don't remember what they called those that had to take their own blankets.. However then they started organizing, and of course he (Charlie) was right there, he fell right in line. Oh yes, he was a union man. But, he never got any farther than that, he ^{just} paid his union dues. I don't know where ^{then} he went, to meetings or not, I never knew where he went ⁱⁿ an evening, it wasn't my business where he went.

SD: how did you resolve this situation on the farm?

ES: ~~When-he-came-back-home-Agnes-was-11-months-old~~

ES: We came back home when Agnes was 11 months old. We arrived in Vancouver. I was still nursing her, she was 11 months old. And I was just saying to my girlfriend last night I ~~sa~~ said she nearly ate me up because so skinny! When we come in there my mother in-law says "Young lady, your not going To be nursing anymore". (Laughter) So I didn't.

SD: When was this? You came back 1921?

ES: 1922.

SD: What did you do then?

ES: I got another baby. Shortly after I was back I was pregnant again.

SD: Where were you staying then?

ES: ^{We stayed at} Charlie's mother's house, they had a great big house. ^{At} 29th and ^{WALDEN} a block off Main Street. It's still there.

SD: And was he working then?

ES: Oh yes, he pretty well worked most of the time. It was out of town work, you see. He'd would get a job and be away for months.

SD: So you were alone with the kids, eh.

ES: Yes,.

SD: Was that pretty common that young woman's husbands would be working out of town.?

ES: Oh sure. .. Then we got a little house up on 56th Avenue. Just a little two room place. Again at the time I lived there I became pregnant several times again. I had several abortions, because I knew I would never get along with Charlie. I knew then that there was no hope for continuing.

SD: You did the right thing.

ES: Horrible, horrible god awful thing. But...

SD: Its been hard to get woman to talk about that, abortions.

ES: Well, its a terrible thing to .. You actually took your life in your hands, you know. Nothing funny. I never had a lengthy abortion, if you know what I mean . I never went past the second month. But, I did some very terrible things, I inserted a crochet hook, I also inserted a knitting ne@dle, I used slippery elm,... One time my sister ~~and~~ and I both found our selves pregnant, and we used nutmegs. They want to hear it again Agnes.

SD: How would you find out about abortion tecniques, would women in the community know about this and..

ES: I just knew that I had a mouth to the uterus. And I understood

ES: that if air got in there that you would abort. I had been told that, just talking with different women you know. Because we all talked about it. For the simple reason that we didn't want more children at certain times. And just, lived in dread form month to month that we would get pregnant.

SD: There was no accessible birth control at all in those days.

ES: The only thing that I knew of was the condoms that the men used, and my husband wouldn't use them. END OF TAPE ONE SIDE TWO

ES: I became pregnant and my sister also, she just lived two blocks from me. A nurse had told her that if you got, nutmegs grated them up and put them in hot milk, a whole big nutmeg.; And drank it, that it would bring on your period.

Daughter: How come you drank it? I thought you used it manually sort of. I thought if you got air in there.

ES: Oh that was for crochet ^{and knitting needles} hooks and that sort of thing.

However thats' what we did, and we drank it. We both would come home from, we went up Fraser Avenue to go to the store and got the package of the nutmegs. I think we each took two, to make a good job of it, with this hot boiling milk on it. I had got supper for us and my husband was out of town that weekend. I put Agnes and Bill to bed, and I'm knitting, sitting there knitting and my row was almost finished, you know, it was a long piece of wool. And I'm knitting there and I'm on a rocker and I,m sitting like this

ES: and it's not getting any shorter. And I feel so funny!

And my little babysitter who was 11 years old came up the porch, and came to the door and I said "Run and get your mother. Quick!" "Hurry up!" And I was getting so I couldn't see properly. And when her mother came, I couldn't see her coming! All I could see was her feet, I couldn't see above here. Everything was ^ablack cloud. So, I said, "get the doctor!" So, she ~~phoned~~ phoned the doctor, and she phoned my mother in-law. And they came, I told the doctor what I had done. "Oh my God" he said. He examined me, and I thought I had lost something, you know. That's the feeling that I had. Everything was out of proportion, everything was hay wire, swimming ~~and queer~~. And he got me in bed and made ~~an examination~~ an examination and said "there's nothing whatever here. I said there I feel as though something big had come, you know. Anyway it didn't."

SD: You were still pregnant?

ES: No I had started to go (??) But I think I had done something else previously. As I say, with the knitting needle, or with slippery elm, that had really got it properly started. Anyway, the doctor was just going,.. Oh, I sent the boy next door down to get my sister. Never thinking, I didn't connect this together with the nutmegs at all. However, he went down there and found her at the door of her house, yelling "Help, help, help!" She was in the same way. So, the doctor went right down to her. And when I saw the doctor next, he said, " I don't know, what is going to happen" he said " we doctors,"

ES: are floundering! We don't know what to do for you people.

You do such terrible things! You almost killed yourself!
 You might as well as-of taken a big dose of belladonna,
 because that's so poisonous," you know. So, my sister was
 the same. He gave her a big dose of what ever he gave me,
 to off set it. But, I had several miscarriages. I had
 another time, that I had got started the same as I told you.
 And, I was papering the wall and my mother in-law, she showed
 me how to paper, hang paper. I was there helping her ~~to~~
 do her house, and I was up,.. and of course I lost every-
 thing, and I had to ^{get down +} go to the bathroom. And I told her what
 I had passed, and it was about that big, you know. It was
 quite formed. She said, "That was it al right, that was it".
 And she never even made me go and lie down! I guess it was
 just as good that I stayed ^{up}, I guess everything ^{Probably escaped} would have
^{That way} ~~that way~~ ^{????} But, we did so many things, you know.

cannot
make this
out

SD: A lot of women did this?

ES: Oh, dozens, but you didn't say exactly what you did. But woman
 were sick everywhere.

SD: Did women ever die?

ES: Yes they did. You heard of them

Daughter: Did you ^{know} any ^{one} that died?

ES: No, I can't exactly say I did.

SD: Yeah, infection would be real dangerous.

Daughter: You nver got any infections from any of this?

ES: No. I don't think so. I had lots of troubles, but, it was

ES: through scarlet fever. I got scarlet fever, shortly after, that time I'm telling you about. And I got infection in the kidneys and ~~the bladder~~, inflammation of the bladder. I was very ill for a long time after that.

SD: Did women ever go to doctors, or ~~other~~ people to have abortions?

ES: Well, I called the doctor several times. I got started on a abortion and would start to get cramps, pains. And ~~I get~~ I'd get frightened and call the doctor.

Daughter: You wouldn't call them in before hand?

ES: No, you couldn't go and ask the doctor to do it, to abort you, no. I went to the hospital several times and had my uterus scraped, because I hadn't got the afterbirth, the rest of it all away. So, I did that, ~~but~~ But, I'm telling you the doctors were not nice with you. No, you were something dirty in the hospital if you got an abortion.

Daughter: The doctor didn't volunteer to do any birth control either?

ES: No, but my own doctor, of course I never went to him for those kinds of things. But, I did have to go to him to, later. He knew my unhappy family ^{life}, you know. I told you that I had scarlet fever, and that led from one thing to another. I ended up with terrible, agonizing pains, and the doctor came, he had to put me under ether to examine me at home. Then he said, " you have either got six weeks pregnancy, or an abcess on your tubes." Well I said " it's not a pregnancy,

ES: I know that." So, he took me in and I had abscess in my left tube. So, when I came to, after the operation, he came to me and said " Well little girl" he always called me "little girl" and my father in-law did too, ~~But-then-he-said~~ even though I was a great big girl. But he said " You had ~~and~~ abscess in your right tube, but as sure as God made the little apples you will have another abscess in the left one." So, I removed both of them. I looked at him, and he said "You will no longer be able to have children" and I just started to cry, I said "Thank goodness, thank goodness.", You know because.. Well, that was the way it was. So, he was a very good doctor, you know. He understood what he was doing.

SD: That's incredible you know, I guess they had to things like that almost underhanded.

ES: This was a fact, that you had an abscess in one ovary, or one tube, that you would have another one again. He was compassionate to me, of course he was. I figure I had about nine abortions. But, as I say now they were never any length, they almost never went over the second period. But, I was a very scrawny, miserable ^{looking} young woman. It took a lot out of me, yes.

SD: Did you raise your children by yourself?

ES: No, no, I left them at one time...

Daughter: You raised us by yourself!

ES: You didn't leave home till you were *fifteen*, Charlie was there.

Daughter: You didn't have help from your mother in-law!

ES: Oh no, I thought you meant did my husband contribute.

I didn't leave my husband till .. I thought you meant had I left my husband! I did for ~~6~~ week, but, I couldn't take it. No, I left left the children at Grandma's, and all I did was cry, cry, cry, I nearly went crazy.

SD: Because of your children?

ES: Of course.

SD: So, was that pretty common that ^{found} women in a difficult marriage, themselves unable to leave because of not being able to support their children?

ES: Of course, that's why so many of them stayed, And put up with the lives they had. But, Charlie came and, on bended knees, actually begged me to come back, And said that things would be all right between us. But of course they weren't.

SD: Because of his drinking?

ES: Mostly, yes. And it was thrown up at me that I had left him, before. It was pretty hard to take. Anyway, I stayed till Agnes and my son were 15 and 13. And then I left, and Agnes left a short time after... (Bill left first). My son came to meet me one time, and the behind was out of his pants and his running shoes were through and I was crying about it and I didn't know what to do. I was working, but I'd just gone to visit my Dad. And my Dad gave me 15 dollars, and that was allot of money then. And I got my son a pair of pants and running shoes. And he just gave the money you know.

ES: He wasn't able to really to afford it. He had married again,
and
and had another small family, with three children besides.

However, when my boy went home, his Dad accused him of
taking money that I had got off the streets! He couldn't
see that I had money any other way, you know. And then he
told him how I'd got it. And of course, he wanted to know
when he ^{was going to} see me again. Charlie, wanted to know when he ^{was going to}
see me again. According to my son, he wouldn't tell, ^{and} he
grabbed him and hit him, and beat him up. His other brother
was visiting him at the time and stopped him. I guess Bill
would have been hurt more. However, he came down to where
I was at a meeting. I was at a meeting in the .. on Granville
Street... It may have been a May Day meeting. In the mean
time I had got interested in politics as you say. I didn't
know it was politics then. I phoned to a cousin and he said
he could come and stay there. And they had an egg business,
and he started counting eggs for them. I don't think he went
to school again after that.

Daughter: How old was Bill at the time you are speaking of?

ES: About 13 almost 14.

SD: So the time you were living with your husband did you ever
work during that time? A= No. And when you decided to leave
you had to find a job again.

ES: Yes, I did. That's when I went back to house work again.

SD: What year was that?

ES: 1936, I guess.

SD: It must have taken a lot of courage to leave during the depression.!

ES: Well, it wasn't really depression, then... yes, I guess it was, of course it was! Not as bad as it was previous to that. In the earlier thirties it was really bad. However, I.. both kids helped me get my suitcases and put my things in it and carried it to the bus, for me you know. They wanted me to go so badly. Anyway, I took half of the money that was in the house, that was \$5.25, and it was \$10.50 in the pitcher, which was the common place for the money. And I went with that. And, my brother... picked me up ~~at~~ No, that was the first time, I left for the week. No, I just got on the bus and went downtown and applied for a job immediately. And got one.

SD: As a domestic?

ES: Yes, as a domestic.

Daughter: Was there an agency that you went to?

ES: No, I didn't go to an agency. I answered an ad^w in the paper.

Daughter: Is that how you got jobs as a domestic before, is ads in the paper?

ES: I think so, I don't know that there was any other way that I could have got it.

Daughter: There was no hiring agency?

ES: No, there was no agency, not then.

SD: What we talked about last time, where we left off, was that you had described a little bit about living on the farm with your husband, and some of the problems in the marriage, just a bit, and then you were talking about deciding to leave and look for work?

ES: After we came back to Vancouver?

SD: That's right. So what I was going to ask you about today was ^{to} just pick up the threads from there; ^{to} tell me a bit about why you left, how you helped your kids through that,

ES: Well, I -- let me see--You mean after I came back to Vancouver?

SD: Yes.

ES: Well, we lived several years together, until Agnes was fourteen, and then... I had left them, earlier, when they were quite small, but I couldn't, I just simply couldn't stay away without them, you know, and so I went back home, and we lived together for some years.

SD: This was with your husband, you mean?

ES: Yes, ^{with} my first husband, and then things got so bad they just said, "Momma, you go. You go." You know, they were grown up enough. So I did. They helped me pack my suitcase. (Laughs)

SD: Did he drink? Was that the problem?

ES: Oh yes. Yes, sometimes I would--quite often I got up and he was on the floor in the kitchen, you know, just sprawled right out, dead to the world. So that got to be impossible to go on with.

SD: Was there a problem with him ^{actually} supporting you in terms of money?

ES: Oh no. He gave me the money, he gave me the money. But then, he would drink it--probably wouldn't have very much of his paycheck.

SD: Did he have trouble controlling himself when he drank? Was he bad with the kids?

ES: No, only one time he struck my boy--He struck me, I should say. He woke the kids up, and they couldn't go to sleep, of course, and he was mollicoddling (??) them.

ES: (cont'd) So, he hit me, and then, of course, I left, and that was it.

SD: Good for you.

ES: Uh-huh. I just--I said I'm going to the store, and in the meantime my brother had come and he took my suitcase, and, so I just went. That was it. And then the first thing I did was answer an ad for housework, and then I went to housework.

SD: Had you done housework before?

ES: Oh yes. When I was younger. That's what I worked at.

SD: What was this job like that you went to?

ES: Oh, it was a very nice person that I worked for. I think he was a Member of Parliament, but I'm not too--I'm not too sure. But he worked away, and they had a boy that was blind, blind, and we got on very good together. He liked me and I liked him. I worked there for several months.

SD: Was that your main job--taking care of him?

ES: No. No, I did the housework, I did the cooking, and I did everything...

SD: After that job what did you do? Was that during the depression?

ES: I guess so. I guess it was. I can't just remember the years. I worked there for some time, and then Agnes left home. Of course, I had my father to go to, and she came to me there, and we decided to get a room together. And then I applied to another job looking after cooking in a hotel, and I worked there for awhile.

SD: Which hotel was that?

ES: It was a rooming-house, and it was on the corner of Cambie and Cordova St. I don't remember what they called it, but I cooked there for the staff.

SD: For the people who worked there?

ES: Yes. And the woman who owned it -- she would eat with us too.

SD: What were the conditions like on that job?

ES: When I wasn't cooking I had to wash blankets. (Laughs) It was quite a rough

Euna Sheard Tape 3 Side 1
job. But there was nothing special about it--I just worked hard.

SD: How was the pay?

ES: About the lowest I guess there was. I never made very much.

SD: Do you remember your hours of work?

ES: Oh yes. I worked... I'm just trying to think...Did I ... I didn't live there.

No, I went to work from where Agnes and I had our room. My memory is getting-- my memory is quite bad you know, and its getting worse daily.

SD: It's fine. How long were you at that job?

ES: Several months.

SD: Why did you finally leave it?

ES: Why... I've forgotten. I'm trying to think... I think I probably met my second husband. I think that was the reason. Did I tell you about the shipyards?

SD: No.

ES: Well, thats to come. I met Sid, Sid Sheard, and we fell in love, and we wanted to live together, but of course I had a husband. So, we got a room, and lived together. Then Agnes met her husband, met Bob Jackson, and they wanted to get married. So they went down to Seattle with another couple, their friends, and they got married. And Agnes lived in a little cottage near Willingdon (Willington?) Avenue and Joyce Road.

SD: Nice area, especially then.

ES: Yes. Yes, thats where our first home was. However, she eventually became pregnant, and I was working, still working, at different places. I worked at the place where the blind boy was, at that time. And after she had her baby, my husband -- my friend-- decided that he was going to work in Powell River. And so, of course, I went to Powell River. We had a little home there, just a little house. We were very comfortable. So, there was a nice little house, just on the same property, and we got Agnes up there. I came down when her baby was born. We went up there, and her husband was working on the boats, on the tugboats, and he was in and out of Vancouver and Powell River. So they lived up there--we lived up there for two or

three years. Three or four years, I guess.

SD: Is this when the war started? Is the war on now? Or close to?

ES: Well, it must have been beginning because Bob joined the navy. And Sid joined the reserves. So it must have been...I can't remember just how long we lived there.

SD: Did you continue to work when you were up there?

ES: Yes, part-time.

SD: Doing what?

ES: House work, of course. I worked for a family. They had two little girls. She was an Englishwoman, rather old-fashioned. I can't think of their names. Anyway, then I left them, and we lived together in this house. Of course, Agnes was up. And then Agnes had her second baby. Then, Bob went overseas.

SD: Was Bob your husband, or hers?

ES: No, hers. Bob Jackson. And I went back to Vancouver. I don't know whether she went first or me. No, I...There was two or three years we put in, in Powell River. I wish my memory was better.

SD: Its fine. You remember the important things.

ES: Now what?

SD: Well lets see. Its wartime. Were you still with your friend? Were you folks still together?

ES: Oh yes. Yes. Then ... we came down to Vancouver. I got sick. He came down, but I got too sick to come down. So I had to wait till I was over the flu. And then I came down to Vancouver. We got rid of our furniture that we had up there. Agnes came down after that. I...(Laughs) I got a room in a rooming house on Homer St. and got in bed --This is crazy--and I was sitting there and bedbugs started to ^(come out?) (Laughs) So I hopped out of that bed so fast, and I got my suitcase and I put it on the chair and I got two chairs and I sat on two chairs the rest of the night! I'll never, ever forget that. It was a terrible thing to happen.

SD: Was that typical of the kind of accomodation that existed then?

ES: Well, it wasn't a first class place, you know. But anyway, Sid started in the shipyards, and I applied for the shipyards too, and I went to work in the plate shop in North Vancouver yard.

SD: Where did you apply to?

ES: I guess to the employment office.

SD: National Selective Service?

ES: Yes. And I was in the...I got over in the north yard and Sid was working in the south yard. So we got together and we arranged so that we could both work together. He was an electrician and I became his helper, and we applied and we got into the Lepointe (?) Pier yards. We worked there for a long time. It was very wonderful.

SD: Was that common that there would be man and wife teams?

ES: Oh no, no-no. It just happened that we got together. So then we bought a house, just about two blocks up from the Point (??) Pier. A nice little house. And, then we got married. (Laughs)

SD: You had gotten divorced by this time?

ES: Yes, we got the divorce through.

SD: Was your husband at all resisting you being divorced?

ES: No, because I wasn't living with him, you see --I wouldn't have nothing to do with him.

SD: So, tell me a bit about working in the shipyards.

ES: It was wonderful, wonderful.

SD: When you first went into the North Shore yards, how did you learn your job?

ES: I worked with a guy on the plate shop, taking big angle irons out and piling them up, and cutting them. We had to lift --it was quite a heavy job. But then when I got over to Lepointe Piers I was an electrician's helper.

SD: Who trained you?

ES: You were trained by working. My husband, he was an electrician and he knew what he was doing about the wiring. We were wiring ships, you know. Wiring the big... what kind of ships do you call them? Oh, we were on dozens of ships, and wiring, and one time they put me to work with another, a young fellow-- Or maybe this was before I was working steady with Sid--and he sent me way up this ladder, and away along, oh way up high. And I was working with the wiring and the boss came along, and he says, "What are you doing up there?" And I said, "This boy's sent me there." He says, "You get down outta there!" And I got over to the --near the ladder, and I got panicky, you know, and he was panicky. (Laughs) He thought I was gonna fall. But anyway, I managed to get

down the ladder all right. He says, "Don't you ever go up--don't you ever let anybody send you up there again!"

S D: Why would that be, though? Wouldn't people have to go up there all the time?

ES: Yah, but he shouldn't have sent a green woman up there to do it. I knew how to connect wires, I knew that, but I was just--I had no place to stand hardly. I had to hang on. It was no place to send me. He wouldn't go up himself, I guess.

SD: So, can you describe exactly what you would do on a ship? How would your day start?

ES: Well, we'd just get together. When I was with Sid--I was with another fellow first, I think--if we couldn't find work to do we'd hide. Thats the truth.

THats the truth, because we were supposed to look busy, so we used to go into the turrets(?), you know, and sit down in there, and talk, until we could find something to do, and then our boss was coming--He'd know we were there, you know. He didn't have anything for us to do, and then he'd find something for us to do, and then we'd work.

SD: So, if you weren't hiding from your boss, who were you hiding from?

ES: Well, there was ever so many different bosses, you know. Ever so many different people running the job.

SD: Was there actually any kind of army presence in the shipyard, like army or navy people who'd come and inspect?

ES: No, they hadn't taken over the ship yet. They hadn't taken over the ship. It was just workmen.

SD: So, if there was no work, you'd hide until there was work--when there was work, what would it be?

ES: Well, we would put lines of wire all along and cramp(clamp?) it on.

SD: Is this in the inside of the ship?

ES: Oh yes. All inside the ship.

SD: And what would those wires be for?

ES: For lighting. The general lighting of the ship--same as the general lighting of the room...It was a wonderful job.

SD: What were the things about it that you really liked?

ES: Well, I like working, for one thing. I liked fastening the wires in, and putting them in with cables...Oh, it was very interesting. But as I say, I just can't remember too much.

SD: Would you have regular breaks on the job?

ES; Oh yes. We had coffee breaks, and there was a coffee shop on the boat, you know, where you could go and get it.

SD: And how many hours did you work, do you remember that?

ES: Eight. Eight hours.

SD: How were you paid?

ES: Well, I know we were paid very good, but I can't tell you what I got exactly.

SD: Was it by the hour, or was it piece-work?

ES: No, it wasn't piece-work, it was by the hour.

SD: And, would you spend time with other women who worked in the yard? Did you get to meet them?

ES: Oh yes. We were all working together. We made one or two fairly good friends. But then when I worked with Sid I was with him most of the time.

SD: Were you isolated with him pretty well?

ES: Yes, he was my charge-hand, and I worked with him and he showed me what to do.

SD: Was it the same way for other women?

ES: Yes. Everybody had a charge-hand.

SD: Were there any women who were charge-hands?

ES: I think they were all helpers.

SD: When they hired you did they tell you anything about whether the job would continue after the war?

ES; Oh no. No.

SD: What would they say to you?

ES: Nothing. You were just working there, that's all.

SD: What was the attitude towards women?

ES: Very good. Very good. It was a jolly...It was very good--I never felt anything wrong.

SD: Was there any talk amongst the women about what would happen after the war?

ES; No, we all belonged to the union.

SD: Can you tell me a bit about that?

ES: Well, we just paid our union dues, and we figured we were o.k.

SD: Were you active union members?

ES: Let me see, did I go to meetings? I think we did have meetings. The job would be discussed, you know.

SD: Can you recall anything about those meetings?

ES: No, I don't think so. I don't think I can.

SD: Were there any issues that especially concerned women? That women thought were important?

ES: There was nothing special that I...We were all union people, and the women were considered the same as the men. There was no difference. They didn't make a difference with us.

SD: What were the issues the union thought were important issues?

ES: No use trying to say something that I don't know.(Laughs)

SD: That's fine. So, you really enjoyed working in the shipyards.

ES: Oh, thoroughly.

SD: Do you remember any stories from working there? Anything that happened that stands out?

ES: No, and I can't--I don't just recall how we quit. I guess we finished up a boat and that was it. There was no more work. I can't recall what happened.

SD: Was that towards the end of the war? Do you remember when it happened?

ES: Yes, I think it must have been. I think the war must have been over when we left the shipyards.

SD: Did your husband leave too?

ES: Oh yes. We were together. We were really together all the time. And then of course, as I say, we got married.

SD: Did your daughter work there?

ES: Oh no.

SD: Do you remember the age of most of the women who worked in the shipyards?

ES: Oh, they were quite young, to middle-aged.

SD: Were most of them married women?

ES: Most of them. I think there was one or two that weren't married, that I know - that I knew. But there was lots of them that had their husbands there.

SD: Would you spend time with the people you worked with after work at all?

ES: No, because we'd go straight to our home.

SD: What about Vancouver during the war--were there lots of dances, social events?

ES: Yes, I guess so. We used to go to the Ukrainian Labour Temple, and we used to dance there quite a lot, my husband and I. We both liked dancing.

SD: Were there a lot of soldiers in town? Was it like an army town?

ES: Yes, and there was a lot of unemployed too. Do you remember them going to the Post Office?

SD: No, tell me about that?

ES: They moved into the Post Office, the unemployed boys, and I helped there. I helped to feed them.

SD: Oh really? How did you do that?

ES: Well, the Ukrainian Labour Temple opened the kitchens, and I think there was another couple of kitchens that I didn't get to. And the boys lined up and we would give them food.

SD: Would you bring the food to them though?

ES: Yes, I think it was brought in packages, you know, sandwiches and that kind of thing.

SD: So did you actually go inside the occupation to do that?

ES: Oh yes, I was in the Post office.

SD: So tell me a bit more about it?

ES: You mean in the Post Office? Well, there wasn't so many I guess. But, I'm trying to think...what I did after that...

SD: When you say you were inside, was that to help them with food, or anything like that? Or was it actually sitting? Were you a sit^{downer}^downer?

ES: No, I wasn't a sit-downer. No, I just went among them and talked with them.

SD: What would you talk to them about?

ES: Oh just...nothing special, you know.

SD: Tell me what it was like in there? What did it look like--where were they sleeping, and so on?

ES: Well they were sitting~~around~~, sitting around the floors. But the Post Office was carrying on, you know.

SD: It was open?

ES: Oh yes.

SD: People would come in and do their business?

ES: Yes. Yes, but the boys were sitting around. Then sometimes they'd all march, and march up and down, out on the streets to show that they were unemployed.

SD: Did they sleep in there at night?

ES: I don't remember. I certainly didn't see them sleeping.

SD: How did you feel about the occupation?

ES: Well, it was just a struggle. It was a struggle against the government. Because of the unemployment, you know--they had no jobs for people. That was a terrible thing. Of course, that's what's happening today too, a great deal.

SD: When you helped to cook for them, how did you^{do}^that? Were you in an organization that cooked?

ES: No, I used to go to the Ukrainian Labour Temple, and help them get the meals.

SD: Were you in a political group?

ES: I belonged to the Women's Labour League.

SD: Tell me a bit about the Women's Labour League.

ES: Well, they were struggling to help, against the government, to help get work. We'd go on demonstrations sometimes. I have a picture but my daughter has it. We marched out to the park, Stanley Park, and we formed the shape of a heart. I had that picture but she has it.

SD: Is that the postcard?

ES: Yes. The postcard, yes.

SD: Tell me about that march.

ES: Oh, it was no different to many other marches. There was a lot of marches

in those days, against unemployment.

SD: Do you remember anything about planning that march though? Who came up with the idea of making a heart?

ES: No, I...Oh, well, when we got out to the--I don't know who arranged it, but the Spanish War was on at that time, and a number of us women dressed in white uniforms and we were--we had caps on--we were supposed to be nurses, you know, and we can see the pictures of the nurses...on the card. It was quite a...

SD: What was the feel of that demonstration? Was there a particular issue that made people want to make a heart?

ES: Oh no, that...I don't know how that happened, but they were ...thousands of people marched, and it was against unemployment, and some were wanting to get relief, cause they didn't have anything.

SD: How did you join the Women's^S Labour League?

ES: I don't actually remember how I did. I knew of it and joined it.

SD: Do you recall any of the meetings?

ES: Well, they're just the same as any other meeting...

SD: Do you remember the size of them?

ES: We had groups, we had several groups all over the city. There was probably twenty or so within a group, you know, and then out in South Vancouver there would be another one. Out in Burnaby another one.

SD: This is interesting. How were they organized--was there a chairperson?

ES: Oh yes. We'd have a chairman and a secretary. Usually...I remember when we lived on Willington (??) Avenue I used to walk a way out to South Vancouver to meetings.

SD: How often would you meet?

ES: I think around two weeks.

SD: So it was pretty active if you met every two weeks.

ES: Oh yes. Oh yes, it was an active group, it was an active...

SD: What other things would you do? What would the group do?

ES: We--I remember one time, we held a meeting, an open air meeting, on the street corner, you know. I can remember that.

SD: Tell me a bit more about that.

ES: Well, there was different ones spoke, and talked about unemployment, and the need to get the government to come across with more relief for the boys, and that kind of thing. I remember that one--it was, let me see--where did we hold it?--near...I'm trying to think of the name of the streets--it was this side of Granville, down where the bridge is.

SD: Was that the Cambie Street grounds?

ES: Yes--No, that wasn't the Cambie Streets grounds. It was farther--it was near Granville Street. But that's just one place I remember a meeting, and I don't remember any other one special. But we did meet on the Cambie Street grounds a lot.

SD: What else would the league do--did you have discussions about issues?

ES: Oh yes.

SD: What kind of things?

ES: Probably somebody being put out of their home. They used...(Interruption)

SD: We were just talking about discussions that the Labour League would have. You were just going to tell us something about that.

ES: Well, somebody'd be put out of their house, and we would get together and go there, and I remember one time, they had thrown the food out --the authorities. They had put the people out and thrown the food out and it was out. Well, we grabbed--we'd try and save it and put it back in the house. I was on several of those.

SD: So what would happen there--how would you find out about the eviction?

ES: Somebody'd come and tell us about it. Someone closer to it than we were, and we'd go and see what we could do to help.

SD: How did people respond to your help?

ES: Oh, wonderful. We were welcome.

SD: Were you ever successful in protecting people's places for them?

ES: No. We never could. We could find some other place for them, or someone else would say, "Come. Come, until you get straightened out." But, it was a pretty rough time...pretty rough.

SD: So, you would try and protect their things from eviction, but would...

ES: Oh yes. But sometimes we never went there in time. They were thrown out. Absolutely thrown out, on the ground. And sometimes there was children.

SD: Do you remember any particular instances?

ES: I remember several different people that were in the group that helped, tried to help...As I say my memory is...

SD: You're giving us a lot of really good stuff.

ES: But, when you're eighty-six I guess you're...(Laughs) I'll be eighty-six this year. Its pretty hard to remember everything.

SD: Did you ever have discussions in the League ?

ES; Of course there was discussions, when we'd have group meetings. There would be discussions, but exactly what we would discuss--just the conditions that prevailed at that time.

SD: What would you do in a meeting every two weeks. What would happen at that meeting?

ES: Hmmm...I don't think I can say anything special...

SD: Did you belong to any political parties other than the league?

ES: (Laughs) Do you really want to know?

SD: Yes.

ES: I don't want it broadcast because its not very popular...I belong to the Communist Party.

SD: Well, many people did in those days.

ES: Did you suspect that? (Laughs)

SD: Well, I know that many people who were in the League belonged to the party.

ES: Yes, I did.

SD: Why did you choose to join? Do you remembe why?

ES: Well, first --my first husband was, or said he was. But he wasn't a very good one, and he dropped out. But I always stayed in. And I'm still there. But I wouldn't want it known, here, because it wouldn't be very good.

SD: Oh, in this home?

ES: Yah.

SD: Well, I wouldn't. They wouldn't know.

ES: No, you want to write that so that...it would be broadcast.

SD: But you made the decision to join on your own, basically.

ES: Oh yes. Oh yes, I made the decision, and I worked in the Party and I did so many things through the Party. Of course I don't do anything now because I'm...But I'm still a member. I haven't got my card here, but someone else holds it for me.

SD: Why did you decide to join? Cause you were active doing other things-- something made you want to join the political world?

ES: Well, my first husband talked, you know, and gave me to understand that it was a good thing to belong to, and we had to fight against the system. That sort of thing. And I was quite willing, and especially when the unemployed boys were around--that was--I especially wante_d to help them.

SD: How did membership in the Party help you?

ES: Well, just being in the Party was a satisfaction, that I knew I--I figured I was on the right road.

SD: How about in a practical way?

ES: Well, we had meetings. We had meetings and decided what we were going to do. I can't exactly tell you why. But it was a principle, it was principle, you know, that we believed in. And as I said, I was at many things on Powell Street grounds, because we rallied there, so much.

And I worked on a paper.

SD: Which paper did you work on?

ES: Tribune. It was called the B.C. Worker's News.

SD: When did you work on that?

ES: ...Well, thats what I belong to.

SD: So it was about--if I recall the B.C. Worker was in about 1935-36.

ES: Yes. About that. Yes, and we had the machine to print it at our house.

SD: Really?

ES: Yes, thats true. We had the machine and we used to...the guys would come out and[^]with the material and we would run it through. It was just a mimeograph, at that time. I worked on that for years. And I met a young Swedish fellow. He was working on it and he used to come out, and he went to Spain, and he never came back. It was a very sad thing.

SD: A lot of guys(!?).died?

ES: Oh yes. I knew, I knew dozens of them.

SD: What would you do for the paper. Did you write for it?

ES: No, I didn't write. I just worked the machines. No, I didn't have the knowledge of writing.

SD: Did you continue to work on it, after it had left your house?

ES: Only to go down and help fold and that kind of thing, get it ready for mailing.

SD: When it was at your house, were you afraid?

ES: I wasn't afraid in those days.(Laughs) I never thought of being afraid. I knew it had to be kept under cover to a certain extent, but I never was afraid.

SD: Was the Party illegal then?

ES: Oh, of course.

SD: Were there ever arrests of people in it?

ES: Yes. Yes, there was people arrested, different times, and people had to go under cover. Did you ever hear of Effie Jones?

SD: I interviewed her.

ES: You interviewed Effie? And she's gone now. She was a wonderful woman, and I was very close to her. Went to visit her lots of times. Yes, she was a wonderful, wonderful woman. It was a terrible thing when she went. Course she was getting on in years.

SD: So you were saying that you weren't afraid then. Why was that?

ES: I wasn't a fearful person. Thats all I can say is. I never thought of being afraid. I never had any fear.

SD: Were you involved with any unemployed organizations other than the League?

ES: Well, I said the Women's Labour League, you know, because I didn't know what...yes, I belonged to the Unemployed Movement (?) and I belonged, let me see--there was a domestic worker's union too. I belonged to that.

SD: Tell me about that. I've been trying to find someone from there for a long time.

ES: Well, we just met and discussed things, the same as any other organization. But...

SD: Who organized that union--how did that come about?

ES: There was a Mildred Dugan (?) Did you know her--have you heard of her too?

SD: I have heard of her.

ES: Yeah, it was she--I think she's in...she was in Victoria. I don't know whether she's still living or not. I don't know. Oh, there was several other women in there too, but I can't remember their names. See this is the thing--that you just don't remember.

SD: And what did these women do?

ES: Well, we used to have meetings, discuss the things. They were ...they helped out with the Post Office and that kind of thing.

SD: How did the women contact the women to join the union?

ES: I don't know.

ES: How did you join it?

ES: I knew it was there and I had my name put down to belong to it, and also, when the Spanish War was on I knit dozens and dozens of sweaters, things for the children over there. We used to get parcels and parcels and send them.

SD: What did the Domestic Worker's Union do? How would it recruit people? Would it go door to door?

ES: Oh no. No--no. It wasn't a great affair like that. In fact, it was quite narrow. When you think of...But we were called the Domestic Worker's Union and we belonged to it. We worked in different houses and different places.

SD: Was the union able to get any improvements for domestics?

ES: I can't remember. I just can't remember.

SD: Do you remember if they used to have negotiations, or anything like that?

ES: I can't...I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Its too bad.

SD: I've heard Mildred Dugan's name. I haven't met her and I don't know if she's still around.

ES: If she is she must be older than me. She did live in Victoria.

SD: During the war, when you were in the shipyards, were you still in the Party? What was the Party's attitude towards the war?

ES: Well, it was against the war. But, we weren't known as Party people. We were undercover. No one knew.

SD: Why was that, that people were undercover?

ES: Because it was illegal.

SD: Was that hard, not being open about your politics with people?

ES: No more or less. We're still undercover to a point, you know. We don't announce it. Nobody knows that I... nobody would know here that I...well, there is one little woman here who I knew years ago. She's ninety-nine. She's quite "normal" too. She has a wonderful memory.

SD: Was she in the Party?

ES: I don't think she was ever in the Party. I think she was just...I think she may have been in the Women's Labour League, but I doubt that too. But she's known me--she knows what I am. But we're very careful.

SD: Is there anything else that you remember that you want to tell me about?

ES: No, I was just going to say, I have a book here, that was given to me by a friend. Its about Cuba...