

SD: This is Barbara Stewart, and we were discussing Market Square in Regina in 1935.

BS: July the first, this meeting was called as a citizen's meeting to protest the lack of jobs, lack of anything for these men and we had interviewed the city about where to house them and they had decided to house them up at the Exhibition Grounds, and so for the meeting they were asked to specifically not to come to the meeting as this was a citizen's protest and we didn't want them on the grounds, so it would make it definitely a citizen's group. So, I was there at 7:00, <sup>as</sup> I was selling literature and the thing that attracted my attention when I got there was ... Swede's vans were on the streets and Pounders and I don't know who else, there was another one and I was shocked to see Swede's vans there because this was 7:00 and my Dad worked for Swedes and he had a strict rule that the vans had to be in the warehouse by 6:00 come hail or high water. There was a financial deal and that was it. And here they were on the street, so I walked in and around the crowd as it was gathering and Mr. Miller was killed. He was a private detective for the city and he was a neighbour of ours. So I had no reason to fear Mr. Miller, you know, I wasn't accustomed to this so, I chatted with him as I roamed in and around the crowd and so when the meeting started, the key person had just made an introduction and the speaker was going to start when there was a very shrill whistle and I was standing way back of the crowd, so I got a pretty good picture of what was taking place up front and I was shocked to find the police doors, that the police station was on the left hand corner of the Market Square. - <sup>garage</sup> the doors opened, the garage doors and there was about 50 or 60 police with billy sticks come whooping out there like a pack of Indians.

BS: (cont..) I was shocked, I couldn't believe my ears or eyes, and then the van, which had slowly been lining up on Osler Street, opened up and there was three men on horseback in each van. They were the piano vans, so they are very low...and I was shocked! The police came from one side, the RCMP from the one side and the whole crowd went streaming out to 11th Avenue which was the main drag, and oh, I couldn't believe what was taking place. I saw a man, ..now as I said, I was way back of the crowd, so I got passed by...they just swept that Market Square clean in a matter of minutes. I even saw one, and I am still staggered by it, chasing a woman who had her baby in a baby carriage...It was one of those high English baby carriages, and the thing was going like this, and that woman was screaming. I could hear her above all that hullabub, and chasing her. I'll never understand it as long as I live. Why?! So on 10th Avenue was a hall, <sup>The Unity Centre</sup> where the unemployed gathered and we had meetings there, and one thing and another and we'd have bazaars and so, I ran back to the Unity Center, and I got the shock of my life to see on the end of the street, six RCMP on horseback, and I was just going to run through, and I don't know what hit me but something just hit my mind: "if I run through there they are going to converge and catch me in the middle," so I ran around the back and went in. Nobody else was around, just the RCMP, and I got the...I was just stunned, there was a police, an RCMP, breaking the plate glass window with a billy stick. I remember asking him what he was doing that for, and you know, with all the detail I can remember everything to the sharpest detail, but I can't remember what he said to me. So, anyway, I left and went to 11th Avenue and what I was going to do was I wanted to see if there was anyone up there I knew, because it was unbelievable, all

BS: (cont...) of a sudden it was like you were in a limbo and there wasn't a soul around. I could hear globes being tossed and banging [and then I could see what was happening,] young people were climbing up and digging the globes out of the signs and they were smashing them, or throwing them at the police, [presumably. But by this time they has chased up 11th Avenue towards \_\_\_\_\_ Street.] Now, on Lorne which was next to Scarf was the town detachment for the RCMP. I went up there and it was just like climbing through a mountain. There were so many people all over the place you could barely get through and Lorne Street was just crammed with people. And there was an RCMP standing on the street and he was presumably directing traffic, And there was a little old lady standing just back of him, so he had asked her to please get up on the sidewalk. I'll never forget her as long as I live, she said "Yes, officer, but that yellow line running down the side of your pants should be running up your back." [And you know, I was listening in amazement at this, it was so astounding because I had never heard anything like this before because] my girlfriends brother was an RCMP, and we had been up to quite a few of the formal dances at the Detachment and <sup>they're</sup> beautiful affairs!, you know, the men are all dressed up and in uniform and they are very distinctive and the music was great and had a lovely time; and here I am hearing this type of thing, and I'd never heard a police addressed in this manner and no occasion at home to ever have anything to say or do about the police! [So I remember going back, and] on my way home I ran into the Reverend East [who was] a man who was working on behalf of the trekkers he was there and Arthur Evans and

BS: (cont..) there were a few other people and the RCMP. And they were discussing going on to Ottawa and the order had been distinctly that they were to be stopped in Regina, that was it! So, I went home and I remember telling my Dad about it. My father was just astounded. Now the next day, the order was not to feed the men and I can tell you the uproar that went on in the City <sup>at this.</sup> That was really something. But I've never forgotten the sight of those trains as they came into the city, with all those men up on top of those trains. It was a most heart-rendering <sup>(rending.)</sup> thing to see. And there was a man who was shot, one of the Trekkers. Now, I never knew how in the world this happened. And I belong to the Marine Workers Bowling League, and it was just a chance remark one night at the bowling alley about the On-to-Ottawa trek; and for the life of me I can't remember how we got onto the subject; and by the oddest coincidence, the two men I was talking to were the men that were with Lyons, the man that got shot. And he was severely injured, he was in the hospital for years that I know of, you know, like then he was in the hospital there for a long time and then when he came back here, I don't know where he is now, I've lost track. But the men happened to tell me what happened was that, I'd always understood that he'd been shot up at the bank which was on Scar <sup>the?</sup> Street, but it wasn't so. They were standing at the entrance to a lane, and they were ordered to stop. And apparently they took off and ran up the lane and an officer shot at them and caught Lyons. And I know he was permanently injured. And there was another man, Shack was his name, one of the Trekkers that was on 11th Avenue. I guess you know, there were quite a few men, they didn't come to the Market Square but they stayed in the distance to see what was

BS: (cont)...taking place, He got hit with a riot stick, and had he lived, he'd have been a [crippled, you know,] mentally crippled man for the rest of his life, but as it was he died. [And after he died we were going to bury him, and a sister from Fargo, North Dakota contacted the movement there and he was buried in a Catholic church.] Needless to say that church was just crammed with people. We all went to the funeral. And it was such a sad thing to <sup>have</sup> happen<sup>ed</sup>, and it was so totally unnecessary. And I've often thought back on it and thought what a cruel, unkind thing to have happen<sup>ed</sup> when it shouldn't have happened. What for? you know, of course that was the ineptness of the government at that time to deal with the situation. And <sup>it was</sup> one of the stupidest things to have happen<sup>ed</sup> all through that period. No work for any of the men. I came through in April of '36, through the mountains, and I could see the relief camps way off and to me they were the most dreary, sad<sup>2</sup>-looking things, stuck out there in the mountains. They put them out there in the mountains to get them out of the city, What for? I'll never understand it. [So,] it was something that happened in such a short space of time and had such an overwhelming impact on the people. <sup>It was cruel,</sup> [I've often thought what a... that was all the government could offer people in those days..]

SD: Violence?

BS: Violence...the unemployed were in deplorable circumstances, people on relief. It was a horrible period in history. And I know that some people were given as much as two dollars as something to maintain their family. You know, in those days of course the cost of living wasn't high, you could get a house, quite a lovely home, to rent for \$25 a month, but and I remember I paid \$2.25 a month, a week, rent, or was it \$1.25, it was somewhere in that level, and I have a

BS: (cont)...nephew who later, not too long ago, paid \$100 a month for that same room that I paid \$1.25 or \$2.25, I believe it was a dollar <sup>twenty-five</sup>. So there, it just goes to show you the difference. And that place is still standing. Totally unnecessary. If only, well, at that time R.B. Bennett was very, what is the term, arrogant with the men that interviewed him on work and I guess if you have ever been to a parliament you can see they couldn't have done too much at that stage. Couldn't have done it or wouldn't, you know they were so short-sighted on many aspects of the things that affected people in those days. And needless to say, when I came to Vancouver, that was another story, you could write stories about the deplorable circumstances.

SD: So go ahead, talk to me about Vancouver...

BS: Oh, I came here <sup>(to Vancouver)</sup> in 1936 and I had no work, I had very little money, so I went to the Y.W.C.A. and I told them I had just arrived. And you know they sent me to a house, I was working at 2:00 <sup>o'clock</sup> that afternoon...

SD: AS a domestic...

BS: Yes, so I worked for a month and the second month I met somebody who was, what he was specifically doing was trying to ~~oust~~ the Unions out of these shops, and he sent me to a shop to work. So that was fine, I went to this place and I was there a month. I, in the meantime I had met the business agent of the Hotel Restaurant Employees Union, and he introduced me to Tom Sidis?? who owned the Melrose Cafe, and Tom said, "when you get a bit of experience, you can come and work with us." So, anyway I worked a couple of months at this shop. We had a strike, rather the Union had a

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BS: (cont..) strike, at the Trocodero Cafe. So I was asked to go down and be a delegate, as a delegate to that picket line, which I did on my breaks. You know, we worked four-way split shift in those days, and so this girl that was going around with a man whom I worked for at Kennedy's reported me and I got laid off. And the next thing I knew I was working at the Melrose Cafe, so that was fine, I was there eight and a half years. And of course, at that time we were working four way split shifts, <sup>we started at</sup> 11:00 in the morning <sup>were not</sup> through till 2:30 in the morning, and I could write books of the experience. Nevertheless, it was a tremendous experience and then I joined the Union, and we were working from one stage to the next <sup>to</sup> better conditions. In fact, in order to get aprons supplied and laundered, we had to wear the same apron for six solid weeks before before they gave in. Six weeks! I've been on the picket line for six weeks, but wearing the same apron without washing it for six weeks was the hardest thing I had to do.

SD: That was a job action that you did.

BS: Yes, and if you went and washed it, you got fined by the Union. So needless to say, we didn't wash it, and it, and it took six weeks before they would give in.]

SD: What did the customers have to say about that?

BS: Well, we camouflaged it very well. You know [once you become quite proficient in this trade, mind <sup>\* move to page 8</sup> it takes years before you become truly proficient waitress in the trade, it doesn't come easy, and it's hard work...believe me it's hard work.

But we managed to pass it off, <sup>you</sup> kept a cheery outlook and you have a rapport with your customers and so we managed to

BS: (cont)..get by. It was pretty hard on the young ones that didn't fully understand.\*

SD: The issue?

BS: Yes, they didn't quite understand, you know, new people coming in the trade don't know what's going on. So I became a delegate to the Labour Council in the second year. And from there on, it's unbelievable, you got very conversant with all the trades and the problems and the wonderful people who have passed on who have made a tremendous contribution. I can think of two very wonderful people from the city, the bus drivers, Peter Munro and Charlie Stewart. They live in my memory for their wonderful contribution. Then there is Bill Stewart..

SD: That <sup>was</sup> your husband?

BS: Yes. He, at that time the Spanish people were having a terrible time in Spain, and I remember we got expelled, 17 unions were expelled for one week and reinstated almost as quickly, for supporting the Spanish workers in their cause.

SD: Was that from the Labour Council?

BS: Yes. Well, you know, if you think back in that stage at that time, the trade union movement wasn't all people weren't progressive in their outlook and which didn't mean that they weren't looking out for the interests of their union, they were, but the things that have happened since have broadened out the trade union movement and a few years later, not too long ago, two women were brought out from Africa, by the trade union movement, and that was a tremendous achievement doing that. Paddy Neale was instrumental in working in that field. And I remember I went to the meeting, I was just stunned. I saw their hair, it looked horrible and I thought, "what in

BS: (cont...)the world? I was horrified to hear that their hair had been pulled out, you know, just pulled out with a snip thing that pulls the hair out. And the youngest one was 16 years of age and her head had been stuck in a toilet bowl, the toilet flushed to try and make her incriminate whoever <sup>was</sup> presumably supposed to be working in cahoots with her on whatever issue it was at that moment. And, I thought this was a tremendous thing, bringing them out to be able to tell their story, and it was sad. You know, I'm one of those kids that was brought up if you left a crust of bread or some milk or whatever you left, some child in Africa could use it. And my mother she just dinned that into us, like a record. And I remember her church was very active in working on behalf of African people, that is the coloured people. And I had an uncle who was a surveyor in Africa and I remember him saying they would do the days work, come back the next morning and find the whole thing all pulled out. Well, you know, I laugh now, I realize it was quite serious at the time, but then those people were protesting in their own way against the things that were taking place. And they weren't involved, they were being ousted in their own country and treated in the most shabby manner. And I remember one of our union members during the war was in the navy and he was stationed in Africa. And he said that there is a special bus for the coloured people which comes few and far between and whites were not allowed on it. He went to go on it, they wouldn't let him on the car. But he said everything was aimed at the coloured man to his detriment. The buses were few and far

BS: between, everything, <sup>and</sup> the manner in which they were treated is shabby. When you think, in their own country. And so you developed a terrific understanding. But coming back to my mother's church...they had, what was that film <sup>in that day -</sup> a film put on the news reel, there's a name for it...and it showed the plight of the African people. And I remember always that if there was something that you wouldn't eat, there was some child in Africa who could use it, you know, it was just dinned at you constantly.

SD: Did you grow up in the Prairies? Was that on a farm?

BS: No, no it was in a city, Regina, but <sup>\*</sup>I used to spend all my summer holidays on a farm [and that's another story]. The hard work that the farmer goes into, [tremendous], I learned how to make bread, I learned <sup>to stock.</sup> You know children in the country have an attitude about children in the city, they can't work they can't this or that, and when I went on the farm, you worked just like you were being paid to work, because at no time were you going to be called a city bum [or whatever it was]. And I even went to the school when I was there on my holidays and I enjoyed it but I, this attitude against city children, so you learned <sup>stock.</sup> to I went during the harvest. you see during the harvest they don't have a holiday they have a holiday after the harvest and we had our holiday during the harvest. So I'd go there. and what used to amaze me was women outdoing each other in setting a beautiful table for all these harvesters, and cooking beautiful foods and this was a German neighbourhood so Mrs. Fuddy-duddy wasn't about to let somebody else get ahead of her. They just literally killed themselves turning out this beautiful food, <sup>strudels</sup>, you name it. And I often laugh when I think of it; here <sup>?</sup> s all the men sitting down to a table with

BS: (cont)...white cloths on it, And they come in from the field and in those days there was heavy rust in the field and you know there was no showers on a farm so it was very hard to wash in a hand basin. And the men would be sitting at these tables all set with white cloths on, the sumptuous food and believe me it was beautiful food -and- it would put the Hotel Vancouver to shame for the beauty of the table and the food, it was lovely -and- I remember helping my aunt and I peeled the apples while she made the strudel, Have you ever made strudel?

SD: It's very difficult.

BS: Tremendous work.

SD: All these different little layers and...

BS: Yes. I laugh when I go on the old strudel and I look at it and go, is that a strudel?, you'd never know. And a thick crust that you could plow through with an axe. And that strudel...oh, between my mother and my aunt, I used to always used to have a little debate with myself which was best because my aunt was a terrific cook, but my mother I don't think anyone could beat her. And she had an exquisite way of baking, and she made the most delicious strudels and galishkis. You know that was applicable to that area.

SD: So, what kind of background did your family come out of? German? Right.

BS: And we lived in the States, but my mother nagged the life out of my father to come to Canada because she had a brother that lived in Markinch. And so it wasn't right, I learned a lot from my mother what not to do, and she would, she nagged and nagged getting Dad to come to Canada, but it was wrong because Dad was very happy in the work he was doing, and it took him out

BS: (cont)...of his environment, [he wasn't too...But however, be that as it may,] it was a working class family and my mother used to say to us she'd break every bone in our body before she'd let us grow up and be useless hulks on society. This from a woman who had never had a day's education in her life. I used to marvel at my mother's choice of words, Like, if somebody was in trouble she'd say "What do you need, a blueprint. Get busy", And do you know, it is the funniest thing, but all through my working years, 'cause we used to get off 2,3,4'oclock in the morning, there was no transportation then and you had to walk, And the things that you saw in the city were incredible, like you'd find somebody lying in a ditch, you'd find them in doorways, you'd find them way off in the grass. Well, you can't leave them lying there, so I'd get the police. And the effort sometimes to get to a telephone when you are walking in a district where there is nothing, everything is pitch black you see, outside<sup>of</sup> the city lights! And you'd get help for them and oh, I could write books about incidents like that. So, I'd find it very easy to..as my mother said "What do you need-a blueprint". The Girl Guides can hide their heads in shame, although I did belong to the guides. So, it is oh, unbelievable the things that you see. I remember I took my husband to..they used to sometimes have meetings 6:00 in the morning., And well, the men were different men in various fields...]

[SD: To prepare for work?

BS: Yes, or to prepare for a meeting they were having that night. So, I'd take him down at 6:00 and waited for the Army and Navy to open up. I used to like going to the Army and Navy. And there was a hotel across the way, and I saw a man coming out

BS: (Cont)...of there one morning. And it was unbelievable, he came out all bent over, and staggered along with the most amazing gait. I think now that <sup>it</sup> must have been <sup>drugs</sup>. He got to the corner, across the way from the Woodward's is a gun shop. He got in front of that shop and he dropped on the pavement. So there was a telephone right behind me, so I phoned the Police, they phoned the inulator and <sup>gosh,</sup> they were there in seconds. They had no sooner picked up the man and taken him, then from this same hotel comes another man in the same condition, all walking, you know, it's the most amazing gait, to watch this. And so, I phoned back again, and I said I'm sorry for phoning back again, but there is a man in identically the same condition as the chap that was picked up just a few seconds ago. The inulator crew came right on the button. And it is just around the corner from that spot, so that is why they were so quick. Well, they no sooner picked up that man, then a third one comes along, so I phoned up and I said, "I think you had better get somebody down to this place to find out what is the matter here, because this is the third man and if there is three, there will be four." And sure enough, they have no sooner picked him up when a fourth one came along. But this time, they brought a policeman with them, and they went..... ]

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BS: (cont)...This time they brought a policeman with them and they went in, two policemen went in the building, so from what happened from there on, I don't know. But that is just the type of thing that you run into.

SD: So, did you find people on the streets who had been drunk, or drugged, or hurt?

BS: Well, it is a little bit of everything. I remember I was going to get in the car, it was in the parking lot down there on the Skid Road and just as I'm going to get in, I could see the tip of a, something sticking up from the tire. I went and looked and my gosh, here was a man right in front of my tire. If I'd have started up, I could have easily run over him because his legs were spread out and it was the toe of his shoe that I saw. So, I straighten up and there is a telephone on the corner and I go to run over there and phone the police and just as I'm going to do that I see a patrol wagon coming along, so I ran out on the street and I...Like this...and they swung around and come in the yard, there is lane there, and they come rushing over, and I bent over the man, then I could see that he is all bloody, and his hands were beaten up, so he opens his eyes, and the first thing he says is "Can't even go to sleep, but the pigs are here." I say, "Well, that is a fine way to call men that have come to help you." Took him to the hospital and so there was another time when I came along and there was a man hanging on the doors of this hotel. It was closed for some reason, the Sunrise and it is a deplorable place. Oh, I went in there to sell a ticket for the Kinsmen, I could have cried. It was...women were inebriated, and one woman bought a ticket, she was an Indian woman, she was quite enibriated, she said

BS: (cont).. "do you wonder that I am like this" she says "I have a crippled child". And it turns out that it is a mongoloid, and of course they have taken it away because she wasn't looking after the child.

SD: So, these kinds of things have happened all the way through the thirties and forties?

BS: Oh, did they, and all you have to do is go on the skid row now and see

SD: 'Cause it's the same conditions...

BS: You can read it, read it like a book. You see I have been so accustomed to it over the years that it just hits me hard today 'cause the sad thing is that it hasn't changed. Nothing has changed too much for them. But, this is the demoralizing of ~~the~~ people.

SD: So, you came to British Columbia in 1936 and you had grown up in the city, but you had relatives who were living on the farm so you had lots of contact with that. Why did you come to Vancouver?

BS: Well, there was a, you know, a - Dad died for one thing and I thought now if I am ever going to make a move, now is the time to do it. But I was sorry after, because my mother had a stroke. This is something that is very sad. Mother had a chance to get married again, and my brother and sister at that stage were mischievous without knowing it. They interfered and it broke, so that mother didn't get married. What they didn't know, mother became the babysitter for their children and to me that was cruel, because you see there is nothing so lonely as a person when their partner is gone for somebody who has been married for many years. It's unbelievable. My husband has been gone now five years, it is

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BS: (cont)..going on the sixth year. When you have had a close relationship, its very sad. So, I came to Vancouver, and mother was home, and after my husband, unbeknownst to me, he would, when he went through Regina, he would take time off to stop and go and visit my mother. And on one of the trips he came back and he says, pack up, I want you to go and see your mother, there is something the matter with her. And so, when I went home, she'd had a stroke, so I brought mother to Vancouver, and oh that's another story. It is heart-rendering to deal with people who have had a stroke. Mother was always looking for what had been and I'd take her for walks and she'd say, oh, Mrs. So-and-so lives there and you know, I could tell how her mind was working and it was sad. One morning I woke up about 2:00, and I'm waiting for mother to go back to the bedroom and I'm waiting and waiting, so I got up. My God, I near died; the front door was standing open, it was pitch black. I went to look out, heavens, I wouldn't have found anybody in a lifetime. I phoned up the police, I was crying, would they send a man down to help me find my mother. He says, "What kind of a coat has she got on". I says, "a red one". "She's here". A baker going to work had at 4:00<sup>o'clock</sup> had seen mother walking. She was going to the waterfront. She was going to kill herself because, you know, what was the point in living. And, oh, I was just horrified. So I had to take Mother back and even on the train, she got away from me. I stopped at a little store, they let you off for 10 or 15 minutes to make a purchase or whatever, and I got off to get something and my god, all aboard, I went to get on the train and my mother is way down the road. Well, I just about collapsed. Anyways, they went and got her. I realize that there's no use fooling around,

BS: (cont)..you know, the doctor advised me to take her back to Saskatchewan to put her in a home there. I said I couldn't conceive of it because the conditions here were superior. He says, "Nothing like it young lady, the conditions in Saskatchewan are superior to anything here." I wouldn't have believed it. But I did take her back and I must confess that I wasn't too pleased with the treatment<sup>other</sup> in the hospital. You know, her arms were black and blue from top to bottom, I never, I couldn't get an answer from anybody of what had happened. And you know, at that stage, they are not themselves and so anyways, I had to take mother back. And it wasn't easy. It's a heart-rendering business.

SD: But, you had left her there in 1936.

BS: I had to. Well, yes. when I left there.

SD: How old were you then?

BS: I was around 19, and so, as I said I could write books, you know the struggles here for your Union and as a delegate to the Labour Council you became aware of all the things going on.

SD: When did you marry then?

BS: Three years later.

SD: And how did you meet your husband, through the Union Movement?

BS: <sup>Yes, the</sup> Union Movement.

SD: So, when you came to Vancouver, you first worked as a domestic and then you worked in a restaurant. What were the conditions like in the restaurant?

BS: Hours and hours of hard work. 25¢ an hour. And first of all to learn the trade, it's a tough job, it's not, you know, I'm watching girls today with 5" heels and some of them look like prostitutes, frankly. What they are doing is ruining conditions on the job, to even deem to go around wearing 5" high heels, on the job and working on rugs, because in

BS: (cont)...five years from now they are going to have varicose veins *they won't* believe. You know, the stupidity. And they have been breaking down conditions right and left. Glamorizing on the job, *It is tough, hard work, But I loved it.*

SD: What would you do as a waitress?

BS: <sup>You</sup> Worked shifts. I never worked in a house that didn't work around the clock. I worked at the Melrose, I was there 8½ years. I worked at *Love's Cafe* for 18½ years. These are restaurants you don't know because they are gone. But any of the old-timers that know decent restaurants, these were terrific shops. Then I worked 2½ years on Skid Road, in that restaurant called the Garbo. Scandinavian people had it and it's where the Army and Navy is now on Cordova. And the unemployed, the fishermen, loggers and unemployed and seamen came in and I'm telling you, what a conniving set-up. The woman, the husband was alright to work for, the wife was a bit of a chiseler. For instance, we were going to see the show, "Gone with the Wind" and so I'd to come right as soon as I finished work, I wasn't going to eat, and Bill said, "you're late". I said "I can't be, I slipped right out of the shop." And away we went. And the next night when I was on the job, I happened to walk in the kitchen, turned around and came out and here I caught the madame setting the clock back. So that explained it, you see, I wasn't aware. But this was what was happening. Cause he used to say quite often, "You're late,.."

SD: You couldn't understand why.

BS: No, how could I be late? So, anyway the unemployed came in. OH, I could write books about it. There was old, old people. I used to get quite a bang...I'd go to the Fisherman's Hall =

BS: (cont)...there would be functions of some sort there and somebody would come up and talk to me, and I wouldn't know who in the world it was, and they'd say, you don't remember me, you used to serve me when I was in the Garbo. They were much younger then, but now they're quite old.

SD: So, would you have a chance to really talk to the guys that would come in?

BS: Never turned anybody down who said he had no money. And I used to get a meal ticket, and I'd take it up to her and get her to stamp it, and she'd say "You're feedin' all the bums." And I said "Yes, Mrs. Jackson, isn't funny that a bum gets hungry." And I started to laugh. Do you know why? It took me back to when I was a youngster. We lived in Buffalo, we lived in Chicago and then we moved to Buffalo. And the Buffalo highway used to be just streaming with men, gangs of men. [Now, I didn't know what that was all about, didn't understand it at all, but I know now what it was.] It was the unemployed of the First World War. There was tremendous unemployment then, and they used to walk up and down the highway. They'd have ukuleles, banjos and mouth organs in those days [and you know] every once in awhile they'd have them and they'd be playing them as they walked up and down. They used to come up to the house and they'd ask for food. Mother used to pan-fry big batches of fried bread, which is delicious with fruit. We'd put out crates of apples. So I remember a lady coming up to my mother and said to her that she was feeding all the "niggers", and that day Negroes - there were Negroes amongst them and Mother said, "Yes, Mrs. Schmidt, isn't it funny but the "nigger" gets hungry too." And you know, I've never forgotten that.

BS: (cont)..I remember one time there was a little Indian boy, and I was saying "Nichie, nichie, nichie " - nichie is Indian in German. And I got "Nichie" on my backside so that I couldn't sit down well for a week. My mother, she says "I'll "nichie" you".

SD: So your mother was progressive: *in her attitudes?*

BS: Progressive and didn't know it. You know she was progressive in a way that you know, you never forgot, *my mother was* Just cause you were home, you were expected to work just like anyone else. And there was no nonsense about it. [She'd used to say "I'll break every bone in your body before I let you grow up to be a useless hulk on society." My mother never had a days schooling in her life and I have often marvelled at the words she used. And that "blueprint" *I joined the Girl Guides.*

And I remember them talking about Girl Guide duties, you know, do a good turn every day and I used to get quite a bang out of it. They never knew quite why I laughed every time I heard that word, because Mother was very emphatic on help. [She stood for no nonsense, where to help. *For instance,* a child, like on the bus...I see people today are so shameless about allowing children to occupy a seat when adults are standing. And I remember I was on a bus not too long ago and there was a Negro woman with two children and the little boy must have been 3, or 4. He was sprawled right across the seat and the bus was packed, and there was some old age people got on, and she was breast feeding this one baby on the bus. And instead of calling the little fellow over, and having him lean on her lap, or whatever, she just left him there. And so an old man came along and just hoisted him up, and that was it. He sat down. But, you know, my mother would brook no such nonsense. She'd say "Get up

BS: (cont)...and give the seat to someone, you know, whoever was standing, waiting". You know how a child is, demure, about it. My mother says, "Get up and give the seat". And if you sat any more, I'd hate to tell you what happened.

SD: You wouldn't be able to sit any more...

BS: And then if you got in the doorway, woe betide you, that was it.

SD: In the restaurant, where you were working in the '30's, were there mostly other women who worked there, or were there men and women?

BS: No, ] there was an occasional waiter that would work night shift, but in one restaurant, we had a waiter and he had a habit of drinking, and didn't show up. Now you never walk off your station if it's not covered, you see. You have to have a station covered at all times. So, I find myself working 16 hours, and by the time the morning rolled around, you'd put a zipper on your tongue, because when you're tired you're apt to say something that you don't mean to say...oh, I could write books.]

SD: Were these large places you worked in.

BS: Yes, yes places that worked around the clock.] In fact the Melrose had a top room, the Gold room, there was dances there every Saturday night and dinners Sunday and when the house was overfull, <sup>then</sup> we'd open the Gold room. And then there was a Mezzanine Floor and then the Main Floor, and oh, it was a busy house.] We worked around the clock in it, and I could write books about the people. I like people, I don't...there was one man that used to come in there. What was a miserable coot. ] and I've never quite understood it.] He had a couple of our girls laid off because of him. ] And he was an old man and he was rude as rude could be. ] and I remember Tom demanded a letter of apology from me for this man. I said, "Never!"

BS: (cont)...He said Mr. So and So was a friend of Mrs. <sup>Sidis</sup> and myself. I said "Tom, that man's no friend of yours". During the war he had some connection in the <sup>ship</sup> yard, or thought he did, and he had a couple of girls laid off there, because of his actions. So I took it up to the Local, and I said to Tom "No". So I went up to Love's Cafe, next day I was supposed to come to work and I was to have a letter of apology.

Needless to say, I didn't give the letter of apology and I went up to work at Love's Cafe, because when I went to come to work, he still insisted on a letter of apology. So I just went up to Love's Cafe, and I started work there. I was there 2½ years and he <sup>he was</sup> walked in one day. And believe it or not, I was fired the next day. He, so, when Tom saw me, he says "Lady I never meant you to go." I says, "You didn't mean me to go, but you demanded something which I was not about to give." So, I told Tom some of the antics of this clown. He'd come in, sit at the counter, open a newspaper, and clean his hair, clean the <sup>brush or</sup> comb...have you seen somebody cleaning a comb in a restaurant. Well, you know <sup>that is just</sup> absolutely out. And I told Tom what he was doing, and naturally the people took exception to seeing this and I didn't blame them one bit. So, he, the man...there was three men that owned the shop, two worked in the kitchen and Tom was the other one. So I told Mike what was going on, he was in the kitchen. And Mike, he'd <sup>(hed)</sup> got Mike a job, his son a job = his name was Mike too, and I thought "That's odd" because you know, all able bodied men that couldn't go overseas, had to go in industry. Even my own husband who couldn't go to war because he only had the sight of one eye, had to go in the shipyard. And this Mike was just a boy, you know, a young fellow, army age. And I

BS: (cont)..thought "Gee that's funny". So anyways, I'm not about to do anything about it, but I would not give that letter of apology. So do you know what I did when I left Love's, I went down to Woodward's. I still retained my membership. I worked in union Shops, worked in non-union shops, I still retained my membership at all times. And so, low and behold if Mr. <sup>Mr. [redacted]</sup> didn't come down to Woodward's, and I pretended that I didn't see him. I thought, I don't know what is behind all this, but I'm not giving no letter of apology. You see how they operated? So, anyway, the set up of the city at that stage <sup>in the 1940s,</sup> was really unbelievable. 4:00 o'clock in the morning, you'd have thought it was 12:00 o'clock noon. All the prostitutes in that neighbourhood, you know, up there on Robson Street..and their cronies and what-not all come into Love's Cafe at 4:00 in the morning.

SD: This was in the '40's?

BS: Yes. and had their breakfast. You'd have thought it was 12:00 noon. I could write books about restaurants. But one of the things that happened at the Melrose, was White Christmas, when it came out, I heard it for 16 hours straight. See, New Year's night, we worked double shifts, and I could hear White Christmas when I walked in the door and when I left the next morning, 16 hours later. Somebody put the record on again. It never stopped for 16 hours straight. I wrote..what was his name, <sup>Bing Crosby,</sup> Cosby, a letter when he was in the hospital and I told him for somebody who had suffer 16 hours of White Christmas, I says, "you've got to get well, this is a command." And he sent me a beautiful letter. With all the good wishes and the prayers and the command, and he underlined command, he said that he was going to get well and he did at that time.

SD: Were waitresses concerned about the kind of conditions in the restaurants in terms of health?

BS: Union restaurants, but not that I know about the others.

Because the conditions in some of the shops were deplorable.

And of course, the Union at all times was the key note for

care. See, I was a business agent in my union one year, and

as I said, I might not have set the world on fire, but I'll

tell you when I handed the office over to the Local, every-

thing was in order. So. I laugh, this was during the war,

and we worked tremendous hours then, and very hard. Restaurants,

<sup>shops that were</sup> these were open 24 hours, around the clock you see. So you

didn't get any, much chance of dragging your heels,

Because the places were packed. Love's was a place that the

whole uptown and show people, and there was an opera group that

was next door, so all these people came into Love's and the

food was out of this world. So you really worked around the

clock.

SD: And so it was almost all women that worked in these places.

Were there busboys?

BS: No, there were waiters.

SD: Were there differences in the wages between what the men would receive and what the women would receive?

BS: No, the pay is the same. <sup>for women + men</sup> That is in Union Houses.

SD: How about in non-Union houses.

BS: Non-union were lower.

SD: Right, for women.?

BS: But, if you couldn't get them to join, what could you do. I remember an incident that took place every time that I came down. I loved Chinatown in those days, it was so new to me, and the whole Skid Row was fascinating to me. It was tremendous

BS: (cont)..activity down there. And there were street demonstrations, you know, where people were. I can't remember the name of this particular person, but he had there were talkers, you know, all sorts of activities on the Skidrow, and it was interesting and I loved Chinatown in those days, it was so fascinating to me. But every time I happened to pass a particular shop, Tommy Nelson who was the secretary of the Labour Defense League, used to. we lived in the same building and Tom would get off just at about the time that I was going home. And so, if I passed by, and he was there, well, we'd walk home to the same block. We lived on the same floor. I lived in this alcove and Tom lived in the other. So, and every time we passed a particular restaurant that was down there, we saw, what appeared, the girls always seemed to be having an issue with the manager over something. So, when I got, I got let out of a shop because I had been on a picket line, and so...

BD: That was your first job?

BS: Yes, and so, I was free that moment, so I went and applied for a job at this place, because it had a sign, "girl wanted," and I went in and the lady, the man's wife, she was white, he was oriental, and she hired me. She says, "bring your knitting." Boy, as soon as she said that, I knew something was wrong. Bring my knitting in a restaurant! So, anyways, I came to work in the morning and I didn't tell Bill, and so I walked in and the place was like a pig sty. I couldn't believe it, it was filthy. So, there was very few customers in the daytime, but every time you waited on somebody, you had to make a slip and put it on this peg. So I washed the salt and peppers and cleaned the counter, and cleaned this that and the other and

BS: (cont)..left the place meticulous. I was embarrassed working down there, I felt like I was in a foreign country. You get that feeling. So anyways, the woman kept <sup>constantly</sup> saying, "I recognize you from somewhere". And there was very few people actually came in. So, the trade was all at night. So when I came in the day, pay day, she said that I had to come and see her husband to get the money. And, when she walked in, I saw her taking the slips off of the pegs, and put them in her pocket, in her purse. And she said to me, "Here's the slips." And I said, "I saw you put them in your purse." And now, that was fatal mistake number one, I shouldn't have let on that I'd even seen her do it. So anyway, I came to pick my pay up that night, but before I did I phoned Bill to tell him what I'd done. Boy, did he ball me out <sup>for</sup> working in Chinatown. White women aren't supposed to..you know, union members aren't supposed to be down there. So, anyways that was the turning point. I came in to get the pay, and Bill came up and he spoke for me, and he said that he was in to collect the money for Barbara Stewart, at that time it was Gale, <sup>then</sup> and he <sup>and</sup> the manager, Do you know what he was doing? When those kids used to come in for their money, he was chiselling them out of their money.

SD: And that's why there was so much conflict?

BS: Yes, that's what it was all about.

SD: So, had you gone in there to find out what the conditions were like.

BS: Yes.

SD: So that you might organize?

BS: YES, but..No, I wasn't worried about organizing. When I walked in this particular morning, I took a wrong turn and found that it

BS: (cont)..was a house of prostitution. I had a drunk Chinese,  
under the influence of narcotics...you know that type of  
nonsense. His arms going all over, and I kept looking and  
you know, this is all so new to me, and I could see the  
waitresses..that I had only caught a glimpse of once in a  
while and I wondered where on the earth they went to, it  
was in the back part of the shop...

BS: Oh, I didn't tell you what happened. He, (Bill said that what the pay was and this fellow near wet his <sup>pants,</sup> (laughter), And he also had to pay for my apron.) Well that was the last straw. He almost folded in. He got, he spent seven years in jail. It was a house of prostitution at the back. Even the cook was under the influence of narcotics and he was sitting there in a chair with a great big long pipe.

SD: Was it opium?

BS: Yes. And he spent seven years in jail and the wife she said, I thought I recognized you from somewhere - the Trocadero Cafe. Well that has nothing to do with me if she recognized me. She was also prepared to send me down the river when she took the tickets off the peg, and asked me where they were. I just happened to see her, and of course I was so naïve I told her, where I should have just held it in, you know.

SD: Did white women as a rule not work in Chinese Restaurants?

BS: White women up until that time worked in Chinatown and after that it was forbidden by law.

SD: Why was that?

BS: Well, because they were in there, they were acting as prostitutes and all sorts of nonsense. A lot of skullduggery going on that wasn't very good, so they made <sup>white</sup> women get out of there, and you never see white women work there.

SD: So Chinese women could though?

BS: Well, there is Chinese women here and there, but as a general rule you don't see any white women work down there. It's a good idea. I don't mean to imply that they are not on the up and up, but I don't believe white women should be working down there. Because they were being used really.

SD: So, was it 1936 that that legislation came in?

BS: No, <sup>the legislation</sup> it came in about '37. [ It was in that period that...

SD: And did the Union support that legislation. <sup>copy</sup>

BS: Sure. Yes, <sup>the union supported it</sup> because women were being used. [ You know that, in essence that is what it amount~~ed~~ to.

SD: Did the women that worked in the restaurants get along with each other well? The waitresses?

BS: Oh, I think so. Yes.

SD: Did people tip in those days?

BS: [ Yes and no. Depending on where you worked. ] I remember the first tip I ever got, I threw it at the person. [ Because ] I didn't know what it was, I felt like I was being insulted, [ don't ask me why, it sounds ridiculous. ] But tips wasn't the main objective. Working <sup>and</sup> wages was the main objective. I apologized to the person after because <sup>s</sup>he looked so hurt. [ and I didn't mean to hurt her, and I told her that I didn't understand because I was so green about this I didn't understand. So she smiled after, but at the time I was insulted. Not knowing what it was. It's just like ] a man inadvertently <sup>give</sup> me a twenty dollar bill thinking he was giving me a dollar. So I sidled up to him and I says " I think you've made a mistake here haven't you, " and I showed him the bill and he near flipped. He had meant to give me a dollar. [ And inadvertently gave me a twenty. ] Oh, sure, I could have kept the twenty, but that's not the idea. It's hurtful, because somebody meant well. [ Tips wasn't the objective, work<sup>and</sup> wages was the objective. ] I used to wait on a man in Melrose Cafe [ and, this is just some of the little peculiarities you run into, ] he came in from [ a hotel, rather ] an insurance business, <sup>and</sup> they had alot of women work in the field, so then they'd meet at night and have a coffee [ and whatever ] and talk over their work. <sup>And</sup> he'd throw a bill on the table, you

BS: (cont) know, big deal. They'd all walk out ahead of him, <sup>and</sup> then he'd pick the <sup>up</sup> bill and walk out after them. And I used to get the biggest bang out of that, it didn't hurt my feelings. But what amused me was that he brought 15 women you see, in relation to this work, and so I used to like the flair, you know, he'd ~~boss~~ this money on the table, <sup>then walk out and</sup> then pick it up.

Well, this is some of the people you meet.

SD: Did the women that worked in the restaurant...in the 1930's it must have been really hard to find a job. <sup>Was</sup> it difficult to find work in the restaurant, was there a turnover?

BS: Any I met...it's a hard working trade, and I met the old timers when I worked in the Melrose. <sup>Of course</sup> I was green to the work, and what I did notice was, you know you hand the tips over to them because it was their tip, and they had a habit of sort of walking all over you at that stage, but by and large it was up to you to find your pace to work with them. So, you don't go out of your way to create any problems. You work with them, and I found by and large them pretty good.

SD: Was it hard to get on though in the restaurants, because of the level of unemployment?

BS: No, there was always work and girls needed.

SD: Did you do training?

BS: It's a job where you have to, you learn as you go along. You're acting as a bus girl at first, and it's up to you. If you're a good person in housework, you can get on with the trade. But it's not a job that you can treat lightly, because it's hard work. <sup>ing</sup> And a skilled girl can work her way around a place like mad.

SD: Were most of the women who worked during the depression and then later, during the Second World War, married or..?

BS: There was a lot of them that were married, and [everybody] was working. They had to.

SD: [You continued to work once you were married?

BS: Yes, I did. Well, you know, just because Bill <sup>(my husband)</sup> was working, the pay wasn't high at that stage. So you worked.

SD: What did he do?

BS: He was a business agent of the Union.

SD: Of the Hotel Restaurant Union?

BS: Yes. The pay wasn't high at that stage. I remember when I took over it was \$25.00 a week. That may seem like a lot of money, but considering that you were travelling all over by foot, and you covered the whole trade, the whole industry, it wasn't easy.

SD: Did you have any children?

BS: No, no children.

SD: And did you do most of the work around the house. So you were both working and sort of maintaining your home?

BS: Well, I did because the drain, and Bill became an officer of the Marine Workers Union...I worked up until I got arthritis in my shoulder and I had to...<sup>B.S. Yes.</sup> One morning I woke up and I had arthritis in my spine. That finished me for work. [And that is another story.

SD: Did you in part get those -- were those occupational diseases?

BS: Yes, that was, [as they said,] the strain on arms and shoulders.

[You know, when you do this kind of work,] it's tremendous heavy work, and we worked so steady that there is no let up, <sup>in it</sup> you know, that kind of thing,] and this was an aftermath of work. [Not only that,] your diet has a bearing on it and you didn't always watch your diet.

SD: You would get food as part of the job?

BS: Yes, oh yes, you ate in the restaurant you worked in, but I walked in the basement one time, I was sent down to get something, vinegar or something, and got the shock of my life. There's a barrel of carrots, potatoes, turnips, beats, whatever. Sitting in water right up to the rim. Well, that's for next day. And then that water is drained out, and all the good of you vegetables is drained out. So what you are actually getting is food where all the good of the food is washed out. And, you know, I worked in restaurants for sixteen years. I have a terrible calcium problem. I, if I went into a new house, I was in immediate trouble because lack of calcium is something that, if you have ever had that problem, I could write books about it. And it <sup>was</sup> affected through the food you ate. And, see, this is all too prevalent, this business of food being washed out of the vegetables. And so, when I got arthritis, I had to quit. But, I did all the housework because I know the business agent that has my husband's job now, his wife's chief complaint is that he never takes the garbage out. We were married 37 years and Bill never took the garbage out. I made darn sure he didn't 'cause I took it out. You see how something seems so important to one person and to me it is ridiculous. Because, as I said, to her, she has no concept of what her husband is undergoing. The tremendous pressures that he goes under. And a woman, I think, can handle this a little bit better than some men. You know, aside from everything, I know the fellows in the unions, and it's not easy.

SD: Did the job and the work change during the Second World War and the kind of people who worked in restaurants.

BS: No, we were organized fairly well. The organization level <sup>by itself</sup> at that

BS: (cont) time] was very high, and you worked hard. There were inner problems that happened between <sup>the</sup> International and the local here, but nothing that we couldn't handle.

[SD: How did you personally get involved in trade unionism?

BS: Well, when I worked in the restaurant, when I started in the Union, it was...yes. See, the man that sent me on the job in the first place was organizing to cut unions out. And he sent me to ~~the~~ restaurant not knowing that I was close to the movement.

SD: You had already become sympathetic to the trade unions?

BS: Oh, yes. I had, from '34 on. [ ] Not that I was unaware of them, but then when I became involved, I never said anything to him. ] He sent me on the first contact and I got a job. [ And from there on, you know, it was up to you. ] You'd be prepared to work, and at all times when you are on the job, you are there as a member of the Union. So you keep it on a pretty high level. And that ~~is~~ up to you to find your way to work, and with the people you work, and with the people you come in contact. [ I had no problem that way. I found that even if I got laid off, so...carry on. I didn't get laid off too many times, but as I said, that incident at the Melrose should never have happened because of Tom's stupidity thinking that I was going to just calmly say, you know, apologize...for what? For a man that was responsible for two of our girls being laid off? That was inexcusable, there is no need of that to have happened. It was a darn shame. That [ ] kid couldn't speak for herself, you know, she was young and she didn't have the experience that we had and what's it like.

(tea conversation)

SD: When we talk about 1934, what kind of <sup>influences</sup> made you

SD: (cont)...move towards that kind of sympathetic...

BS: I came into the movement - are you conversant with Communist Party?

SD: Well, I've met people who are active in it.

BS: Well, at that time, <sup>In 1934</sup> I met a member of the Communist Party.

[Very wonderful person.] And talked about conditions. [And, oh, I was so green. I didn't know the complex things that were going on at that time. And] through him, <sup>+</sup> became conversant with the things that were happening, and that's how I became involved in the attack on <sup>in Bogina</sup> Market Square. [And shocking,] I couldn't believe that such a thing could truly happen.

SD: So you entered trade unionism as a woman who already had a political perspective.

BS: Well, a perspective of what took place there. Once you saw. And then, too, ] there was the terrible things that were happening, people were being [evicted. [And we'd gang up] - evicted out on the sidewalk, children and all - [and] the whole gang of us would go and march everything back into the house. The sheriff would be there, oh it was despicable, the things that were done to people, and that were so wrong. And no one to turn to. <sup>You'd find</sup> find a family out on the street, children and all, <sup>even</sup> babies. It was bad enough with no food, let alone with no shelter.

SD: [Who did the initial organizing of the Unions in the Hotel Industry? Was it the Workers Unity League who did that work in Vancouver?

BS: No, the Workers Unity League, the role they played, I became aware of them. There was a family in front of..I came along in front of Woodward's Store, at that time the Worker's Unity League was up in the flat block, [and much to my horror, there was a family on the street.] The mother was pregnant and four

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BS: (Cont)...little children , and the father was standing there, and they were appealing for help. They had no relief, no food, nothing. [And this was a Saturday, and Tommy Nelson was in the office. (Tom<sup>le</sup> was the Secretary of the <sup>Woburn</sup> Unity League at that time. [And I ran up to the office and I said, "Tom there a family out here". Jack Phillips, have you heard of Jack Phillips - he was about 19 years old then, and so was I, this happened in the fall of '36 - and Jack was with this family.] I ran up to the office and told Tom what was going on down there with the family appealing for help and Tommy immediately ran off a bunch of leaflets on the mimeograph machine and next thing I had a bundle of sheets and "Get get down there, <sup>we'll</sup> hand them out!" Tom came out, so he <sup>Tom</sup> went to help the family. Just then the Police Department came up, and I remember people lined up on the street, all booing the Police. The police picked up the family. So I went with Tom up to the police station, but before that, I'm standing there with the leaflets, I don't know what to do with them, I'm scared to hand them out. Just then a woman grabbed a leaflet and with that I started handing them out. [I was so busy by the time the police had gone <sup>So</sup> Tom and I walked up to the police station. He introduced himself [and so] I sat and waited. [Then] the man who owned the Hastings Bakery at the time was close to the <sup>CP</sup> movement, and put up bail for people who required it, (you know, <sup>in the</sup> labour field. He put up bail for this family and it took until about 9:00 <sup>o'clock</sup> that night before we could get this thing cleared. The judge was on holiday, [and] he had gone to his summer home which was [somewhere,] either at [that <sup>time</sup> time] Deep Cove, or Horseshoe Bay, [or whatever.] Somewhere, now I have forgotten in the meantime, it was so long ago. But,

BS: (cont)...it took till <sup>that</sup> time to get this thing cleared.]

And the family were released and fed, [and all of the other things that go along with it.]

[SD: Would they be arrested for non-payment of rent?]

BS: No, no, it wasn't that. <sup>They were arrested by</sup> They were begging. [This was the term.] <sup>But they had no food!</sup>

Tom and I went to the house the next day, you could have eaten off the floor. [Have you heard of Jimmy Bainon? Well, you know, it was years later at a meeting, a lady kept talking to me. She says, "you don't remember me". I looked at her, and I didn't know her from a hole in the wall. She says, "I'm the lady that was out in front of Woodward's with my family." And her daughter by this time was quite grown.] The one she was carrying at the time, <sup>the daughter</sup> she was a little mentally retarded and that was because <sup>Malnutrition and</sup> she couldn't get food. And the terrible worries and strain of that time. And so, I was at her 75th birthday. We went out, neighbours of hers, old friends..we went out to where they are now. They live in a camp, you know where they have cars.

SD: Trailers.

BS: Yes, trailer camp. She's out there. Her husband died last year. And it is kind of sad. As soon as they went out there, he died. So, she is pretty lonely, but she has a lovely family.

BD: So, the Worker's Unity League would be involved in meeting the unemployed struggles and defending...?

BS: Right. At that time, Tom took care of the details of that.

SD: Did it do any organizing of workers who were into Unions?

BS: Yes, oh yes.

SD: What kind of organizing?

BS; Well, it was for people that got into problems. That type of thing. Not in the Unions, the Union looks after their own in that respect.

BS: (cont)...But families that had problems, You know, like labour problems. Generally, this is the role of the Labour Defense League.

SD: What about the Worker's Unity? Did they organize communication workers, or domestics, or...

BS: No, not that I know.

SD: Right, O.K. Was there organizing going on during the 1930's of domestic workers?

BS; There was from the Labour Council side. I just forget their names. She is still in the Trade Union Movement. She was active in that role. She is now quite on in years.

SD: Helena Gutteridge.

BS: Helen Gutteridge- She's now passed away. I can't think of her name at the moment. She is still in the Labour Council. She was active for years. But, oh, there has been tremendous things happen. Some marvelous people have played a tremendous role. Harold Pritchett was in the logging movement<sup>the</sup> Woodworkers, some wonderful people have passed on.

SD: So when you actually got involved with the union, it was through working in a Union place, and then what kind of difference did the Union make to the kind of conditions on the job?

BS: Oh, tremendous.

SD: Can you describe that for me?

BS: <sup>The aprons</sup> For one thing, the hours, they ultimately changed it so that workers cannot get off after 2:00 in the morning without transportation. The conditions of work...the whole decorum has been changed. And <sup>The union</sup> they have made it a work that is feasible to work in. The other way, it was grim. Like, getting off at 4:00<sup>o'clock</sup> in the morning with no transportation. At that time, I worked in a shop

BS: (cont)...on Main Street. Now, the police would drive you home.

They'd come into the coffee shop around 4:00. They would drive you home. But sometimes things would happen, whereby they couldn't be in the shop, Sooner than let you walk, they'll drive you home. But, they couldn't do it, because there was some problem, so you ended up by walking, well...let me tell you that is another story. You know, you can walk into all sorts of problems. I remember I got off...my shift at Love's was I got off at 4:00. <sup>from my shift at Love's</sup> Now, there is no transportation, and I lived in North Van. So what I would do is wait for the first bus and then take it to the ferry. Otherwise you walked. Now if you walked this is when you found all sorts of things. People in the ditches, in the doorways. It was unbelievable what you saw.

SD: Was it frightening?

(Laughs.)

BS: YOU better believe it. You see a man lying there and there is nobody around. No place to phone. So you go out on the road and bang somebody down if you can to phone for you, and hope to heaven they would do it. Or try and find a place where you could phone from. You know, that's frightening. You can't leave them along, because somebody will come along and roll them, whatever. And children are another thing. Not that children are out at that hour. But say it is at night, out somewhere where children are. Now they don't mean to be unkind, I know they don't, but they don't realize that they are being sadistic. They do all sorts of cruel things, just shocking. I know a man came along one morning, on his way home. At that time I lived up at West 14th, <sup>up in</sup> Kitsilano. He's on his way home. O.K., I ended up in the churchyard of St. Augustus Church, up that way, and he wants to put his hands on my knee. Isays, "4:00 in the morning, and you want to put your hands on my knee! Come on, I couldn't

BS: (cont)... imagine anything more boring."

SD: [This was from a ride you had gotten?

BS: Yes, I'd accepted a lift. [And believe me, don't accept a lift. Anyways, 4:00 in the morning, I'm in St. Augustus Church (church, and he wants to put his hands on my knee. <sup>And I said,</sup> and of course, I'm building it up, "I couldn't imagine anything more boring." ] And I'm scared to death. But you can't let on. So then he wanted me to come home with him. [And] his wife was out of town. I says "Look, I would feel terrible going to some woman's home, knowing that she is out of town. I says, <sup>I'm working on this vein.</sup> "What will your neighbours think." You can talk yourself out of some things, it depends on how you deal with it. Not that you'll always succeed, but I did with this man. [So the net result was,] he let me out, and I'm walking home, and he's driving along side of me and keeping the light, which I thought was prohibited, shining right on me as I'm walking along. I was hoping to heaven that a policeman would come along that would investigate this, but he didn't. So I walked all the way home with that ~~crreep~~ <sup>with the</sup> light on me. [You see what you can fall into?]

SD: [Yes, it would make the question of hours of work a really important demand for waitress.

BS: It was. [We lost a girl,] we had a girl murdered at English Bay through this nonsense. [And the kid went to English Bay with some...whatever...] they never caught him. He got away with it, but we lost a girl. [And it just made you aware that it is terrible.] So the Union passed the law that no girl can be let off after 2:00 without transportation. Either you get a cab or you provide the transportation. And rightly so.

SD: Did you work on organising any restaurants that were unorganised. Can you talk about those things?

BS: Yes. I did, but I was so green at that time. We got the house organised and I thought, well, now the man won't... I don't know what my reasoning was, I've often thought about it since and laughed. I didn't come to work the next day. And the fellow balled me out. I said, I didn't think he wanted me. And when I think of how naive, you see how, even with your organising how you forget. Of course he had to take me back, but I... (Laughs)

SD: 'Cause you'd formed a union , you were protected...

BS: (laughter) But I, you know how I did that I'll never understand to this day. Anyways, I wouldn't have worked in the shop anyways. It wasn't my cup of tea.

SD: What place was that?

BS: Well, I forget the name of it now, but it was on Hastings St. You know where the Only Fish is...well, that's been the Union House for over 60 years.

SD: Are they still unionized?

BS: I don't know, I doubt it, 'cause I haven't seen Union

BS: (cont)...houses. This is something I am quite shocked at.

You never see a button. Seldom.

SD: Most of them have been lost.

*SIDE II:*

BS: Yes, I don't know what the score is. I'm going to go in one day and talk to Paddy for my own information. But we had union houses all over the place. We organized it, but it wasn't a house I would have worked in. I only went in there because I had about a week to spare, you know between a job. I worked in about five houses in the 16 year period. Because I didn't shift around from job to job. But sometimes, due to the nature of the work, we'd help out.

SD: Did the union send you in there to organize.

BS: Yes, Well, we utilized whoever was free at the moment. And so, I worked in the house and helped. And then...I wouldn't have worked in that house, it wasn't my cup of tea. I worked only houses that worked around the clock.

SD: How would they organize? Would there be organizers who were outside from the union and then someone inside who would sign up.

BS: *When you organized* No you worked from the inside out. *You* worked with the kids that you were working with, if you could rely on them. I went into one shop and, this in Horseshoe Bay, and I said to a girl... "When are you kids going to make this a Union House." It's the best house in Horseshoe Bay and it has been busy for all the years that I've been here, pretty near 40 years. And that clown walked up to the boss and told him. So he followed me around and kept talking about the union. *(Laughs)* So, I just ignored him, I thought to myself, "if you see who he has in there, it's a bunch of kids." He has no specified organized group of workers. However, it's such a busy house, it should have.....

*SD: Job categories?*

[ BS: (cont)...Yes, but however that's a minor detail now. But when I worked at Love's, my we worked, we were awfully busy in there. Love's and Melrose, of course you worked around the clock.

SD: Were there any strikes at restaurants in the '30's.

BS: Yes, <sup>of the 30s</sup> we had the first sit-down strike in the Melrose, and it lasted exactly six minutes.

[ SD: What were you demanding? ]

BS: <sup>We were demanding the union wage.</sup> The wage, and then there was the question of he wanted a waitress to wash the floor. Well, no waitress washes floors. You get a man to do that work. <sup>oh</sup> And that was over in six minutes.

[ SD: You just sat down? ]

BS: [ Yes. And the apron issue. Where we wore the same apron for six weeks. Tom was actually pretty good. He was on good terms. My husband had a very nice way with management. He wasn't the man that was unfair. He had a very nice way, he could talk to them, very understanding, very reasonable. And he had a nice way of putting it. Like, I know even the men at Cannon wrote me some beautiful letters about Bill, and they said what they liked about Bill. He always zeroed right in on their issue. And had a way of...you know, he was never unfair. After all, here is something else alot of people are not aware of. ] When you are organizing, dealing with management, you always have to look at their problem too. They have problems, and its not a one-sided street you see, you have to learn to work together. And if you don't do it you are out of luck.

SD: Were there strikes at the (White Lunch?)

BS: We had a girl who was let out there <sup>at the</sup> for six weeks, so we had

BS: (cont) a picket line up for six weeks to protect her job.

And ultimately, they took her back. But, the house was on the Unfair List at the Labour Council, so when I became business agent, I went to see Mr. Sorenson and I told him who I was and I said as a delegate to the Labour Council, I'd like to take their name off of that list. And see if we couldn't get together on making it a Union House. Well, we couldn't, but [then] we left it in a friendly state. Never fight these people, because that's not the answer. And we left it at that. [Now, I worked at Woodward's for 2½ years after I left Love's, and Mr. Love came to shop a few times, but I pretended I didn't see him. I thought "If you want to talk to me, you talk to me." And so, maybe I was wrong, maybe I wasn't, I don't know. But I just left it at that. So I worked at Woodward's for 2½ years, and got on very well there. And I was elected as the shop steward, and.. Mr..

SD: Was Woodward's organized?

BS: No, but I was elected as a shop steward from the group. But Mr. Leposki made darn sure I didn't go as a delegate, but he didn't say anything more.

SD: Who was Mr. Leposki?

BS: He was the manager of the restaurant. So, guess who we catered for at Christmas time? The Love's staff. Mr. Sorenson saw me, you know the dinner was at his house. When he saw me, he just went ~~like that,~~ he didn't say a thing. He kept it quiet, he didn't tell Mr. Leposki.

SD: What about The Only Fish and Chips. Did they, I heard there was a strike there as well during the '30's?

BS: No. The Only Fish has been a Union House for over 60 years.

SD: What other restaurants were struck?

BS: Oh, Scott's Cafe, we had a picket line up there. The Hotel Vancouver...

SD: Would people generally respect picket lines at Scott's, that kind of place? Did it depend on the clientele?

BS: Yes, up to a point. We had a picket line up at Hotel Vancouver for over 6 weeks. There was a picket line up at the Georgia. And, you know, the strata of people that go to the Georgia or the Hotel Vancouver, aren't easy people to deal with.

SD: In terms of support...

BS: No, they it was just shameless the way they'd walk in and out. We won the strikes nevertheless.

SD: Were they around certification?

BS: No, not necessarily...around the conditions that the union wanted and they settled the strike.

SD: Was it hard to get certification?

BS: No, not necessarily. I remember when I had the Trocedero, we organized that house...and Bill was the business agent..and I'm not quite sure how this - I've forgotten the details - how we had it reorganized again, but I remember Bengough was the president of the council, and he pitched right in there and got all those names, you know. And we had the agreement signed again. I was the business agent then. So we got another house at that time, but as I said, I might not have set the world on fire but, I kept everything intact for the local.

SD: So, did most waitresses support the idea of unionizing?

BS: They did in Union Houses. But, you know, alot of people, unorganized staff don't understand. And it takes alot of talking to get through to them.

SD: But it sounds almost like you were really on an organizing campaign in terms of...

BS: YOU are, always. See, because, you'll have girls that will come to work in a Union House, that aren't members of the union, and they have the understanding that they have to sign up within a given period of time. They are quite prepared to work with you, and get everything that you get for them, and don't want to join the union. [And, it's just been made quite clear to them, that they either join up or get out. That's it. They have no other recourse. [And we had some nice kids, there's always a strata of very nice people in the trade. And of course again, it is up to you to find you level to get on with people.]

SD: Was it during the 1930's that alot of the unionization spread through the restaurant industry?

BS: No, in the..Yes, in the '30's. We had, gosh, I have to give Bill credit for a tremendous amount of work. Very fine work.

SD: So, he would go around and organize and talk.

BS: Not only that, but he also had to deal with the beverage dispensers *people* ..the union itself, you see, 'cause it's a tough situation. The beverage dispensers, and the catering work together, but we have separate meetings and so every now and again a beverage dispenser will try and give you the business about going into *the beer parlours* I happen to know all the back business about the locals, so I can talk right up.

SD: So the union had jurisdiction over both. On the job.

BS: No, you don't have jurisdiction over the beverage dispensers, but you find your level to keep things...

SD: ...the two unions to work together.

BS: Yes, right. I remember the International man came here one time to fire one of our business agents. And I was really keen about

BS: (cont)...this, I was curious because I had never met any of our international people outside of one, and he's passed away since. So, here he walks in...we met at the Beverage Dispensers Hall...and I looked at him - he had a diamond pin in his cravat, and he had a cane with a dog's head and two diamond eyes and he had a diamond ring and this cravat thing here. Brother! very nice, so <sup>everybody</sup> they had their little say, and then I got up and I said I was delighted to meet our international man, and thought it was very nice of the Hawaii Local to have been so generous with him, and you know, delighted to meet him and all the rest of it, but I wasn't delighted with the idea that he was coming to fire a business agent who had done a terrific amount of work, and a very fine job. And if you can keep the union houses on the go, with no nonsense, you are doing all right.

SD: What year was this?

BS: I don't remember the year now. About, I'd just be hazarding a guess, but that happened about 10 years ago. And so, more than that - about 15 years ago. And so, I thought, you know, you come to lay off one of our people ~~was~~ kind of hitting below the belt.

SD: Was there an ongoing struggle between the International and the Union up here?

BS; They have it worded in this way. Bill, who was doing terrific work,...but you see, unions at that time were not as politically sharp. Alot of them are duds. And the International wanted rid of Bill. He was doing wonderful work.

SD: Because of his politics?

BS: Yes. And so they had it worded in this way. If he couldn't meet with the Beverage Dispensers, you know, be in cahoots with them...they had it worded very cleverly. So, Bill was out and

BS: (cont)...he went to the Marine workers. There was a big story behind that. And I don't remember all the details but anyways, Bill's done terrific work. It has been a tremendous loss to his union. Because he was something special. I'm not saying it because he was my husband, but he had a wonderful gift of knowing how to get on with people, and he knew what he was doing, and he always had the interests of the local at heart. And very much liked by everybody. He had that nice ability that, you know, some people had that charisma to be right, and other who are duds at it.

SD: So was the International successful?

BS: No, not at that stage. But anyways, there's been issues. A lot of people, I hear them today, I heard a trade union man from Canada say, "Oh, the thousands of dollars that are going to the States." That's not true. There is so much of your money goes, about a quarter from every dollar, and it is a strike fund set up. But to imply that there is more than that, it's not true.

SD: Did the Union change at all in the late '40's? Like, I know that the IWA and other unions...

BS: Had problems, tremendous problems.

SD: Did the union go through a similar kind of process?

BS: A little bit, but nothing that wasn't solved. After all, unions have all had their tough struggle. Some of them have even been put in jail on principal. I know Bill defied [the local on an issue,] the International on an issue, and to fight for a right. Spent one night in jail.

SD: What was that around?

Oct 23 <sup>rd</sup>	VD	p. 1-4 (and confer w/ w re. work to do)	10:00-1:00 ish
Oct 28	VD	p. 4-10	10:30-1:00 ish
Oct 30	VD	p. 11-19	1:00-3:30 ish
Nov 6	BS	p. 1-19	11:30-3:45
Nov 12	BS	p. 19-26	1:30-3:00
Nov 25	BS	p. 27-39	10:30-12:45
Dec 3	BS	p. 40-48	2:15-4:15 (to 5:15 composing a letter)

BS: I don't remember all the fine detail of it, but I know the lawyer phoned to tell me that this might happen and not to worry because he'd be out the next day. Sure enough, you know, I was warned and Bill warned me that this might happen. So one of the members of the union comes into Woodward's. Well, I near flipped, did a double take. Here he comes in, as the headline like that in the paper, and he comes in and he holds it up and he walks in to the dining room, I just about passed out.

SD: There goes your job...

BS: Oh, imagine doing that (laughter). It was just about an hour before quitting time and he walks in with this thing you know, to show me and oh, really, I near died. But the lawyer had phoned me and warned me that it might happen, so had Bill. But hadn't warned me about the tactics of this fellow coming in with a paper. That man's dead now, but I'll never forget that as long as I live. I just about passed out with shock.

SD: What kind of skills did organizers need?

BS: An <sup>organizers need</sup> understanding of the work, and an ability to talk, and feeling for the whole industry. [As I said,] It's not a one-way job, you're always taking in consideration of management in this. [So] There was nothing demanded that couldn't be given, and in the final end they gained anyways. I always think a Union House gains, because you've got organised staff and there's no nonsense about it. They know they've got to produce the work, because everything you do reflects on your union if you don't, and that's only correct. The man that has the shop that isn't unionized is a bit of a dud, because you're giving a little bit more pay, true, but you're dealing with an organization and it's not a one-way street. [You always have to look at the two

BS: (cont...)sides. And anyone that tells you 'NO', is not being truthful. So, I remember during the War, I got a call at 4:00 in the morning from Canrod<sup>n?</sup>. The girls were on strike. I says, 'What do you mean, you're on strike? There's a war on.' I says 'I'm coming right down'. I got a cab and I went down to Canrod.<sup>n?</sup> [And you know for the life of me I don't remember what silly thing,] it was some little argument between the girls; And I just rushed down there and I said 'There's a War on, there's no such a thing as a strike. And get that food on the go.' [Because] men were standing in a line-up waiting to get served, you know after all they only have so long. So the strike was on and off. (Laughter). We had many a laugh about it after, but it was no joke at the moment. [It was some silly clown thing between the girls. I'll never understand it. Because there is no such a thing as a strike on during the war. And gosh when I think of those years,] Our people did a terrific role in that war. [You know] When you consider the work done in the yards, and the war progressed with all the men on the job. [So,] It wasn't easy. When I think of the way we had to work in those days. I watch girls working today, and oh brother, they don't know what it's all about. I laugh at them prancing around with high heels, [and you know some of them look like they're...I laugh<sup>ed</sup> when I was up on Georgia, I felt like I was competing with some of the prostitutes going into the hotels, you know, to sell our tickets, and I can't believe it, I'm looking at them, and they've got high heels on, 5 inch heels and,] they look positively ridiculous.

SD: [I hate that stuff. In terms of organising, did you use to leaflet restaurants that were being organized.

BS: Leaflets? No, you talked to staff. You can't work with leaflets,

Barbara Silwan 3025-2 Page 30  
BS: (cont) [ ... ], you see, you talked to staff on the Q.T.

SD: Did you have public meetings ever?

BS: No, no, you met with them and chatted with them, that sort of thing.

SD: There was no legalization of Unions in the '30's, was there? Like, there was no laws that would protect you if you were organizing?

BS: No, you have a right to join a union, if you can get the house to go union, so much the better. But, no, this is all done in a quiet, friendly way, if you could get it that way. If not, if you got the majority to join the union, then the house either had to give in or fight.

SD: So, did the union you were in also encourage individual women to sign up and become members, even if their whole house wasn't. So that you'd have individual memberships?

BS: No, there is no such a thing as individual memberships. If you join, and if you can get the house to go one over 50%, you can get into the Union.

SD: Were there any employers who were particularly hostile to unionization?

<sup>BS</sup>  
BS: Oh, yes.

<sup>SD</sup>  
SD: What kind of things would they do to stop people from...

BS: Well, threaten to fire you for one thing, or, see, you had to get the majority. I remember one House where they came in and we had the majority, and the government checks every name against the book, and if you can show that you have over 50%, that carries. But if you haven't you're out of luck.

SD: Who would do the negotiations once you got...

BS: The business agent.

SD: And, was there a steward structure for the union? For shop stewards?

BS: Yes, where it was necessary.

SD: Was that mostly in larger places?

BS: Industrial, yes. And the union membership. And you had to have the majority in the house, you see.

SD: So, what kind of work would the stewards do in your union?

BS: Well, ] <sup>The steward</sup> they represent the local. And if you had a beef or problem, you went up to him and he is supposed to settle it.

[SD: Were there alot of grievances?

BS: No, nothing that you couldn't solve by discussing. Contrary to what you hear, you didn't go around batt~~ing~~ing people over the head. It's all done through talk.

SD: What kind of grievances would people have? Were there any common grievances in the restaurants?

BS: No, outside of conditions, ... work...

SD: Being forced to work extra overtime, and those kinds of things?

BS: Well, you're not forced, but it happens. You work to help out.

SD: What kind of issues were important in the contract? Did the union ever try and set up a hiring hall?

BS: No, it all ] <sup>Hiring</sup> comes through the union. If a manager needs extra help, all he does is phone the local.

SD: [So, when the union was in to the restaurants, they would in fact hire through the union, not just hire off the street?

BS: Yes, ] you can't hire off the street, you have to hire through the union.

SD: And was that a very important part of the contract?

BS: Oh yes, yes.

SD: Why was that demand brought out? Was it to ensure that people could change work places if they needed to?

BS: Well, ] you can change jobs if you want to, but if it's a union

BS: (cont)...house, the call comes through the union, you see, and they supply the help. Or, if somebody should perchance come into the shop, and as long as they are willing to join the union they can come in that way, [but sometimes somebody will come along and want the job, but doesn't want to join the union, well, he can't do that. He has to join.]

SD: Was there solidarity in the labour movement, like on the Labour Council with the attempts by the Hotel and Restaurant Union to organize? Did people support the organizing work that was being done and give financial assistance?

BS: On the Labour Council? Well, they support the conditions, but they don't have to play a role in providing the help as it were.

SD: Would they ever give money for organizing campaigns?

BS: No. Although there has been from time to time things that they have contributed to.

SD: How did the ...one of the things that your union did which I though was always really interesting, was to sort of create a boycott on restuarants that didn't comply with union conditions.

SD: Well, the way they do that is, if it's brought up, and there is some reason why something should be condemned, they bring it up in the council, and that's how it works.

SD: Like a blacklist, almost, of restaurants that won't...?

BS: Only if there's a call from a union about it.

SD: Was that really effective in the '30's and '40's.

BS: Yes, very much so.

SD: Was that because the people using those restaurants were often other trade unionists, who'd not go there if...?

BS: Well, if there's a shop that's on the 'unfair' list, then unions don't go. We speak against it and ask help.

SD: Would it mean that union drivers wouldn't deliver there?

BS: Not supposed to. If they do there's trouble.

SD: So did that help to force organization into those places?

BS: Yes, if there's a shop that is practising unfair tactics, and they appeal to the union, labour will protect...I see there is a shop, Muckamuck?

SD: Yes, they've been on strike for over a year.

BS: A year! Now, is that shop open?

SD: Yes.

BS: And who is working in there?

SD: Scabs. Non-union people.

BS: Now, isn't that unbelievable. Now, what does that mean? People are supporting that restaurant. Damn their hides.

END of INTERVIEW?