

Tape 1 (35) - Side 1

Q: Maybe we could start by you telling me some background about where and when you were born and how you came to Seattle.

A: Oh, I was born in south of the () in 1904, and my folks brought me out here () Mississippi in 1909. Then we settled in Burlington, () Washington. And we were there about six months and moved to Seattle.

Q: And what did your folks do? Why did they come out to Seattle?

A: Oh, my folks had a farm in South Dakota, it was pretty tough there. Tough winters and hot summers, () wiped out our whole crop and so my folks decided to leave.

Q: And so what did they do when they came to Seattle?

A: Well my father worked for the city. He was a laborer, () we had a little foreman trouble and then my father left and I went to school until I was, I wasn't quite 13 yet.

Q: Were you living with your mother then?

A: Yeah. That's right.

Q: Was she working outside of...

A: Then she got a job in the market, in a fruit stand there. And I was selling ().

Q: Starting at 13.

A: Yeah, I was only 13. I wasn't quite 13 yet. And I was making, I was pretty good at it. I () reading in the Times one day, () to get my papers and a foreman of the, of a pressroom, asked me if I wanted to come downstairs and work. And I told him, oh yeah, I'll try it, and that was in June of 1916. And I went in to work part time. And I was supposed to go to school, and I didn't, and so...

Q: That was working on the presses?

A: Yeah, that was.

Q: You were an apprentice then?

A: I started as a fly boy.

Q: What's that?

A: That's taking the papers and working the press. And I worked that way about six months. And they put me on a (). And I worked from that time, from June of

1916 to 1938. I got my journeyman card in 1933. No, 1923.

Q: When you were growing up, do you remember your folks discussing politics much?

A: No, I don't. No, ().

Q: Do you remember what newspapers they read?

A: Oh, () the Times.

Q: Do you remember the Union Record?

A: Oh, yes. In fact, I worked on it a few times.

Q: Oh, you did.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you or your parents ever read that?

A: Oh yes. We did.

Q: Was your regular paper the Times?

A: Yes sir. That's what...

Q: Not the record.

A: No, that, oh, well, we got it all the time.

Q: Oh, you did.

A: Yeah, we, oh yes, but see the () alot of the unions subscribed to it.

That's the way it worked, see. Alot of unions subscribed to it.

Q: So, at the time of the strike in 1919, you were working on the presses at the Times, is that right?

A: Yes, I was working on the presses on the Times.

Q: Do you remember why the strike was called, or who called it?

A: Well, it was, it's a long time to remember that.

Q: Really.

A: It was the (), the ship yards, you know, we had alot of ship yards back then, and it was mostly the crafts out, it was all of the crafts outside of the building trade union. And of course, I was so young then that I, I wasn't in this labor movement too much, see. And all those offices of our union, they were all filled by German (), see. So...

Q: Do you remember who called the strike, or...

A: As far as I can remember, the, our Central Labor Council called it.

Q: Do you remember before the strike started, when people were just talking about it, what did people expect it was going to be like, did they think it was going to be just a bigger strike than normal or a revolution, or what did people think it was going to be like?

A: Well, they, as far as I can recall, they thought it was going to be a real knock-down drag-out.

Q: A big strike.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did they think it was anything more than a strike?

A: Oh, no. They were just the working, the organized labor (). That's my interpretation of it.

Q: And what was it actually like? You told me a little bit before we put the tape on, but...

A: Well, of course, unlike () too much, because I wasn't involved in it too much because I, you know, was still working.

Q: You hadn't voted to support the general strike?

A: Oh, yeah. Sure we did.

Q: You did, so why were you still working?

A: Well, the, we were working because the employer said you can come down and sit there all day, don't work, and I'll draw your pay.

Q: Why did you do that?

A: Well, because we thought it was best for our future to do that.

Q: Yeah, but why did he tell you that he'd pay you even if you didn't...

A: Well, because he was one of these real good employers. And he didn't want us to go out on strike, and then he would probably lose some of his employees, and () they would probably leave or something. Our travelling cards that our union () worked in or anyplace, see. And that's why Col. Blackburn, he was a real good employer, see. And, it later turned out he was () a good employer, he spent too much money and around 1930 or so, he actively (). Because he just spent too much money.

Q: What did you think of the strike? Were you in favor of it, or...

A: Oh, yes. I was.

Q: How about your friends and family, most of the people you talked to, did people seem to think it was a good idea or a bad idea, or...?

A: Well, there's people thought it was, the workers wanted to get what they should get, it was good.

Q: Why did the other workers go out, other than the ship yard workers. Why did, when the ship yard workers came and asked for help, why did the other workers who weren't affected by the strike also go out, and make it into a general strike?

A: Well that was because you had unity in labor then, see. Which is something you haven't got now.

Q: They just went out for the sake of the ship yards?

A: Right. They went out in sympathy, see. When they all go out, that's a pretty effective strike.

Q: Do you remember if there was any violence during the strike?

A: There wasn't much, no.

Q: Do you remember the army or national guard or anyone coming in?

A: Well, now I'm not sure. I wouldn't say they did or they didn't.

Q: Who do you remember as the leaders of the strike? Was it mostly union people or IWW people, or...

A: Union people.

Q: And do you remember how long it lasted?

A: No, I'm not sure how long it lasted.

Q: Was it a long time, a couple of weeks or a couple of days, or...

A: Oh, I think it was four or five days, if I can recall it.

Q: Why did it end, do you remember?

A: Oh, well, the reason it ended, it was too much inconvenience for everybody. You couldn't even find a place to eat.

Q: Did you eat in any of the big dining halls that they set up, the striker's dining halls?

A: No, I didn't. My, our mom, my home was there, and it was only about four or five blocks from the Times, and so I didn't have to.

Q: During the strike, how did you get information about what was going on?

A: Well you got it through the strike headquarters at the Central Labor Council.

Q: That's where the headquarters were?

A: Yeah.

Q: That's not where the Labor Temple is now, is it?

A: No, uh-uh.

Q: But it wasn't over on First Avenue?

A: No. Not on First.

Q: Did you think that the general strike was worth it for labor?

A: Sure I did.

Q: Were there, did it affect your life or the life of the city in some ways?

A: Sure it affected it () but we had a good union city there for years and years.

Q: As a result of the strike?

A: Yes sir.

Q: How about, did it affect your own life, personally?

A: Oh well, it affected me in this way, but () I think a good union man.

Q: Uh-huh. Do you remember Olie Hansen?

A: Yes sir. I sure do.

Q: What do you remember about him?

A: Oh, he was mayor, kind of a hectic mayor.

Q: What do you mean?

A: Well, he had alot of hectic ideas.

Q: Do you remember Anna Luise Strong?

A: No, not very much about her.

Q: Do you remember anything about her at all?

A: She was supposed to be kind of radical. It's been so long ago, that it's kind of difficult

Q: Well, you're doing pretty well, it seems to me. Where did, how did you know her at all, how did you know her name?

A: Oh, through reading about her. Yeah.

Q: Reading about her in the papers, or...

A: That's right.

Q: Uh-huh. How about Jimmy Duncan.

A: Jimmy Duncan? I remember his name but I can't recall what he, what his...

Q: Do you remember any of those, Duncan or Strong or Hansen, in connection with the general strike, or do you remember other...

A: No, I don't.

Q: How about around that time, did you know people who were in the IWW?

A: No, I didn't. I wasn't associated with them. With those people.

Q: There weren't Wobblies working for the Times?

A: Oh, no. No.

Q: What was, if you think about the strike, what's the biggest impression that you have of it? What's the picture that you have in your mind when you think about the strike?

A: Well, the biggest impression I have is I don't believe there was any union in Seattle that didn't cooperate with the strike. And that is one of the biggest things that you can say. All, of all the organized labor in Seattle in that strike cooperated. I worked in the press room for 57 years. And I'm just as good a union man as I was 57 years ago.

Q: What did you do after the strike?

A: Oh, just the routine.

Q: Went back to working the presses and...

A: Oh, yeah. Sure.

Q: So you continued to work as a pressman for the next 57 years?

A: Sure.

Q: Was that, I think you told me before, it was about 20 years for the Times?

A: I worked 22 years with the Times.

Q: And then for other papers?

A: Then I left there and went to Butte, Montana. I worked there five years. From there I went down to Sacramento, California and worked there three or four years. I went to Portland on (). Then I finally came up here to () and I worked there for 36 years. And I retired in July, 1972.

Q: And now are you working...

A: No, I'm not working in the pressman at all.

Q: But as a salesman now?

A: No, I'm working as a gardener now. I went out and did (). Then she gave my name to somebody else. I did some work for that lady, and she gave my name to somebody. So for the last seven or eight months, that's all I've been doing. Then I've got 2,000 celery plants out here. That keeps me busy now.

Q: Really.

A: And I'm, well I'm still secretary of the () Council.

Q: I was just going to ask you what organizations you belong to.

A: Of course I still belong to my pressman's union. This Allied () Council is a kind of a job you, all you get is () for it, see. A lot of work. So I do that, and so I'm pretty busy.

Q: I'll bet. What other sorts of organizations did you belong to during your life?

A: Huh?

Q: Have you belonged to other organizations during your life, political or religious?

A: I belonged to the Moose quite a few years and I finally dropped it. (). So my wife, she got sick three or four years ago () heart surgery, ever since that night we haven't done much. All I've done is work. That keeps you very busy.

Q: You say that you remember the democratic () down here. Have you been a pretty active person politically?

A: Oh, yeah. I haven't tried to get publicity out of it, see.

Q: You've voted, and things like that?

A: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. ().

Q: Were you politically active in the days of the strike?

A: No.

Q: When did you start being politically active?

A: Just since we came to Tacoma. You know, I grew up () these candidates () their opinions, and I did the advertizing ^{in the shops} ~~in the shops~~ And since I started doing that they don't like me.

Q: Has there been a political leader in the last couple of years who you've felt spoke for you, represented you?

A: Oh, there's been quite a few of them, like Senator Jackson, and Magnuson, () the representative from the sixth district, () Vicks. Most of them () those in the early (), they always ~~fight~~ ^{write} back and say they're in favor of them. And, of course they always get the () votes, so I can tell whether they're lying or not.

Q: When you think back over the last 50 or 60 years, what do you think have been the most important events that have happened in this country or in the world?

A: Well, the, as far as the world is concerned, I think our country is just putting out too much money for other nations. And they say if we don't do it, we're not going to have a democracy any more. But I don't think that's true. I think they should take that, spend that money here and help people here. And for one thing I think we have a congress that's getting too much money and they don't think anything about the people that need things.

Q: What do you think is the most important issue facing the country today?

A: The most important issue is that this country has to help these people that are too poor. We've even got people here going hungry, yet we sent billions of dollars out of this country, and I think it's time that we (). We're such a great nation that we ought to shoulder the rest of the world, we're such a great nation.

Q: What do you like most about this country?

A: Well, why don't you ask me what I think is the worst problem?

Q: What do you think is worst?

A: Yeah.

Q: That was the next question.

A: Well, I think this country (), you and your vote. You can go out if you want

to do things, if you've got enough stuff to do it, you can do it. I'm still amazed, I'm never going to become senile.

Q: It looks like it. What do you like least about the country?

A: Well, I think our system of government isn't right. I think the government loses it's popularity, they should switch. They say we have a democratic government, but we have not got a democratic government. When I was in office, () lose the confidence of the people, I think they should quit.

Q: You mean like in the British system, or...

A: M-hmm.

Q: A vote of confidence?

A: Darn right. I think that's the way we should run it. And the sooner we get through it, I think the better off we'll be. Whoever is elected to office, should watch what they're doing. Well, that's the absolute truth. You take the () got a democratic congress and republican (). You're bound to have a bunch of squabbles. And that's the way it works. () the democratic president and congress, when they ^{don't} do what the people want, then I think () they should go out. A lot of years, () stock market and that, and your federal reserve system of (). It might be 1,000 years before ().

Q: What do you mean, the stock market...

A: Well, that's the whole, our stock market runs the whole country.

Q: Has there been anything in the news lately that made you feel especially mad?

Tape 1 (35) - Side 2

A: Oh, is this oil deal. They're going to start getting oil in 30 days now, down at (), and they haven't decided here where they're going have the oil port, and if they put it up by the gully here, it will go through Canada. And, they haven't got an oil refinery here to refine that oil. They just fool around and fool around. The state passes it back to the federal government, and the federal government passes it back to the state. They could have decided a long time ago, what to do, but they're too many people looking

for something.

Q: What great people, living or dead, do you admire most?

A: Oh, I admired Franklin D. Roosevelt very much, but of course what he came out and did really hurts the whole nation now.

Q: In what way?

A: Well, when you look at here we are, 500,000,000,000 dollars in debt, and who in the hell is ever going to pay it? Who is going to pay it? Still, they're dishing out this money right and left. One of these days something is going to happen. One of these days ().

Q: Do you think that most people can be trusted, or do you think that you can't be too careful with people?

A: Well, there seems to be a certain few that you can't trust.

Q: But most of them you can?

A: Most of them you can.

Q: Do you think most of the time people try to be helpful, or are they just looking out for themselves?

A: Oh, most of them try to be helpful. Like, I can give you my experience as far as trust is concerned, I go around all these ladies houses, working, and gee, they trust me anything. They want to give me a key to their house. Of course, I don't want anything that they got, and but, they're all very nice.

Q: Would most people try to take advantage of you if they had the chance, or would they try to be fair?

A: Oh, I would say about, maybe 95% would be fair.

Q: What did you think of the civil rights movement in the 50's and 60's?

A: Oh, that's as far as the blacks are concerned, I think they overdid it a little. Right now it's down to the (point) where there seems to be more blacks doing things than white people are now. Just like you turn on the T.V. set, every play, play there is, is black people in there. And some plays, there's all black people. And of course I think they went a little bit too far.

Q: What did you think about the student anti-war movement against the war in Viet Nam in the late 60's?

A: Well, of course, I, personally I didn't think they should have had a war there, but I didn't talk against it, or anything. I think these students had a pretty good cause.

Q: What do you think about the labor movement today?

A: I think it's real bad.

Q: Can you tell me why?

A: Why? Because 90% think about nothing but money. And I can say my union trade, the printing trade, they're () making \$335 a week. That's for 35 hours. And of course they get over time and everything. Well, of course, if they, their contract is up August 1st. They're ^{going out} ~~opting~~ for a \$15 a week raise. All they're going to do is price themselves out. Same on the Times and PI up in Seattle.

Q: By pricing themselves out, do you mean they'll hire other people, or...

A: Well, no, advertizing will be getting so high that the stores can't do it anymore, see. Big stores like (^{the Bon}), and (^{Frederick + Nelson}), they can probably do it, but they ().

We got a little beef down here now with the (^{labors}) union, (). They're both getting a (^{Ampted}) in Seattle now. And the lady here, she's going to lose her job. I sent a letter to the Allied Council asking to take the union label away from them, see. So I don't know how it'll win, but.

Q: What do you think about the women's movement?

A: Well, I haven't thought much about it.

Q: Do you think that what most young people need is strict discipline by their parents?

A: Yeah, I do.

Q: Do you think that most people who don't get ahead just don't have enough will power?

A: What?

Q: Do you think that a few strong leaders could make the country better than all the laws and the talking?

A: Yeah. I think so. If we had two or three leaders (^{with some good common sense}) ~~good~~ strong, () I think they could ^{really do something} ~~rule~~, I really do.

Q: People sometimes say an insult to your honor should not be forgotten. Do you agree with that?

A: No, I don't think so. I think that people say things sometimes that they ^{don't} really mean. ^{to say}

Q: How do you feel about the school desegregation issue in Seattle now?

A: Well, of course I remember years ago, we never had any trouble like that. White people, white kids and black kids went to school together, and there was never any beef. Of course they got, black people () all these beefs, and I don't see any reason for it. When we lived up in Seattle, there was black people living a couple of blocks from us, they, everybody was nice. They were nice to us, we were nice to them. But, (^{just as soon as}), they, in this big war that we had, they started moving ^{troops} ~~cooks~~ all over hell, and brought alot of blacks from the south in to Fort ^{Lowry} ~~Luise~~ here, well, after the war ended, alot of those guys liked this part of the country and they settled here. That's when we started having trouble. All the black people that were here before ~~us~~, we had no trouble with them.

Q: Do you think the general strike could happen today?

A: No.

Q: No conditions that you can see? Is there any condition which you could see, that you would support a general strike?

A: Well, if we, of course the set up now, that couldn't happen.

Q: Why is that?

A: Huh?

Q: Why is that, that it couldn't happen?

A: Because the teamster's don't belong in the AFLCIO. It couldn't possibly happen. Of course we, the people here get along with the teamster's. But this last, this first strike, well we just had, they didn't, the teamster's ().

Q: So, could you see yourself supporting a general strike?

A: Sure I would.

Q: What would it take for you to support one?

A: Well, I'd still support it, knowing all the unions got together.

Q: How necessary do you think employees are for running businesses? Could workers run businesses without employers?

A: No, I don't think so.

Q: How about these cooperative industries that they have, sometimes in which just the workers split the profits among themselves?

A: Oh, they're, some of them are good and some of them aren't.

Q: Have you read anything about the general strike, since those days?

A: No, I haven't.

Q: One thing I wanted to ask you earlier, do you have children?

A: I had one. One daughter.

Q: And what did she do?

A: Right now she's an office worker up in ~~Auburn~~ Everett.

Q: Has she always been an office worker?

A: Yeah.

END OF INTERVIEW.