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MEYER BAYLIN'S

ORAL HISTORY

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This oral history, Meyer Baylin's oral history, was delivered to the Regional Oral History Office by Meyer Baylin, age 89, in October 1993. He said the tapes had been recorded by his friend, Ernest Besig, retired director of the San Francisco American Civil Liberties Union, and transcribed by Baylin's grandson.

The text is scrambled and repetitive, but includes information that dovetails with other oral histories from that period.

Summary

Born 1907, Russia, to a poor Jewish grain merchant's family. Emigrated with family to New York City, San Antonio, Texas, Los Angeles. Young Communists League in Los Angeles, 1924, and UC Berkeley, 1928. Unemployed Councils in Los Angeles. Communist Party in Los Angeles, Long Beach, San Pedro.

New York City, 1935-1943 - organizing for Communist Party within the Teamsters Union. Electrician business in San Francisco. Comments on Harry Bridges, Tom Mooney, other leftists in San Francisco after 1943.

Meyer Baylin Oral History

Introduction

My life covers a relatively long period. I will be 89 years old on August 17, 1993. Much has happened in this world during these 89 years.

I had mainly completed this document- History during the last few years. The break down of Socialism as practiced in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European Countries. Our move to a full care house in Oakland in Nov. of 1992 giving up our home of thityseven years. In me there are still a few States existing- including China, Vietnam and North Korea. I am observing them and hope they learn by the mistakes made by the Soviet Union.

The move to Oakland has not been a happy one for me. Vera is Satisfied and that is important for me. I am working on this. I find that Vera has contributed much to my existence (life). Her attitude and actions have influenced me and kept me content. Her ability to understand my doings and accepting them has contributed much to the 68 years together.

The profound bad condition for much of humanity still effects me much, I wish I could still be active but I can't.

I want to thank my friend and (senior by two months) Ernie Besig, retired Law professor at San Franscico State University, and for many years head of Civil Liberty Union Organization of California, and for much of his time in listening to my doing. Both in California, New York City and Texas.

My activities were always to advance the human species to a better

life and relation with each other and a rejection of authoritarian actions and for Democratic socialist action.

The immediate period is gloomy and the prospects for it to get worse are on the horizon, especially the Economic situation for many of the people. My hope is that the violence and blood shed is avoided (for example Los Angeles riots and fires of 1987.)

Organization and Education must be the way out.

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I. Growing up in Russia and U.S.

Childhood in Russia: parents, siblings, family life, other events.

Emigrating to New York.

Living in New York.

Moving to Texas.

Q: Who are you?

A: I'm a man, at this time nearly 85 years of age.

Q: And where were you born?

A: I was born in Russia, now known as the Soviet Union, in a small village, [with] a population of about 10,000 Russian Christians and about 200 Jews.

Q: In what part of Russia was that?

A: ..... in the Ukraine, about 200 miles east of Kiev, which is an important city in the Soviet Union.

Q: And when were you born?

A: I was born on August 17, 1904.

Q: And to whom were you born?

A: I was born to a family, ..., father and mother, and I was the ninth child that she had.

Q: How many children did your mother ultimately have?

A: She had ~~five~~ nine (?) living, and one died at a very young age.

Q: What did your father do?

A: My father was doing what many Jews in the small business were doing, buying grain from the peasants, Russian peasants, accumulating enough to make a carload, to be shipped to a central market where it was sold. He was a merchant in that area, and not too successful either.

~~Q: Now, did you have any schooling in Russia?~~ Did

A: I only add that conditions were such that my mother, as soon as she was able to, ~~would~~ open up a little grocery store in the market, and sell things there, and the older children

would take care of the younger ones. In this way we eked out an existence, a fairly poor existence. I think that is important to indicate.

Q: Incidentally, were your parents born in this community?

A: Yes, they were born in that community. To identify them a little bit better, this was within 25 miles of the Chernobyl plant that just exploded, ... gives you an idea of where it was at.

Q: So your father was a small merchant, dealing in grain, and your mother, at some later time, added to the income of the family by selling groceries at a market.

A: That went on until a pogrom took place.

Q: Now when did this pogrom take place?

A: About 1905. I was a baby in arms. After the pogrom all good merchandise in the stores was stolen, was taken away, by the people involved in the pogrom.

Q: Who was involved?

A: They were mostly peasants, who were very dissatisfied with conditions, and were told by the czar that the Jews were the cause of it, and as a result the Jews got it. It came after the 1904 uprising, in which quite a large number of peasants were shot in Petrograd, at that time, and they were put down, everybody was put down. But it's a landmark in the history of Russia and the Soviet Union.

Q: How many Jews were there in this community?

A: There were about 200 families, I was told. They had a synagogue, and they had the richer Jews, who had special status from the poorer Jews. There was a distinction, even I sensed it, as I grew up, by hearing talk in the family, mother and father, and what richer Jews were doing for the poorer Jews, etc., etc.

Q: In this synagogue, was there a rabbi serving?

A: I can't recall for sure. I do know that the services were conducted, and that this was an important event in my life, to go to the synagogue on Saturday mornings.

Q: What did your family do at the time of the pogrom?

A: I really don't know what they did.

Q: Did you remain in the community?

A: Yes, for a little while; [actually] for quite a while, until 1913. The situation became very bleak for Jews and for my family, expecting more of the same, and very uncertain about their life. There were killings of Jews in other parts of the country, so things were not very

much [good], and as a result my mother allowed herself to let me come to live as a baby with a priest.

Q: In the same community?

A: In the same community. The priest was very kind to her, and she had made contact through her grocery business. So she passed me on to him, in thinking it was an act of God that he wanted me to be alive, and that's why ..... This thought came to her, and he was very glad to take me.

Q: Were any members of the family lost in the pogrom?

A: No, there were no killings in this pogrom. It may be that, for whatever reason, there was possibly more contact between the Jews and the peasants there, and as a result they knew each other. It was more difficult to carry out a pogrom against somebody you already know. My mother met one of them on the road, carrying off stuff from her place, and he was so embarrassed, this peasant, that he dropped all the stuff and ran away. There were no acts of violence. Also, the "federal" government, if you want to call it [that], sent in cossacks to handle the riot, and ..... to stop it in that manner. But in general, as far as I could tell and sense, things were very insecure and very uncertain.

Q: Were there any schools in that community?

A: No, no public schools for sure, but there was a Hader, a Hebrew school, and I was sent to the Hebrew school at the age of about five or so.

Q: Did this Hebrew school meet in the synagogue?

A: ..... , and I think it was in a separate house near the synagogue. It seemed that the synagogue as such was not to be used in that manner. It was supposed to have been a holy building of some kind.

Q: Do you recall what sort of praying you did?

A: A little bit. It was to repeat Hebrew words, the prayers, all the prayers, but a lack of knowledge of what the prayers were saying, which I thought was quite backward. We did learn by rote what the prayers were. You pick up a little bit of the words, "God" and other things, but in general it was a backward thing. You also learned to write the alphabet.

Q: Do you have any recollection of the man?

A: A little bit, a little bit of a man, who was kind of undernourished, and kind of helpless, and was doing this because the community wanted him to do that. I'm not sure whether he got paid much or not, maybe fifty cents or a dollar a month, or something like that.

Q: Now you state that for six months you were turned over to a priest. Of what church?

A: I think that's the Russian Orthodox Church. I think it's affiliated with the Greek Orthodox Church, not with the Roman Catholic Church.

Q: Do you know whether or not that priest had a family?

A: No. I do know that they're permitted to marry, but I don't know whether he had a family or not. I don't remember him at all, of course, I was so young. Later on, after six months, he returned me back to my mother, she wanted me back, and he was not happy to give me up. He became attached to me as a baby, so that's [my] experience of being a Christian.

Q: You had that limited experience, no subsequent Christian [experience]?

A: Oh yes I did, I had subsequent [experience].

Q: Subsequently you have. We'll go into that later. In any case, your family didn't do so well after that pogrom and nevertheless remained there?

A: Well, there was not too much choice, because there was no money to go anyplace with, but one of the families that were migrating to the United States suggested to my mother that the oldest daughter be allowed to go. She was about 16 or so at the time.

Q: Who suggested that?

A: This family that was friends with my family, who were migrating to the United States.

Q: They had not already migrated?

A: No, they had not. They said they would take care of her. Again, Mother thought this was an act of God, and that she'd been selected to be saved, [so] she agreed to let her go.

Q: Have you any knowledge of how people in that little village undertook to go to the United States, how that came about?

A: It basically came through mail-order things. There was a central place like Kiev where they would write for the cost of the trip. They all went by boat. They went by train to the city of Luba[redacted] on the Baltic Sea, from there....

Q: What I'm getting at [is], had this matter of going to the United States been discussed by word-of-mouth among the people? Was this a common thing?

A: Yes, it was common, and some of them already had someone [who had] migrated, indicating in their letters that they were much better there, more free, and helped financially to support the families in Russia. I guess we'll use the word "Russia" until it becomes the Soviet Union. And so this talk went on, and as a child I recalled these things. I was inquisitive, like the others, as to what was going on. I had ideas as a baby that my sister was going into the post office for some reason.

Q: What was your sister's name?

A: Goldie. She had a story of her own. When she finally arrived here, she went to work in the garment industry, and was a late sleeper, working in the Triangle building, where the factory was. She came there 15 minutes late, and they wouldn't let her in, and the fire took place. Have you heard of the Triangle fire?

Q: No.

A: ~~Very~~ ..... No exits, no way [to get out], and they lost about 150 people, burnt to death in that Triangle fire.

Q: Did that occur shortly after her arrival?

A: Let me say, within a year or so. And I don't recall how we got the news [of the fire]. I know there was no local newspaper.

Q: Did your sister keep in touch with the family?

A: Very much, very devoted to it. She immediately started saving her money to help bring the others over, to help bring us all over in time, from 1905 to 1913, she brought all of us over.

Q: And where did you go from Nosofca.

A: When we left Nosofca we were migrating to New York, ~~to~~ three Ellis Island.

Q: [You didn't leave] to live in another Russian community?

A: No, no, not to live in another Russian community.

Q: But to emigrate to the United states.

A: Yes.

Q: And how many were in the family at the time of the immigration?

A: Started, with one, Goldie, then she brought over two sisters. She saved enough for that. Then the two sisters started working in the garment industry, saved the money to bring over another brother and his wife, and then finally she brought over my father, alone. Then he applied for us to come. He had to show a certain amount of money in the bank before they would give him permission to have us come, and one of the bosses my sister worked for put up the money to be deposited in the bank, so that he could show the immigration people. [Then] after we arrived he returned the money. Kind of interesting, it was done by many of them, a common practice.

Q: So that it was showing that you wouldn't become dependent?

A: [Yes], which still exists now. So this all took place from about 1905 to 1913. By July 1913 the whole family was over here in New York.

Q: And now, the eldest girl didn't leave until 1905, and she was already 16.

A: 16, she was old enough to be my mother.

Q: And you say, two younger sisters, they were the first ones to go there after Goldie. How old were they, in relation to Goldie?

A: Probably all three years apart, or something like that. She seemed to have a baby every two or three years, for a while; they were a few years apart. That would make them about 19 or so, and 21, in that area. They were grown women.

Q: They were grown by the time they arrived in New York?

A: Yeah, they were already looking for husbands. I mention these things because the pressure (?) of the times. The need to get married became a very important part of a woman's life at that age, and already at that age it was considered getting kind of late. I'll deal with that a little later. That has a story in itself.

Q: That's generally true in farming communities.

A: It is.

Q: In any case, after the three girls were in New York, who came next?

A: My brother Abe, who already had gotten married in Russia. He came over.

Q: Did he have any children at that time?

A: No, but he had one very soon after that. Frieda, his wife, was already pregnant, I think. They had ..2.. children. And he had a hard time getting work in the United States, because he wasn't skilled. He worked for awhile in a hat factory .....

Q: Now Goldie and the other two financed the immigration of your brother and his wife.

A: The four of them financed the immigration of the rest of the family.

Q: Now your eldest brother, what sort of work did he get hold of when he arrived in New York?

A: As far as I know, he tried to start working in a laundry, and his wife went to work in a factory, ... But they struggled along. The opportunities were here. Somewhere or other there was always something to do.

Q: The next ones to come over were the remaining group?

A: The father.

Q: Your father...

A: By himself.

Q: What was your father's first name?

A: Isadore Baylin. Baylin has not been changed. Two of my brothers spelled it Beilin. I don't know why, but they did. We got hooked with Baylin.

Q: How old was your father at that time?

A: Oh, probably in the fifties.

Q: Do you recall when he was born?

A: I have no recollection for either one of them as to when exactly they were born. Mother was born, I think, by the freeing of the American slaves, around 1861, 1865. She was about 95 when she died. I don't remember my father's .....

Q: Do you know what the background of your father was?

A: No, not much, as far as I can [recall]. My grandfather was a flax producer. They would buy the flax, and they would shred it, and make it into ropes or cloth or whatever it was. I recall that as a child. And that was destroyed during that pogrom. It was a very tough break. I do not know it firsthand, but I'm assuming that some help came from other parts of the world, to keep us alive. I don't remember my mother discussing getting any directly.

Q: Did you ever know your grandmother?

A:[No], I knew my grandfather, but she the grandmothers were already dead.

Q: Your grandmother was already dead.?

A: Yes. There were two grandmothers involved. Both of them were dead, and I knew both grandfathers, my father's father and my mother's father.

Q: Now what did the other grandfather do?

A: The other grandfather managed a brewery, produced.... I am recalling now, the fact that before we left for the United States, it was decided that we move to my mother's father's place. He was living on a plantation with a brewery on it. So for one year, we were living there. It's like in a farm area, where they were growing tobacco, and so on. I learned to love him very much, he had very much influence on my life. There too, while we were there, it may not be in good order, but we will edit it later. While living there, in his brewery that made beer, to ice the beer they would cut the ice in the wintertime off the pond, and put it into the straw in the brewery, to preserve the beer, and the brewery..... He was managing it but did not own it. He was getting paid to do that, and so on. The workers, peasants, that did the harvesting of this ice were not paid. So they came to his house at night, the whole group of them, very threateningly. They wanted money, and of course he didn't have

any. We were kind of barricaded inside the house not knowing what was happening, and going through the experience of a pogrom, we were in trouble.

Q: Why weren't the peasants paid?

A: I guess there was no money, wherever it was.

Q: He hadn't received any money to .....

A: He did not handle the money, the owner probably did, who lived probably in a large city someplace. It was an investment. One of his sons, who would be my uncle, sneaked out through the back of the house and ran for about five miles to the village, where there was a sheriff or a policeman or something, who in turn came over there and ordered the peasants to disperse. I didn't see it, all I knew was [that he was] mulling around on the outside. Kind of interesting to know what would happen. He was all alone, as far as I can remember, and the peasants dispersed.

Q: They obeyed authority.

A: Yes, they obeyed authority. The next day they came and apologized, saying that they had been drinking, and one of their leaders incited them to go and get the Jew and make him fork up the money..... This is the story. Big contribution, an incident that occurred to me is, that I became very much in love with the outdoors. I lived on a farm, on a ranch, miles away from the ....., and I learned to fish, learned to observe that there were other things besides human beings around me. And it remained with me all my life.

Q: Let me ..... do this: do you know, directly or by hearsay, whether or not there was any interest in politics at that time in your family?

A: Yes, there was, only to the extent.... I mean, basically, to the extent that the czar was a threat to the lives of people, Jews, was very nationalistic, naturally, and they it could not at all depend upon the czar to do something that would be helpful for the Jews. In fact, he was accused, that [we (?) were] the ones that were inciting the peasants. Their condition was so bad that he would be ..... "that these Jews were buying your grain, you're getting very little for it," and so on. And there was also some justification for the charges. A number of the Jews did cheat, in my opinion. This was specifically to hurt my mother, who told my father time and again to give the correct weight, they would have to wait, and so on. God would punish them, that was their attitude. He was affected by other dealers there, who were doing that. They looked upon him as being the oddball, whatever it was. And so that's how I know about it, ... talked about that my mother knew

Q: Your mother was a very ethical woman.

A: Very ethical person, very ethical person.

Q: Were you close to any particular member of the family?

A: The [sister] next to me, Hannah, who was about two to three years older than I am. She kind of looked after me, because Mother was involved, and so I became attached to her, and that remained throughout our lives. She comes into my life again much later on.

Q: So, during the Russian years, Goldie looked after you, and you ....., more or less?

A: There were so many sisters, I don't know which one of them looked after me. There were four sisters, they were all older than I. But I do know that Hannah is the one that left ....., because I remember her, and Goldie was already gone to the United States.

Q: What do you remember about Hannah in Russia? Any particular thing?

A: She was being taught some dancing, I remember, and I loved it, and I started mimicking her dance, and of course boys were not supposed to dance. This was folk dancing, not ballroom dancing. Mother wanted her to have the opportunity to try, so that there was a Russian peasant came with an accordion played music, and she was taught how to do it, and I would do the same thing. I was ..... that that's not what boys do. So I was attached to her in that way.

Q: I would like to clarify one point, and that is with respect to your Jewishness, so to speak. You stated that your parents were religious, and very definitely your mother. Now, in what respect was your mother especially Jewish? Was she Orthodox?

A: Yes! Orthodox, performing all the rituals, biessing the candles, going [on] the sabbath to the synagogue, not to do any work on the sabbath of any kind, a minimum. And to impress on us the need to believe in God, and indicated in the ethics of it, that if you believe in God, therefore you do not steal, you do not cheat, you do not lie. She carried on in her way. It was very helpful, she was not punitive about it.

Q: How about the eating rules?

A: Very strictly kosher, and she observed that very strictly. Even under the most difficult circumstances (?), she knew how to deal with it. Before you eat, you're supposed to wash your hands. We were on a trip to another village in the morning, she had brought some food with us. We needed to wash our hands but had no water. How do you solve the problem? She stopped the horses, got out, and had us rub our hands in some wet sand, and in that way satisfied the need to do that. In general, kosher was kept very strict. You are not supposed to eat any dairy products after you have eaten meat products. You have to wait at least three hours. She enforced that.

Q: Now was your father equally....

A: Equally. To survive we ..... had to be. He did not minimize it, but he was like to not to be so tight about it, but she wouldn't allow it.

Q: I take it that he attended the synagogue in kosher, and at your mother's urging, maintained the rules of the religion.

A: As far as going to synagogue and ..... that, she did not have to impress him with that. Just in other acts, a special ethical ....., telling the truth about things. I remember her scolding him, saying "you can't do that."

Q: Did your mother and father have any special relationship to the synagogue, did they have duties of any kind?

A: No, they were what I call very low on the totem pole, because they were very poor, and the wealthier ones were the ones that kind of ran the synagogue, if I remember. They were asked to contribute a ruble a month, or something like that, sometimes they were able to, sometimes they weren't, but that's how it went .... And this money went for the teacher, the rabbi who taught, not for the head of the synagogue. As I even recall, even on high holidays, they would bring someone to sing, they would perform in the synagogue during Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashana. But that's what I recall. It was a small town, and the Jews segregated themselves as far as I remember.

Q: They grouped themselves.

A: Oh yes, very much so. [They] would have gatherings in the synagogue sometimes during the week, for a prayer, afternoon prayer, and after the prayer would stay and discuss some of the ethics of the religion, and the one that knew more of the religious thing could read pages out of the Talmud, or something like that. I recall that my father took me once. He looked upon education [as being] the most important thing.

Q: Did either your father or mother have any education?

A: Very little. Mother, as far as I know, none. Father may have had some haider (?), but no formal education.

Q: I wondered whether there were any gatherings in your own home outside of the family? Can you recall any?

A: About the only one was when my oldest brother became engaged to be married, to a woman in the next town, about 30 miles away. There were gatherings for that. Her parents came over to our house, to get to know us, and we in turn made this trip to their place, and I fell in love with my sister-in-law, and became jealous of my brother. That's the story. I think there is some place (?) for it.

Q: How did your brother become acquainted with this young woman who was in the community 30 miles away?

A: There was some kind of an educational institute there that he was sent to, ... to study the Talmud, which he studied. To Mother it was very important, it was very hard. And so at that place he met, and .....

Q: He went away [to] secure religion, but he secured a wife.

A: Yes, the marriage lasted about 10 years, and then they broke up. That's a story in itself.

Q: I understand from you that you were in the last batch of your family who went to the United States. Your father, your mother, you....

A: The last one's that went were Mother and five kids. My father came a year before, to make way for us.

Q: Do you have any recollection about that trip to the new world?

A: Oh very much, I was eight years old. I became the mascot on the boat. We were in steerage, we couldn't go upstairs, but I didn't know it. They would feed me foods that we didn't get below. An eight-year-old can be very attractive. I found my way around.

Q: This food wasn't kosher, I take it.

A: Mother found some way to get around that, because we survived. Boiled eggs were okay to eat, and other things like that. I think she had .... the bread. Got bananas for the first time on the boat, and I loved it. All the rest of them d...., so I ate their bananas. It was a good experience. My mother said a prayer before we stepped on the boat, to make sure we would make it. The trip across was fairly uneventful, as far as I remember.

Q: Did this boat leave from Russia?

A: From Liebov (?). I don't know whether Liebov is in Poland or in Russia at that time. It's a port city, ...

Q: Is your recollection that it was a big ship? It seemed big to you at the time.

A: Yes, called the czar.

Q: Was the trip uneventful otherwise?

A: No storm, uneventful. Not much seasickness among us. There was some. The children held up pretty well.

Q: And your mother?

A: My mother fine, as far as I can remember. I don't remember any extreme hardships for us. And after awhile it became very enjoyable.

Q: Roam around?

A: Roam around the deck, yes. I did not have much contact with the sailors, didn't even know where they were. The ship ..... I guess they were not accepted in the passenger area. And then we landed, on Ellis Island.

Q: And how long did you stay in Ellis Island? Do you have any recollection of that?

A: Yes, we came in on a Sunday, and they would not let us dock on Sunday, because the workers were off. So my sister and brother, Abe and Goldie, hired a launch, a boat with a motor in it. And they circled around the ship, because we were lying in the harbor and waved at us.

Q: Your mother must have been delighted.

A: Oh, we were all very excited. My brother tried to throw oranges into the ship, but he wasn't a very good ballplayer. The oranges all ended up in the water. They were not allowed to stop the boat, they had to keep circling around, keep moving. And then the next morning, we went into Ellis Island, and before we were released from the boat we were examined by a doctor.

Q: Did you have any communicable disease?

A: No trouble. No lice. And then they told me "you can go now," and I said "where?" I didn't know.

Q:Now, you spoke only.....

A: Yiddish.

Q: Yiddish?

A: Yiddish, and Russian, some. The Yiddish was my language.

Q: I take it then, your mother spoke Russian?

A: She spoke Russian, but Yiddish was the language she spoke to us.

Q: And your father?

A: He spoke Russian, and Yiddish too. Yiddish was our language, period. Russian was secondary. At the age of eight, I had some Hebrew already, I knew how to read and write, and almost know what I was doing. I had some Russian, I picked it up from my sister when ..... talked, some Russian already. We spoke Yiddish, and I was, of course, very fluent. We learned how to write in Yiddish. Of course, when we entered into the schools in New York, all the kids spoke Yiddish.

Q: How long were you on Ellis Island?

A: I would say no more than four hours or so. As soon as we docked, and started coming off. There was a barrier, behind the barrier was my sister and some family, and they were waiting for us to come in.

Q: Do you know where your mother got the papers, the documents, to allow your entry?

A: I don't recall.

Q: In any case, your entry was approved, and you were released the next day, and where did you go?

A: We went to a house, an apartment that my sister rented, that would be larger than what we had. 336 East 26th St., New York City.

Q: Now what section of the city is this?

A: That's on the East side, between Yorkville and in the downtown. I don't know whether there was any specific name for the area. It's off of 23rd. There's an insurance company not far from a Park. I was within a half a block of the elevator on 3rd St., and it was nice and clean, but crowded, and a walk-up.

Q: You're in a flat, I assume?

A: A flat. I think we had a three-room flat.

Q: The five children, and your mother, and father....

A: And Goldie.

Q: Goldie moved in too?

A: Oh yeah, we were all there together. A big family, all lived in one flat.

Q: When you arrived, then the family reassembled.

A: They were always together there in one flat.

Q: Very likely you couldn't afford to have more than one place.

A: That's right, we just accepted it as a family. So some of us slept in the living room,....

Q: Were there any furnishing?

A: Oh yes, there was furniture in the house. It was Goldie who managed. And she tried to maintain as high standards as she could.

Q: Now what year was that exactly?

A: 1913. We came in July in 1913.

Q: Sometime in July, 1913. You don't remember the exact date?

A: No, I don't recall.

Q: It must have been a Monday, because it was a weekend that you arrived.

A: You're right. And I remember that my sisters had taken off from work.

Q: ....., they had to work, I assume, on most every day of the week.

A: Oh yes, I think they even worked Saturday, too, at that time, a six-day week.

Q: Was your family in good health at the time?

A: At the time, yes.

Q: And how old was your mother in 1913?

A: Around 50, 51 or so.

Q: And I take it your father was a little older.

A: Yes, he was a bachelor when he married my mother, he was 26. She had never met him before. It was an arranged wedding. A marriage broker brought him around, she was very much impressed. It lasted for quite a while.

Q: I suppose your mother and your father may have told you about how they were married?

A: Not really. Things got (?) talked about, and we listened. She would say that the marriage occurred, ... And she was not happy about it in general. She did not want to get married at age of 16 or 17, but her father thought it was advisable to do that with this man, my father would get a good marriage ..... She obeyed orders .....

Q: I suppose your grandfather was a good father.

A: He had a number of children.

Q: Can you recall what he did, he was the brewery man?

A: Yes, he was a gentle person, very religious. He was living in this industry, the brewery industry, managing a brewery.

Q: You arrived in 1913. You were eight years old.

A: I was born on August 17th, 1904. That makes it nearly nine, in August I'd be nine.

Q: Now, what did you do? Did you enroll [in school]?

A: It was vacation time, [regular] school was closed, but there was summer school, to get us out of the house, otherwise we'd wreck the place. So we were taken to the school, we had classes that were conducted in English. We didn't know what was going on. We had to keep asking the kids around me, "what is she saying?" In that way I was able to follow.

Q: Did you attend that school with any of your sisters?

A: No, they didn't do it.

Q: You were the only one?

A: I was the only one who attended. Hannah was older....

Q: She was only three years older....

A: I don't recall, maybe she did [attend], but not in my class for sure. And the other three sisters were already working. There were four sisters in all and four brothers.

Q: Did your mother stay home to cook, to clean the house?

A: Not only that, she took in borders.

Q: In the house?

A: In that house. She took in borders, six or eight of them, I think they paid about 25, 30 cents for a meal, and after they were through eating, ... It was not easy, but that's what she had to do to make a living. Father got a job as a mattress maker.

Q: Where did these borders live? Did they live in the house?

A: No, in the neighborhood, but they came and ate with us, always kind of a friendly bunch.

Q: Do you know how she got started on taking in borders?

A: I don't, but I know they were there.

Q: Do you have any recollection of when she started taking in borders?

A: Very soon after, because we didn't stay in New York very long. We stayed in New York only about two years, and we moved to Texas from there.

Q: So it was during most of the period that you lived in New York at that time, that she took in the borders. And what did your father do?

A: He took a job working in a mattress factory. [He] found it very difficult to....

Q: How did he find the work? He didn't speak any English, did he?

A: No, but there were always other Jews that tried to help. I don't think that they went to any society or any agency, but you mingled with other families, or the kids would tell them where this is, where to go to get a job.

Q: Do you have any recollection of any friends in New York during that two-year period? Any friends who you knew from Russia?

A: A few that were there, that migrated, that I knew, they were adults. No children, as far as I can remember. We visited, and they visited with us. And that was a good experience, a feeling like you had some contact with your past in that respect. And of course, the adults carried this on.

Q: Now, the period in which you lived in New York, was that more or less of a ghetto? Mostly Jews?

A: No. On the street [where] I played, there were a lot of Irish kids playing. Because I didn't speak English, it was very hard for me. Very hard for them too, they couldn't figure out how to deal with me.

Q: Do you have any recollection of the kinds of games you played with them?

A: Well, they played a game, but I was an observer. There was a stick game they played. They had a stick and they would knock it around to certain goals. Like hockey or something like that. But I was either too young or too Jewish, I don't remember. Most of them were Irish, as I remember. And then someone told my mother that it was good to take the youngsters to Coney Island on a summer day, so she took us all by subway to Coney Island. And then we came back the darndest lobsters she ever saw. She didn't realize what would happen. We were all red- faced. Quite an experience to go to Coney Island.

Q: Now during that two-year period, did you become associated with any synagogue?

A: I don't recall of any.

Q: You don't recall any synagogue....

A: No synagogue in New York. Our mother maintained her religion and lit the candles on the sabbath and Friday night, kept kosher, very strictly, but I don't recall any Jewishness at home, except the holidays.

Q: Did you have a seder....?

A: Oh yes, very much so, we had a seder, a very big seder, [with] all the family, one of the few times the family was together, [with] the youngsters. [Before] they were here, and we were in Russia. The only bad feature is that one of my sisters, Nettie, developed a very bad tooth condition, to such an extent that she couldn't sit at the seder. We kept on running into her room to be with her ..... That's the only time we were together.

Q: You don't know whether she had abscessed teeth?

A: I don't know what it was.

Q: Except that she had some tooth problems.

A: Tooth problems, to such an extent that she couldn't sit up and participate. I was observing, I bumped into the boyfriends that came around. Three girls that were eligible, all three of them. Mother was concerned, and (?) nothing would happen. So that was one

of the problems. That comes in a little later. While we were there, we had a cousin who lived in Texas, in San Antonio. He was partially raised by my mother. His mother was a sister to my mother, and died at a young age, so that Max was under her jurisdiction to a degree. At the age of about 15, 16 or 17, he decided to get out, not to be drafted into the army. ..... So he came to this country, and he was in San Antonio. He kept contact with my mother. When we came to New York he decided to come and visit us.

Q: He was alone then....

A: He was already married, and had a family in Texas, in San Antonio, but he came alone to New York. There, he fell in love with my brother's wife, to bring that in. Her name was Frieda. She already had 2 babies.

Q: And he's married?

A: He's married, and he's got three children. Anyway, as time went on, he convinced my mother that if we moved to Texas, to San Antonio, he practically guaranteed that the daughters would get husbands. Why, how can he do it? He said that there were over 100,000 soldiers stationed around San Antonio, Ft. Sam Houston, Kelly Field, Travis Field, [etc.], all around. And over a period of about a year and a half after we arrived at New York, we found ourselves moving to Texas, to San Antonio, going by train. ..... The only thing is, at this time we found the oldest brother working on a good job, and he was not ready to make the move.

Q: This is what happened ..... The girls gave up their jobs.

A: Gave up their jobs, and moved to Texas.

Q: But your brother remained.

A: Remained with his wife and two children, but about a year or so later he too was convinced that if his job failed someday, he should move to Texas, because he could do better there. So my brother and sister wrote, and the family moved to Texas later on. There he started carrying on with my sister-in-law. Well they both had families, and it was very hard to break things up. It caused a lot of turmoil in the family. I wanted to ..... to ....., ... Anyway, we carried on. I kind of supported ....., quite a ..... person. He was a Socialist, and he was not religious, and he talked about ..... the other brothers that I had didn't have that kind of an influence on me, ...

Q: This was a cousin.

A: Yes, he was a cousin of mine, he's a first cousin, Max.

Q: How much older than you was he?

A: Oh, probably 15-20 years older than I am at this time, 1913. I was nine, he was at least 20-25. He was escaping, going to the United States on his own, and at the port that he [shipped] out of, someone approached him and said "would you like to buy a ticket on this boat which goes to America at a very cheap price?" So he bought it, got on the boat, and

he lands in Galveston, Texas. He didn't know where he was going. And there he was stopped by Immigration and searched, because a governor in the area in Poland was assassinated, and the ticket he used was the guy did the assassination. ..... So they stopped him, and they found a knife in his baggage, a three- four-inch knife. So they held him. He spoke no English. So he was in jail, and the word is out among the Jewish community that a Jew was sitting in jail, in ....., they didn't know why. So a Jewish mom said I'm going up to ..... So ..... to Immigration, and he said "I speak Yiddish. I'd like to have a chance to talk with him," because they couldn't communicate. So he got in, and Max told him the story of what happened. So the Immigration people released him, turned him over to this man. So he's out. Max felt he had to do something to reward this man. He discovered that this man's oldest daughter was pregnant with no husband, had been seduced. So he married her. And then the family, the whole works, moved from Galveston to San Antonio. He turned out to be exceptionally good with his hands in repairing things, and became a first-class gunsmith, to repair guns. Guns were very popular, shotguns and whatnot. He set up a business there, and did very well.

Q: He had his own business?

A: His own business. Except that a major flood took place there. The dam broke in San Antonio, and the flood wiped him out, so he had to start over again, and he became quite successful. I don't know whether we should go into that or not, because I was very much a part of it.

Q: You suggest that he was a Socialist. Was he a Socialist at the time he left Russia, as far as you know?

A: That I don't know. He was draft age at the time, ... I really don't know. My guess would be that he was at least thinking [along] those lines, because he was young, and that was the attitude among young Jews. Other young people were involved.

Q: Do you know where he first became interested in Socialism?

A: No, I don't know.

Q: Whether or not he had any connections? Were there any organized Socialist group at any time?

A: Later on in San Antonio, they developed somewhat of a Socialist gathering, and a division [occurred]. Two ideologies; those who were [labor zionist, and those who were orthodox zionist], and he was in the labor zionist ..... This is maybe the value of this recording, is that I listen..... The older ones discussed the differences. We also had two of them I knew that were specifically anarchists, who believed in the anarchist philosophy, and that discussion went on a great deal. My mother listened to a degree, [but] only participated as far as the danger of war and things like that, because this was 1914, and the war broke out, and here she is with a couple of boys. When did we declare war and participate?

Q: 1917.

A: We went in in 1917. And so there was a lot of turmoil there in San Antonio, and we became an underground house. Individuals who were escaping to Mexico, they would recommend to come and stop at our place. ..... helped to get connections to ..... There were regular smugglers that took them across. Two of my brothers and a brother in law [went across]. Meanwhile one of my sisters got married, and they also went to Mexico. They were in Yucatan, and .....

Q: Now you're referring now to 1917?

A: 1917, during the war. Of course Mother was against the war, both on the basis of philosophy, and also on the basis of her sons being involved. So that carried on.

II. Growing up in San Antonio; YCL Activity at UCB

Growing up in San Antonio, Texas; family life, schooling, etc.

Texas A&M.

Moving to Los Angeles.

Cal Tech.

Young Workers League.

Meeting Vera.

Red Squad, arrests, etc.

Continuing with education: UCLA, then UC Berkeley.

Young Communist League at UC Berkeley, activity against ROTC.

Q: How did the family maintain itself when it went to Texas?

A: Basically, the family maintained itself by my father working as a junk peddler, with a horse and wagon, which we kept in the back yard. We had two milk cows, and we sold some of the milk. My older brothers became installment peddlers, selling merchandise of all kinds to the Mexican people, and they would pay 50 cents or a dollar a month, whatever was required. I myself started selling newspapers at the age of about 11, and at the age of 13 I started working after school and on Saturday, as both a messenger boy in a drugstore and also as a delivery boy in a clothing store in San Antonio, Texas. I would pass over my earnings, which amounted to about 3 1/2 - 4 dollars a week, to my mother, and felt that I had a responsibility like the rest of the family. Being a family of about 10 people or so, I recall that in the summertime we slept outdoors, because the house was just so crowded that we would not be able to [sleep inside]. Mother was very religious, so was Father, and she required us to walk to the synagogue, and we had to walk about 3 miles to go to the synagogue; she would not permit us to use the street cars, or any other public transportation, because she taught it was not allowed.

Q: You were an Orthodox family?

A: A very Orthodox family. We maintained a kosher household, and it was fairly well accepted, this was our way of life. We thought nothing of it.

Q: Now, what schooling did you have?

A: At this time, being about 10 years old, I was put into the third grade in grammar school there. I had one year in New York, and as a result I missed out on much of the grammar in the English language, and I suffered for that throughout my life, in not being able to use

proper words. I improved as time went along, but at first it was quite difficult. I also had quite an accent, so that my friends around me immediately recognized that something's different than the rest of them, since I spoke in broken English, as foreigners do. My experience with the family in the main was that the war broke out in 1914, and then we went into war in 1916 (1917?). It meant that I had brothers who were draft age, and Mother urged them, and they themselves recognized, that the best thing to do was go to Mexico to escape the draft, which they did. Then others came through our house and stayed with us. It was a stopping point on their way to Mexico. There was a regular organized group of people in San Antonio who would take them across the border. They did not have to go through the regular immigration station.

Q: Now was this underground limited to Jewish boys?

A: I don't know, but I would say that all those I met were Jews. I did not remember anyone else.

Q: Where did your brothers go in Mexico?

A: They went to Yucatan, Merida, Yucatan, and started peddling merchandise there to make a living, door-to-door. They did very well. They all came back later to the United States, after the war was over.

Q: With their wives?

A: In the case of two of them, with their wives. One of them came back not married. He married later on. Interesting thing about going to Mexico was that Yucatan at that time had a governor who was a Socialist. That was enough to fascinates me that in a country like that they would have such a thing, and I became interested in Socialism, for various reasons, the war in particular, which my mother and my grandfather recognized as an unfair war, a war that was not good for the people, and I accepted that quite readily.

Q: Was there discussion of Socialism in the family?

A: About Socialism, not much. There was much more discussion of Anarchism than there was of Socialism, which to me did not make much difference, it was something that was liberating in the main. There was a lot of discussion going on among the elders, and I listened in. As I recall, I didn't in any way participate, I didn't understand. Not a matter of not being allowed, but I just didn't have anything to say about that, but I did listen. My cousin Max Mipos, had quite a bit to say. He was married, and about this time had about three children, so there was no question of him being drafted, but at the same time there was a lot of the discussion. He may have also influenced the rest of the family. But I don't recall any political discussion much outside of the pogroms in Russia, and how rather terrible it was to live there. As far as any Socialist idea, they were not concerned until Max came into the picture. He talked more in terms of Socialism.

Q: Now what community was this?

A: In San Antonio, Texas, where we lived at this time (from 1946 to 1923).

Q: You had moved from....?

A: From New York, to San Antonio, about 1915. I had nearly 2 years in New York, and then moved again.

Q: Was there a ghetto in San Antonio?

A: No, there wasn't. In fact, we lived in the poorest section in general.

Q: Were you accepted in the community? That is to say, were Jews accepted in the community?

A:Basically, through the synagogue. Once you joined the synagogue, you were accepted and recognized as being part of the community, and others to it. The hierarchy was that the rich Jews had more positions, organizations than the poorer Jews, and we were the poorer Jews. That didn't set well with me.

Q: But there were quite a few Jews in San Antonio.

A: Oh yes, I would not exaggerate if I thought there was at least a 1,000 families at that time. There were two synagogues. We went to the synagogues made up more of the poorer Jews because there were some Jews with some money, responsibility, belonging to it like we do to any church. The outstanding excitement for me at that period was the Russian revolution, 1917. I was very joyous about it. The disposing of the czar, as far as I understood it, meant freedom for people, including the Jews. I talked about it, and some of my young friends didn't understand why I was so excited, and I had to explain to them. I already recognized it as an extremely important event in the world, to have that revolution happen.

Q: Where did the family get its news? Did they subscribe to papers, did they get papers? Where did they get the information? From the synagogue, from other Jews?

A: No, there was the New York newspaper called the Foreward (in Yiddish) that was a social democratic paper that was received in the community. I don't think that my family could afford to subscribe to it, but the news came through that way. At that time there was no radio or anything like that, so it came through. Also, the local paper, the San Antonio Light and the San Antonio Express, told me about the revolution as a news event.

Q: But your parents didn't speak English, did they?

A: No, but they were probably told by others, who did speak English, what was going on..... I know in New York my mother did read the Yiddish newspaper, but I don't think she was able to subscribe to it in San Antonio, I don't recall it being in the house.

Q: When you last mentioned your education, you related that you had attended grammar school for a year in New York, and then you had a year in San Antonio in the third grade....

A: Started in the third grade. Of course I was older for my [grade], and as a result I missed out on the grammar part of the English language, and I paid a penalty for it throughout my life. My mother was pleased to see me advance. She assumed that I was bright enough, that I had the ability at that time to do mathematics, arithmetic, for a sixth- grader. And don't ask me how I came about it, but that's very common in families to teach in that area. I went through grammar school in San Antonio....

Q: Did you graduate from the school?

A: Oh yes, and then I entered high school.

Q: How old were you when you entered high school?

A: I would guess around 14 or 15.

Q: And what community was that?

A: Again, it was in San Antonio. There were two high schools. There was Breckenridge high school and the Main St. high school, I forget the name. I went to the Breckenridge high school and I still had quite a bit of an accent. I recall the teacher explaining to the class that I was a special type of a person, because of the fact that I left a persecuted country. She was trying to soften the teasing that I had. The high school experience was a very good one for me, except that I had to go to work right after school, from 2:30-6:00 on weekdays, and all day on Saturday, so I didn't carry on any activity to speak of in school.

Q: That is to say, school activity?

A: School activity. Yet in spite of that, when it came to the graduating year, they brought me in to be a part in a Shakespeare play, "A Midsummer Night's Dream". I had a very minor part, but it was still very exciting. It was staged near a river in San Antonio, near the high school, and the play was performed on one side of the river, and the audience sat on the other side of the river. It was quite a good sized river. The river since then has been made into a very big tourist attraction in San Antonio.

Q: Did your parents keep in touch with your schooling? That is to say, did they ever appear at school, at the time of your graduation, from grammar school and high school?

A: Only the graduation from high school did my family appear. They did not recognize that they had any role to play in it. They felt that the school people would take care of me. But they were quite proud of me, because I did well in school, and from time to time they would get a note from the teacher saying that I am doing well, and that pleased them very much. To them, being educated was the most important thing in life.

Q: Did other members of the family attend Breckenridge?

A: Yes, my sister attended Breckenridge. She graduated from it. My sister Hannah, that's the youngest sister that attended it. I have a younger brother [who] attended Breckenridge,

but I think he only went through the third year, and then went to work. As far as I can remember he didn't go any further than that.

Q: Was Hannah a good student?

A: As far as I recall, yes. She was a good student. She was also very musically inclined, so Mother bought a piano on installment plan, for five dollars a month, and had a person come in to give her lessons. I would watch and listen, and want to repeat the thing that she was playing. It was quite an experience, a very big event, the bringing in of the piano. It was a surprise for my sister, so we enjoyed it very much. In the present-day light of what I consider almost the breakup of families, this seemed to please me, to know that we really were a family and concerned with each other, and participated fully as such.

Q: After you graduated from high school, what did you do?

A: I enrolled in Texas A&M in September of 1923.

Q: Where was Texas A&M?

A: About 150 miles north of San Antonio. It's located in the open fields of Texas, if you can visualize that. The closest town to it was College Station, about 20 miles away, a railroad stop.

Q: Who induced you to go to Texas A&M, or any college?

A: My cousin Max, again, had played a big role in urging me to continue my schooling if I could. He even gave me some of the money to do it. The tuition fee was about 150 dollars, around there, including room and board. Very low.

Q: Was that 150 dollars a year?

A: I think a semester was about 4 1/2 months. I didn't have 150 dollars. They accepted me on the basis of paying about 50 dollars, and the rest I should work out, work in the college there, which I did.

Q: Now what sort of a course did you register for?

A: I was attracted to electrical engineering. The rabbi's son was going to school, and he was in an electrical engineering course there, and he was about three years older than I was, but I looked up to him like he was some kind of an unusual person. And he did some experiments at his home in which I watched, and I was fascinated with that. Actually, I don't belong in electrical engineering, in any kind of engineering. I would have done much better in political science or in sociology, but then again I didn't know. Electrical engineering sounded to everyone like a good living, that it was the number one thing, and therefore I went ahead with it.

Q: How long did you remain?

A: I remained in there for one year, and during this period my family moved to Los Angeles, CA. So when I got out at the end of the year, when summer vacation came in, I came back to San Antonio, and together with Max Mipos he we decided to move from Texas. We went across in a car to Los Angeles. I was the smallest kid at Texas A&M, about five feet in size. I grew two inches while I was there. The food was very healthy and lots of it, and I made up for it. I also worked to pay off the debt, washing windows, cleaning, things like that at the college. As a freshman, as all freshman, we were hazed, and very much underneath the domination of the upperclassmen. We had to do whatever they told us, and I accepted that in the spirit of it, and made very good friends amongst them. They offered to help me, and they did help me whenever they could. When the football team would go on a trip I didn't have money for the railroad, they would get together, and get me a ticket so I could go along with them. So in that respect it was a lot of fun. My schooling was very good. I was doing better than a B average. The electrical engineering course was looked upon as very special. Most of them were taking aggie courses. They were much easier. They had a high regard for me, that I could undertake that, work at the same time, etc. So in that respect it was interesting. What I observed in the sociological, political way was the goodness of people. Here they come from all walks of life, and yet were able to live together quite comfortably. The college was a religious college. A Baptist college, and land-grant college. We had to go to chapel every Sunday morning. I didn't care for it.... We had to listen about how Jesus Christ was killed by the Jews, and everything else that goes with it. But I accepted that as part of it. I accepted the hazing quite well, I didn't object to that.

Q: Did you think that any of the hazing resulted from the fact that you were Jewish?

A: No, I didn't think so. I don't really feel anything like that.

Q: Was there any anti-semitism on the campus?

A: I could not sense any at all, and I was conscious of these kinds of things. I do not recall any remarks. Some of our professors were Jews, but that didn't matter I would say there were racist remarks about blacks, there were no blacks on campus at all. Of course it was a male college, no women were allowed. And that was a big problem too. It has changed since then, but at that time any woman walking on the campus could not do so alone.

Q: How long were you at that college when you attended....

A: I'm trying to remember Texas A&M about 1923. That would make me 19 or 20 years at that time. I was still kind of immature in many ways.

Q: You relate that the entire family, Max too, went to Los Angeles. Did you all go together?

A: No, in drips and drabs. We went in Los Angeles, find a place, and then others would come.

Q: Who was the first one to go to LA?

A: My oldest sister, Goldie. She already was married by that time, and then she arranged for a place to bring the rest of the family over in parts. It was quite an expensive deal to go by train. I came by car, we drove a Ford across.

Q: That was with Max?

A: With Max, about 1923.

Q: Were you the last ones to go to LA?

A: I was the last one to go to LA, and Max also migrated with the family, to LA. Just to complete the Texas situation, San Antonio is located in the midst of about six military camps. It's important, it had an influence on the population. The outstanding one is Fort San Houston, which is the main base. Then there's Kelly Field, Camp Travers, as far as I can remember. During the war, there was stationed over 200,000 soldiers. And they had an effect on us, insofar as the economy was booming, the jobs were plentiful and we all worked pretty well. But on the other hand we recognized that also there was a negative, because it brought in a lot of prostitutes. They set aside an area of about 20 square blocks for a red-light district, where prostitutes were set up. It was a negative, we thought about it. The blacks were segregated. They were kept in a separate part of the camps. They were used mostly for cleaning, gathering the garbage, and whatnot, but these were the conditions that existed in them. There was an attempt at patriotism, such as parades with the military, and so on. And the one important ..... is a parade in which a woman was wheeling a baby carriage with a baby in it, with a sign saying, "I raised my boy to be a soldier." My sister Goldie couldn't take it, and she rushed out and started threatening this woman, and some of the guards came and took her away; they didn't hold her. And she couldn't resist telling "how stupid can you be, to talk about raising your son to be killed in a war." That's an instant that remained in my memory.

Q: Was this in San Antonio?

A: Yes.

Q: What year did you say your brothers returned from Mexico?

A: About 1918, 1919. As I told you before, they were arrested or held for escaping the draft. By being able to get to the local congressman and retaining him as an attorney, they were able to get them off. At that point they decided they would want to move to California. They were not comfortable in Texas. Maybe because it got around in the community.

Q: And was this the thing that motivated the family in moving from Texas?

A: I don't recall whether it was or not. As far as I can remember it was not the main thing. The economic conditions and the climate in Los Angeles was described as being very attractive to go there.....

Q: Did you have any relatives in Los Angeles?

A: No, I had none at all. We moved right into Temple Street, which was the ghetto in Los Angeles. We didn't know where that was. I'm trying to think of any relatives, no.

Q: But Goldie was the one that led the way, and the entire family followed.

A: And this is the way it happened coming to the United States. She led the way, and then the others followed her. She was like the leader of the family, and Mother accepted that quite willingly, quite readily. I don't recall any differences between Mother and my sister Goldie. This was it, and we followed her in that respect.

Q: Now when you went to LA, what did you do? Did you get a job? Did you go on to education again? Did you go to school?

A:I planned to go to school there, to continue, but in the end there was no money, so I went to work. I worked in assembling electric light fixtures, fifty cents an hour. My parents allowed me to save this for school, they did not expect me to pay any room and board, which I did. Toward the end of the first year I recognized that I already had over a thousand dollars, so I applied to California Institute of Technology in Pasadena. I was interviewed, my record from Texas A&M was brought in, and the examining board said that the record from Texas was not much good. They didn't want it. I recognize that I don't know whether Texas A&M was accredited fully or not, but this is the reason they rejected me. I accepted that, started to look around at other possibilities, and then I get a letter from one of the members of the board. It said to come in and see him. He was one of the board. What's interesting is that he already was a member of the American Legion, with a little cross on his lapel. I come in, and he tells me, "I'm calling you in because I think you would make a good student." I can't go in to tell you too much of what's going on, but we had a very large influx of Jews into the schools, and some of the members were concerned about that. He said, "I don't think you need to be punished for it. Are you very serious about wanting to go here?" I said yes. He said, "well, I'll make it possible for you to go here. I want you to take a review course in physics, a review course with a tutor," (this was summertime) "and in chemistry." These were the two areas that he thought I needed.... My math was good he thought. I had an A in math. I wish he had included English, but he didn't. And so he said, "there are some tutors here on campus, some instructors that will help you. They know what's required. And I think that if you reapply, you will be accepted." And I followed the instructions, and I was accepted.

Q:Now what time of the year?

A: This would be in June, July, August, during the summer vacation time.

Q: It was during that period that you were tutored, and then in the Fall semester, you entered?

A: I came in, that's 1924 by now.

Q: Did you enter as a second-year student?

A: No, I entered as a first-year student, with some credits. I don't recall the details.

Q: How long did you attend?

A: I attended only nine months, and I've never worked so hard in all my life as [when I was] going there. The standards were very high. Problems were not assigned to do so many, [instead I had to] do as many as I could. Some youngster was bringing in 50 solutions, and I was coming in with 10. Professors would grade according to my work my grades were not very good. But they were passable, ... passable. I stayed up many a night until 1, 2 o-clock, trying to keep up with what was going on. Millikan, I don't recall his first name, he received the Nobel prize in electronics at that time, that was a very exciting period for us. I stayed with my sister Goldie in Pasadena. They had opened up a dry goods store in Pasadena and I would work part of the time, to help in that area. She was very good to me, very anxious that I remain [at Cal Tech]. At the end of the first year, I had no money, I recognized that I couldn't continue there. The tuition was pretty high at that time, a thousand dollars or some such sum. And then I met Vera. Things were beginning to happen.

Q: You met Vera in what year?

A: In 1925.

Q: Did you skip over....

A: One year? I think I went to Cal Tech in 1924..... It comes close enough to the area that I'm talking about. The year 1924 I went back to work again, in the machine shop. On this job a young man by the name of Porter started edging up to me, talking to me. He heard me say that it was not fair for me to be getting 35 cents an hour, and all the others were getting 50 cents, just because I was young. They were getting away with that. And that perked up in his ears, and then he started saying to me, "do you know about these organized groups? Like Socialist groups, Communist groups. You ought to investigate them, you may be interested." And so he steered me into a Young Communist group in Los Angeles in 1925. I asked him, "do you belong to one?" He said "no, I'm not eligible, because I'm drinking too much." [He was] Very honest about it. I went to this group on Spring Street, 224 Spring Street, and the..... allowed me to be there, and that was about all. They didn't make friends with me, they did not reject me, they did not accept me, but I was so interested in what they had to say that it didn't matter. It took about three months or four months before they recognized that they should ask me to join, so they asked me to join. They asked me some questions, and I joined. This group consisted of Bill Schneiderman, and Levine.....Edith Berkman (?) who became very well known. All these were young people at that time.... We carried on.

Q: This was the YCL?

A: YCL, Young Workers League in Los Angeles.

Q: Young Communists League...

A: It didn't call itself [that] yet, it called itself the Young Workers League. It later changed its name to that. I was giving the assignment of selling the Young Worker, the newspaper, which I did. One young lady came into the organization, she was assigned to sell papers.

She came back in about an hour and sold them all. I didn't sell any. She said that she'd come up to a man and say, "Mister, wouldn't you like to buy...." She said it worked every time, so that was accepted. She was not too bright, but she was doing her job.

Q: Did you then go out and try it with young women?

A: No, I don't recall. I was made Educational Director of the Young Workers League, six months later, which was a kind of interesting job. I had to do some reading about Rosa Luxembourg, Carl Liebnock, they deserve mention in my life. Not so much about Lenin. Trotsky was a no-no on it. We would sing revolutionary songs, and then after the meeting was over we would go to a place where we could dance American jazz music. We enjoyed that very much. We were not too sectarian, as far as I can remember.

Q: How many were there in this club?

A: I'll make a guess of about 20-25 that were in the group, all interested. About 2/3 of them were students at UCLA at that time, that's where Vera went. And the others were already out of school, or were doing other things. We had one young businessman who would come to the meeting, and became known there. He was a salesman for a large furniture factory and we'd make a collection for purposes that we needed, to carry on some money. He would always donate; whereas as we would donate 50 cents or a dollar, he would donate 10 or 20 dollars, according to the needs. His name was Owens. He was going around with Vera at that time, both of them short people, and I was going around with Alice Arnes. I met Vera, he met Alice, and within three months they were married; Alice and Owens were married. I was still going around with Vera but we weren't married.

Q: Was she a member of the Young Workers League?

A: Yes, she was a member at that time. And her father was a socialist, too. At that point we did not feel very much the existence of the Red Squad in Los Angeles.

Q: Was Heinz (Police Red Squad Captain (????)

A:Heinz was already in the picture, just beginning. The Red Squad was a police organization in Los Angeles, but was basically sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, to keep any union organizations from starting. Of course, Communist organizations were well know, and they were quite active and quite good. I don't think I would exaggerate to say that there were at least 500 arrests, mostly on the charge of "criminal syndicalism", suspicion of criminal syndicalism. They were allowed under the law to keep us for 72 hours without bringing us before a judge, and in nearly all cases they would dismiss it at the end of three days, 72 hours.

Q: Were you picked up?

A: Oh, many times, I was arrested over 30 times.

Q: Tell me, do you recall the first time you were picked up?

A: Yes. The first time I was distributing leaflets, or handbills, at UCLA. At that time it was called the Southern Branch. It was against the war, war preparations, and so on. I was arrested at that time, was bailed out by the International Labor Defense. It was a very traumatic experience to be in jail. I was in jail for about 8 hours, but it felt like 8 years. Very frightening, especially in the type of institution the jail was there, on First Street. Mainly made up of people who were drinking, who were sick, everything else..... In the room there were about 20 of us. I was bailed out.

Q: Did you appear before the court?

A: No, no, I don't recall what happened, I did not appear. Whether it was dropped or not, I don't recall.

Q: Were you represented by council?

A: Oh, definitely. Leo Gallagher came..... He was a very good friend. The one that headed up the ILD defense was Tom Lewis, an old veteran. Very wonderful person. He was the one that just..... carrying on at that time. The movement in Los Angeles was really developing. The persecution didn't keep people away, and it attracted attention.

Q: Did any of the Red Squad attend your meetings of the Young Workers League?

A: No, they would be around downstairs to show themselves, that they were watching us, and in that way act as a discouraging factor. It may have done so for some. We were not happy to have this happen. But the meetings mostly, their activities mostly [were] at demonstrations, which they would break up. At marches that we held. We'll get to some of the things I carried on in the Unemployed Movement.

A: I would like to describe my activities in the Young Communist League....

Q: Before you do that, however, let us refer once again to your education....
A: First at Texas A&M, one year, then transferred to Cal Tech, where most of my Texas credits were not given, as far as I can remember. I started as a freshman. At the end of one year, I transferred to UCLA because I had no money to pay for the high tuition fee at Cal Tech. At this time it's Cal Tech. [I was] working very hard, under difficult circumstances. I think I described how I finally got in there, after some indication of anti-semitic feelings there. But I could not afford to stay at Cal Tech, the tuition was quite high at that time, so I transferred to UCLA in Los Angeles, on Vermont Street. One of the attractions of transferring there was that Vera was a student there, and I [had] gotten pretty deeply involved with Vera. We saw each other a great deal at the time. At UCLA I stayed for one year, and became a full-fledged sophomore at that stage.

Q: What year was that?

A: 1926, as far as I can remember.

Q: What department were you registered in?

A: I was registered in engineering, but UCLA had no upper-class engineering, only the first two years. So I decided to go to UC Berkeley, where they had a full course in engineering. I spent nearly two years at Berkeley. At this stage I had married Vera, and conditions were such that made me drop out before I completed my full engineering course. I came back to Los Angeles to take a job, and take on the responsibility of raising a family. In Berkeley, this is 1926, I had become very active on campus, especially in the struggle and activity against ROTC, which was required for two years to take if you enrolled at UC. And with my desire to stop militarism in any way, I embarked on an extensive campaign, attracted much attention, including many religious groups, who were also interested in a pacifist position.

Q: Were you registered at [illegible] the Young Communist League?

A: Yes, we had a Young Communist League on the campus.

Q: And you were active in it?

A: I was active in it, quite openly of course. The organization was sponsoring was the doing away with the ROTC, became very large, quite active in Berkeley and Oakland. But we did not succeed in stopping it. On the other hand, an International Congress of the Communist Parties in Moscow was held, and the issue of what I was doing in Berkeley was brought up at this congress. The California Communist Party, including me, were severely criticized for carrying on a campaign of pacifism. At that time they wanted the young workers and students to take ROTC, to learn how to use weapons, in the cause of the revolution.

Q: How did you learn of the displeasure of the Communist Party?

A: I was called in by the Communist Party head, Emmanuel Levin, and shown this information in the form of a statement that was made, and I was told that this was the wrong policy that I was pursuing, and I should disband this organization.

Q: Levin is the man in Los Angeles?

A: No, at this time he's in San Francisco. He was in Los Angeles, and Ann was in Los Angeles when I first joined the Young Communist League, but now he'd been transferred [to] state organizer or state head of the Communist Party, Secretary of the Party.

Q: You mentioned Ann....

A: Ann is his wife, and she played quite an important role in the movement as such.

Q: What did you do with respect to his request that you discontinue your operations?

A: I stopped calling meetings of any kind, and just dropped the matter. Basically there was no official activity to say "let's disband, here's the reasons why," I just did not call any meetings. By the way, as an instant again, I lived to see ROTC disbanded, discontinued on that campus, in 1960, '65. They discontinued it. They brought it back (ROTC) now again. At that time I discovered on the campus a large number of students who were from Russia, who escaped the revolution, who were enrolled on the Berkeley campus, including of course

the engineering course. So it came out, more fully in a debate or a classroom, we were supposed to be studying engineering.

III. Communist Party activities; prison

Political activities in Berkeley

Moving back to Los Angeles, becoming active with Communist Party;

Educational director, meetings, Red Squad activities, serving time in prison, etc.

At same time; jobs with utility company and May Company.

Association with Leo Gallagher.

Leo Gallagher's participation in defense of Reichstag fire suspect;

Other information about Gallagher's life.

Start of involvement in unemployed movement.

Q: We're continuing our discussion of your political activities in Berkeley. Specifically, you had followed the instructions of the party and discontinued your efforts at having compulsory military training discontinued. Now what did you do after that in the political area? You were apparently pretty well-known in the community, at least on the campus, as a Communist. You had never kept that secret, had you?

A: No, I didn't. I don't know that I particularly flaunted it, because we still were in the semi-condition, especially coming from Los Angeles, where you didn't go around shouting. But our activity on the campus was basically [one] of support for the students, those who were poor and couldn't make it. I myself worked on various jobs, washing dishes, cleaning windows, and the last job I had was in a gas station, from 4 to 9, making a living. And there were many students like me on campus, so this was our activity, and in struggling for better conditions for the students we also brought out the party line.

Q: Now Vera was with you in Berkeley?

A: No, not at this time. She was never with me Berkeley for any length of time, except when she came up the last time and said, "This is it. We're going to be together from now on, although I must go back because I have a job." She had already graduated, and was working as a social worker. Since you mentioned Vera, I think I can bring in the instance of the fact that when she came to stay with me in my room, a situation developed in Los Angeles where two party people were found living together, and were arrested for that, on moral charges. Both of them had been together for over 20 years. We at first were not going to get a license, we didn't feel it was necessary, but the landlady put pressure on us by saying that I registered as a single, that she didn't want to have such a condition, so we rushed out and got our first application for a marriage license. Then you had to wait three days before you could summarize (?) that. Meanwhile, the landlady cooled off and apologized. Since Vera was getting letters under "Mrs. Meyer Baylin" through the mail, she assumed that it was okay, so we dropped the marriage license at this time. Vera stayed

about a week, then went back to Los Angeles, and I remained on the campus. Some outstanding instances that occurred on the campus was the number of Russian emigres that were in school. These were White Russians who had escaped after the revolution. Many of them lived in Manchuria, China. I got to know a number of them, and one of them was called upon in an engineering course, public speaking I believe, to tell about his experience in Russia. So he did, and he loaded, very heavily, with statements like the Bolsheviks killed 50,000 priests in Russia, and in general they were destroying anyone who had any beliefs. At this point I couldn't resist, but to get up and tell him I didn't believe him, that I think he was exaggerating on all these statements, and in came the dean of the college, Dean Cory, and listening to all of this, he raised hell with me about me refuting it, and decided that I didn't know what I was talking about, that this man had come from Russia, had escaped the revolution, and therefore he must be telling the truth. That instant caused me great difficulties in the department, and one of the reasons that I left before I graduated was the fact that he had implied that I'd never make it, and I was having a very difficult time in that area. The experience on campus and in school was an extremely exciting one for me; there was always much to do. I also made contact with a Finnish colony, that lived in Berkeley at that time. They had their own hall on 10th Street.

Q: The Finnish Comrades Association?

A: Yeah, Finnish Federation. I went to some of their gatherings, found it difficult to make friends amongst them. It took about a year before I was accepted fully in it, especially since they ran dances on Saturday, and I enjoyed going to those dances. Out of this group, maybe I will discuss later, came Grace Snyder, who was a student at Cal in Phys. Ed. major, a very beautiful blond young lady, who volunteered to go to the Soviet Union to help them in their problems ~~their~~, in education and in physical education activity, and quit in the middle of the term. I was very impressed with her. I later visited her in East Berlin, where she had meanwhile gone through many experiences, including her husband being killed by the Nazis, and she herself extremely crippled up by the Nazis. That was one of the instances that I recall from my life on the campus. I met others, worked with them, including Bernie Witkin. He was a law student at the time. I believe I'll mention the event that stood out. Bernie had three other roommates, they called themselves the Four Inevitables. Bernie of course knew that I was a Communist, a Young Communist person, and he invited me to meet some of his friends and talk the thing over.

Q: These were the Four Inevitables, I take it, that you're referring to.

A: Yeah, that's right, that's right. So I came over there, and found about 20 people in his apartment, and then they started shooting questions to me about Communism and Socialism, dictatorship of the proletariat, and many other things, and I did my best to answer them. And then they seemed to be getting the best of me. At this stage Bernie stepped in and defended me, and he started answering questions, and in some ways he did a better job than I did. This instance remained in my being because Bernie later on became quite well-known as an attorney in the Bay Area. I think he wrote some of the briefs for Governor Warren, who went to the Supreme Court. He's still around, and Ernie tells me he's living in Berkeley, and I should someday try to contact him for old times' sake.

A:Ernie asked me if any adult people were members of the campus or the Berkeley unit of the YCL, and I say no, I cannot remember any adults being part of it, except from time to

time, someone from San Francisco, from the State Committee or one of the other ones, came and sit in with us to see what we were doing. Our activity mostly was around education, trying to understand, studying some of Marx's writing, studying some of Lenin's writings, and trying to get a hold of what life was about. It didn't come easy, but we did study.

Q: Did you hold any public meetings?

A: No, we had no public meetings.

Q: Did you distribute any literature on the campus?

A: We distributed literature on campus. I don't recall how, whether we did it underground or not, whether we left it around or what. I'm pretty sure we didn't stop at the Sather Gate and hand it out, but we did distribute literature.

Q: Did you have an office in the YCL?

A: No, there were officers, organizers and educational directors in the unit as such, but that's about all there was to it. We participated in conventions that were held. We sent delegates to that.

Q: Were you sent as a delegate?
A: Oh yes, definitely, I was one of the most active ones. I also arranged a debate, a public debate, between Bernie Witkin and William Snyder, who at that time was head of the state Young Communists League, living in San Francisco. He originated in Los Angeles. The turnout for this debate was quite good, my guess would be 400-500 people.

Q: Where was the meeting held?

A: It was held in a church. I think the church people believed it would be basically a pacifist meeting because I was known as such, ... working on it.

Q: Was this the Unitarian Church?

A: I cannot remember which one it was at that time. I wasn't very hot for churches in general, because I looked upon myself as being an atheist, not being in favor of the organized church.

Q: Had you lost your connection with the orthodox Jewish faith?

A: Oh, a very long time ago, right after I became bar mitzvahed, that is, when I reached the age of 13. I started to kick my heel about not going to synagogue, and by the time I was 17-18, Mother didn't even try to....

Q: But you did go through the bar mitzvah ceremony.

A: Oh yes, I fully participated. Also, before reaching 13 I spent 3-4 years in parochial school, after school hours, learning to read and write hebrew and yiddish, which I mastered to some degree. I never had a chance to use it much. I was able to write letters to my mother in yiddish, which she appreciated. She enjoyed writing yiddish, but I couldn't always make out what she was saying.

Q: But to return to Berkeley and any political activities there, can you recall anything else?

A: The presidential elections in 1928. I'm trying to recall who was running on the Communist party ticket. I think it was William Foster and Ford, a black man, was the combination, and I was trying to get my friends who were not necessarily members of the Young Communist League to vote for them. There were a number of friends that I had made on the campus who were willing to participate in the elections, but were not ready to join or carry on.

Q: During the period you were in the Young Communist League in Berkeley, was the party or your group active in national activities and issues?

A: Yes, it was, because that's the way the party and the Young Communists League functioned, not just locally, but it dealt with international problems. We were faced with a danger of another war at that time, and so we dealt with it extensively. The way it showed in particular in our ..... a factional fight developed within the Communist party and Young Communist League, led by William C. Foster, whose program was a leftist program, and Jay Lovestone, who was a rightist person, insofar as he said to go slow, that the United States was not ready for revolution, etc. So we debated that, it became a very difficult struggle because it meant leadership of the party in California and the leadership of the party worldwide.

Q: This was heavily debated in your own chapter of the YCL?

A: Yes.

Q: Were there differences of opinion there?

A: There were differences of opinion.

Q: Did that result in any of the members withdrawing?

A: No, if anything it attracted more people. Sympathizers were encouraged to come in, and the party during that period grew, rather than falling apart. It ended up basically in 1931, I believe, by being taken to the Communist International, which was basically controlled by the party in the Soviet Union, and they ruled in favor of removing both Foster and Lovestone from their important positions and bringing in Earl Browder at that time into the party. Lovestone was either expelled or dropped out of the party, Foster remained indirectly, although both of them were criticized. Foster's position of being leftist and working for revolution in the United States was more or less upheld by the CI at that time, and that's why he remained. To try to heal the wounds that had developed, they brought in Earl Browder at that time. Browder came from Kansas, Browder was aligned very much to the American scene, and he seemed to be fairly successful. He's the one who that raised

"Communism is 20th Century Americanism." In regards to the factional fight, it was an extremely bitter fight, and caused the party to place all of its activity around the factional fight, one group trying to outdo the others in certain areas, and as a result bad feelings developed. When the CI ruled in favor of the "Fosterites" as we were known, many of the "Lovestonites" dropped out of the party.

Q: You attended statewide meetings?

A: Statewide meetings, convention meetings, where we struggled for power to carry it on. Other ..... meetings that were called. As the leader of the group in Berkeley I went to these meetings and participated. Unfortunately, it got to a point where local activities were secondary. The main thing was to advance our position in the factional fight that took place.

Q: Your political activities prevented you from carrying on some of your studies, would you say?

A: It didn't help. Taking an engineering course was a very difficult undertaking. I think it was far more difficult than many other courses, and it required work, and I carried a full load of 16 units. As a result, my grades were very poor, and I believe because of the activity I put into the party and the Young Communist League, I didn't have the time that was necessary. I do recall staying out till 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning to prepare for exams and whatnot. Most of the exams in the engineering course were what they called "open book exams". We would come in with books, and try to solve the problems and carry on with that. If you made an average of 55 in an exam, you would get a "B". It was that much of an undertaking. Why I stuck to it I don't know, but I guess I was in it too deep to make any changes in the third and fourth year. By this stage of my life I didn't recognize that I really didn't belong in engineering. I would have done much better in sociology or fields of that kind.

Q: So how many years did you spend in your studies of engineering?

A: Almost four years. I lacked about 12 units to graduate. I dropped out when I got together with Vera.

Q: When you dropped out of UC Berkeley, did you remain in Berkeley?

A: No, I went back to Los Angeles, where my family was, where Vera was, and I had many roots in Los Angeles. I became very active there too, because the depression was coming on.

Q: When you returned to Los Angeles, did you get a job?

A: Yes, I got a job with the bureau of power and lights as a junior engineer, a civil service job. It paid fairly well, but when the depression was coming on, the utility company which had hired four of
us decided that they would have to lay us off. We were there less than a year. After you spend a year, it would be very difficult for them to lay you off.

Q: You would have tenure?

A: I would have tenure, so they laid me off just a little before the year was up. From then on I had a hell of a time getting any work. We are going into now a very interesting and difficult part of my activity, but again I carried on fully. When I think back on it I'm sure that if I were told to take that gun and get on the barricades, there would be no hesitation on my part.

Q: When you returned to Los Angeles, did you become active in the local Communist Party?

A: Yes, I was transferred from the Young Communist League into the Communist Party. In fact, the Young Communist League was a transition ..... for people to go into the party if they stayed in the Young Communist League. Of course I became active in the Communist party.

Q: What was the nature of your activity during the first year?

A: The first year basically I was put into the educational work, and made the head of the educational committee for the Communist party. At this stage the Communist party had about six to eight branches in different parts of the city. It was my job to coordinate the educational work in each one of these units, by having their educational director meet with me once a week, discuss what should be taken up at the party units, and in turn prepare material and carry on in that way. Fairly quiet, ... went on, I don't recall any major demonstrations at this time. The Sacco and Vanzetti demonstration, I don't remember what that was, I know I participated in it. It was a very big one, and the police broke it up in Los Angeles.

Q: Did you have any other connections with the police, with the Red Squad, during that first year?

A: Yes, I just cannot recall the circumstances, but I was arrested at Philharmonic auditorium in Los Angeles, where they broke up a meeting and ..... arrested at that time. But my record of arrests was to grow and grow. By the time I left Los Angeles in 1935 I had already been arrested 32 times.

Q: Did you actually serve time in prison?

A: In nearly all cases I did not. They would arrest me under a law called suspicion of "criminal syndicalism", and they could keep me for three days and nights without setting any bail or anything, so they would let me go. The major time I did was for the Tom Mooney demonstration, at the Olympic games in 1932, but I think we will come to that a little later in our discussion.

Q: What is the longest time you served in jail?
A: About four months at one time, then released to go back again, and in the Tom Mooney case I did nearly a year in all.

Q: From Berkeley, you returned to Los Angeles. What did you do in Los Angeles?

A: In Los Angeles I applied for a position with Los Angeles Bureau of Power and Water.

Q: Now this was roughly in 1929?

A: Yes.

Q: What sort of a job did you get?

A: It was a job as a junior electrical engineer, and it paid pretty well. I was required to join the electricians union, which pleased me, and the work itself was very interesting for me. We worked with a service department that metered the electricity that people used in their homes, and we would have to check these meters, they were very delicate, and see that they operated properly. There were four of us who were selected, ~~accepted~~, who came from Berkeley, from the electrical engineering department there, and we continued this work and I continued my activity in the movement by joining the Communist party. Up to that time I was a member of the Young Communist League, or Young Workers League, I don't remember which.

Q: Had Vera returned to Los Angeles with you?

A: Oh yes, Vera had remained in Los Angeles. Came on back after we got together and made our first attempt to get married. She went back to Los Angeles from Berkeley, and when I came back she already had a job, working as a social worker for the Traveler's Aid department, and so we went and lived in her parents home at this time. We weren't yet ready to get a place of our own.

Q: Did you know the other young men who had been at Berkeley who had gotten jobs?

A: Yes, I knew especially one by the name of Abe Tillis, who later went back and got a doctorate in this field, and became a professor at Cal, at the University of California.

Q: Now you say you engaged in political activities at the same time you had a job. Now I assume these political activities were carried on after work.

A: Yes it was, and I was selected to become the educational director for Los Angeles and the surrounding area. Quite a responsible job.

Q: Now precisely what were the duties of the educational director?

A: The duties were to keep up with the current events of the period, to keep up with the Communist party position on various issues, and to instruct and help the Communist party units, which at that time were about 12 or 13 of them, to have educationals at their meetings. Part of their meeting was educational, and partly was business.

Q: That is to say, educational discussion in which the members were supposed to participate?

A: Yes, that was my.....

Q: And how large was your unit?

A: The average unit was about 15, maybe 20, and there were quite a few, as I said, maybe 12 or 14 of those units.

Q: And I take it there were men and women.

A: Men and women, yes, and each unit elected an educational director, and an organizer for it as I can recall, and a literature agent to sell literature that was produced by the Communist party, mainly in New York.

Q: Could you give me a sample of what the discussion was about? Have you any precise recollection of what you would talk about at a meeting?

A: Yes, yes, the main discussion was the economic conditions in the country, the attempt for workers to get organized into unions. There was a coal miners' strike that we were involved in. There was the Scotsboro boys, a case that came up, of which I think 9 or 10 black youngsters were arrested in the South, taken off of the freight trains, and charged with rape and whatnot. It became quite an important case. The Tom Mooney case came up from time to time, on various anniversaries. The main discussion though was around the economic situation.

Q: And what wa the purpose of these discussions?

A: To help members understand more of the conditions that surrounded them, and help them to use this information to recruit additional members to the Communist party.

Q: Had the party previous to the meeting taken a position on these particular issues?

A: Yes, I had become a member of the County Central Committee, in which we discussed again the various things, and indicated the direction that we wanted the educational to be, and I would follow out these directions to the best of my ability.

Q: Do you have any specific recollections of these meetings? Were there any occurrences, disagreements, anything about the discussion, or was there no disagreement?

A: Not too much disagreement, as far as I can remember. Usually there was agreement, because basically all of us read the same information, and came to the same conclusion ..... Of course, part of the educational was to conduct classes in Marxism-Leninism outside of the unit meetings, in which each unit would send two or three people to this class. That was helpful in general. And education was a very important part of the Communist party movement at time in my opinion, preparing the members to the direction that we should carry on. Also, the sale of the Daily Worker, I believe it was already a daily by then, was part of the unit's responsibility, to dispose of 10 or 20 copies in each group among friends, sell it, or whatever method we had. That was a very important part of our activity. By the way, it's also now an important part of the Communist activity, and the new daily that they are selling and distributing now.

Q: The People's World.

A: The People's World.

Q: Is there any other activity that you engaged in for the Communist party in Los Angeles, that you can recall?

A: Yes, there were other instances. One that stands [out] most in my mind is an attempt by the Communist party, through its members, including me, to break up a meeting at an ACLU general meeting, where they announced a man by the name of Abrams, a Social Democrat (I don't know whether he was a member of the Socialist party or not) came to speak and to expose the Soviet Union as being a very bad situation. We came there, about 15 of us, and it was our job to cause turmoil and break up the meeting. We weren't very successful, because the police department, the Red Squad which was part of it, had gotten wind that we were going to do the.... they were there, ready to take care of us, and they did. The grabbed nearly all of us, as far as I know, and managed to throw us out. They did not arrest us, but threw us out of the hall and kept us out of the hall. I don't know at this time whether that meeting proceeded or not, but this was an activity that we were involved in.

Q: Were you still employed at that time?

A: Yes, I was still employed.

Q: Had any effort been made by the Red Squad or others to get your employer to dismiss you?

A: I don't know of any, but by the end of the year, before the year was out, I was fired, laid off, with the reason given that if I continued to work I will have some [kind of] civil service status, and they could no longer fire me. Up to a year, they had a right to do that. They did that to two other of my friends, and Abe Tillis was the only one that remained working. Out of the four only Abe remained working. I don't know whether the Red Squad had a hand in it, because the other two who were also fired were not members or involved. They had tried at other times to get us fired. I then went to work for the May Company as a maintenance person, an electrician in there, and there I worked for about a year or so, up to about 1930, and then was laid off. I'm sure that the Red Squad new where I was working, but they may or may not attempted to have me fired, I'm not ..... The instance I recall while working for the May Company (it was a big department store in Los Angeles) is that after work we were required to punch a time clock. I wanted to leave the job early to go to a demonstration at the plaza, so I asked one of my buddies to punch my clock for me, when the thing was all done. I left about 4 o'clock, where as usual I went to 5, came down to the demonstration, and in no time the demonstration was broken up by the police, and I was arrested. I was arrested later on, on the charge of resisting arrest or disorderly conduct. I was bailed out, and the trial was held at this time. At this trial we presented a timecard showing that I was at work at 5 o'clock, and here they were supposed to have arrested me at 5 o'clock at the plaza. They were puzzled, so we brought the foreman on the job, put him on the stand, and he had to say "yes, this is the correct timecard; yes, I was there", and that the police didn't know what they ..... They didn't arrest me at the plaza, they arrested me at the party office after the demonstration was over. Kind of stupid it was,

that's where we congregated to find out the results. So I was acquitted for the first time. It was quite a victory for us.

Q: By whom were you represented at the hearing?

A: Leo Gallagher was the attorney for us.

Q: This was not the first time you were represented by Leo Gallagher.

A: No, no, I'm trying to recall, my whole career was centered about Leo Gallagher representing me. We became very good friends. Leo was not married, we thought he should be married, and we brought very lovely young women to make a marriage arrangement, but it didn't work, basically because he couldn't afford to support a wife, he was having great difficulties. I don't recall whether Leo was fired from his job as a teacher at the Southwest Law School. And there he would close the windows, and tell the students what he thought about the class struggle, and so on. And he preached the revolution very strongly. Very sincere man, very likable person, I found him to be.

Q: And a good Roman Catholic.

A: Very good, and we went to church with him, at the DoHeeney (?) church, I don't know if you know what church that is. That's a church built by a millionaire called DoHeeney, he contributed most of the money, and it's all decorated in gold leaf on the inside. Exceptionally beautiful. We went there for services, either for a Christmas mass, or some very important holiday and here he is, Leo sitting with me and Vera and grumbling. He said "if this was a Communist meeting, it would have been broken up a long time ago. Look how the people are standing all over the place, there's no chance to get out in case of a fire." That was the main thing, he said "nobody bothers them," and he was very upset by that. For some reason or other, we didn't tackle his Catholicism, we felt he was very sincere, and it was not advisable to deal with ....., at least we didn't.

Q: Did he ever say anything inconsistent in his membership, or association with the CP, if not membership?

A: Well, he was never made a member, and there was reasons for why the party did that. Not that he was ineligible, they did not want to endanger his source and position as an attorney, and he was not happy about it. He felt that he should be a member. But that's the way it worked out. I want to dwell on Leo because he was such a beautiful person. He was definitely more than a civil liberties person, he definitely considered himself a revolutionary, and I do too. At this time I was going to mention the Reichstag fire that took place later on, and I don't know whether I should mention it now in regard to Leo Gallagher. I think I shall.

Q: I think it's a good time to mention it.

A: The Reichstag fire, for those who may not know the history of it, was when Hitler took power in Germany. Soon after, a fire broke out in the Reichstag in Berlin, and the Communists were accused of setting this fire. This was a fairly large fire. Dimitrov was arrested, who was at that time the General Secretary of the Communist International. Dimitrov was a Bulgarian, but not a Russian, but he was not ..... A fabulous man in his own

right. But that's not what were dealing with. When he was arrested, and others, the Communist International, and the Communist parties, decided to send lawyers to defend him, and in the United States Leo Gallagher was selected as the attorney to go there. Leo knew some German, for one thing, and Leo had a good reputation. He knew something about Berlin because he had spent a number of years studying in a seminary there, because the priests were German. I might as well mention that while studying in Germany he developed a condition of tuberculosis, and was told that he needed a warm climate to help him overcome it, so he left before he finished, and came to California, and was going to live in the Mohave Desert for a while, and then came to Los Angeles, where he passed the bar, I assume, and was trying to establish a practice. While in Germany he met a young woman that he liked very much, but he could not marry her because she was a Jew. This is before the Reichstag fire, during the period before Hitler took power.

Q: He couldn't marry her because of his religion?

A: This was the reason he gave me, he gave us as a..... And so, when he came there to defend Dimitrov at the Reichstag fire--by the way, he was not permitted to do so. He was only allowed to sit in and listen, but was not permitted to carry on. He thought of the fact that his duty to bring Hannah, this girlfriend that he liked so much, out of Germany, and he arranged to marry her, and he took her out. I don't know the details of how it was done, but he took her out of Germany and she came to Los Angeles, and we met her. I do not at this time remember where they were married or how, but by this time he had a wife, and soon after a child, who Hannah wanted to call Monica, but Leo said no, it had to be Hannah. So the child was called that, at that age. Leo continued to be active in Los Angeles, and became the official attorney for the CIO, which developed in 1936, and the members of the CIO, the union men in different unions of the CIO, thought so highly of him that they made a collection and bought him a house, no mortgage on it of any kind. Enough money was raised to buy him a house, which is a terrific tribute to the man and his being. At an age of about 75 he developed what I would say was Alzheimer's disease. He could not recognize me when I came to visit him, could not remember anything, just a living vegetable, that's the way I saw it. Hannah let us visit with him, and so on. And soon after that he died, I don't know exactly when.

Q: He was still married to Hannah at the time of his death?

A: Oh yes, at his death he was married to Hannah.

Q: Do you know whatever became of little Hannah?

A: No, I haven't, we haven't followed through. You see, we were living already in San Francisco. We would come and visit Los Angeles, family and friends, and Leo was included in that. But this is what happened to him toward the end. I really don't know how to find out, although he has a brother living in San Francisco, also an attorney. I met him once, I just don't know any more. He had another brother living in Arizona, in Phoenix, and that's about it. I don't know his background, where he was born, or anything else.

Q: Now all of this resulted from your arrest in LA, on the occasion of the breaking up of the meeting at the ACLU. Your arrest and subsequent trial, at which you were represented by Leo Gallagher.

A: No, in the case of the breakup of the meeting we were thrown out but not arrested. But in the case of the demonstration later on, in 1929.

Q: Oh yes, that's right, where you left the job an hour earlier....

A: And used the timeclock to keep myself out of jail. But Leo was the attorney that defended us.

Q: Did you lose your job in the consequence of that trial?

A: Soon after, I lost the job at the May Company, and became unemployed. The saving grace was that Vera was working. She was the breadwinner at that time, earning I think $60 or $80 a month, working for the welfare department.

Q: No longer with Traveler's Aid?

A: No longer with Traveler's Aid, and I don't know why she left Traveler's Aid at this time. In fact, I've never asked her. I became active in the unemployed movement, which was coming on, and then the crash of 1929.

Q: Were you assigned by the party to work in the [unemployed movement]?

A: I don't recall exactly. All I know is I started working in the unemployed movement, and it of course developed into a huge movement. We had as many as 500 people at a meeting.

Q: Did the WPA exist at that time?

A: Not yet, that came later, after Roosevelt was elected in 1932. But at that time there was very little relief in it.

Q: Now what was this unemployed movement? What was the name of the group?

A: Yes, the Unemployed Councils we called it. And we had our headquarters on a lot, a private lot, in the skid row, in the area where the employment agency existed, where the .....

IV. Unemployed Councils; hunger march; TUUL; milkers

Activities with Unemployed Councils in Los Angeles
First hunger march.

Becoming involved with TUUL; start of involvement with milkers.

Q: When the last tape expired, you were starting to discuss your activities with the unemployed councils, and particularly how they met at the so-called slave market, which was at 5th and Townsend in Los Angeles. Would you carry on from there:

A: Yes. We started out to build an organization that we called the Unemployed Council, that originated back East in New York, sponsored basically by the Communist Party. I was selected by the county central committee to be active in that area. We started out by trying to speak on the street to the unemployed, and were broken up by the police. We were not permitted to do that. For some reason, there was no constitutional challenge made of that event. Either that or we didn't believe very much in the constitution. This was very possible. And so to get around it I located a lot in one of the alleys close by. The owner was willing to rent this lot for twenty dollars a month. On that lot we could speak and the police could not break us up because we were on private property. At least that was the interpretation we had at that period. This started a movement that in my opinion was outstanding as far as the activities of the Los Angeles Communist Party and its members took place. We soapboxed about six times a day, telling the unemployed the reasons why they were unemployed, and what they should do about it. One of the reasons we told them that would help would be for them to join the Communist Party. We were pretty frank about it. And as a result, in one month I personally signed up fifty members for membership in the Communist Party. I didn't know that I was doing it until it was called to my attention.

Q: How many stool pigeons....

A: Not only that, I don't even know that many of them remained, but there were some that did remain and became active. A fellow by the name of Chambers who was very active later in the general strike in San Francisco was one of the products. A number of them later went to Spain in 1936 to fight Franco, part of the struggle that was taking place in which I may deal with later in the discussion.

Q: Did you do speaking, and who else did the speaking?

A: I did most of the speaking.... I did attract anyone who wanted to speak, and I attracted some interesting people. One of them was a man by the name of Duncan who had a very clear capable ability as a Marxist-Leninist student. He was not a member of the party. His wife was working in the garment industry. He was just around, and he heard me speak and then I asked him to speak and discuss matters. He came around quite often to speak. There were others that came to speak. There were some who were extremely capable at raising funds for our rent, and that became a question as to what to do with the surplus money that we raised. The rent was only twenty dollars a month and we raised as much as

a hundred. So we all agreed, those around me in the unemployed movement set up an organization, we all agreed that this money should go for literature and for good causes. But we never used any of the money at any time for our own purposes, our own gains. One of the things I wanted to mention about the activity there was that the Salvation Army set up a dining room to serve the unemployed coffee and donuts. They had a donut making machine that produced donuts, and we would get in line and get our coffee, two donuts and a cup of coffee, then go outside and eat and drink it, and as soon as we were through with that, we would get back in line again, because it did not satisfy the hunger among most of the people. I was not a person that was hungry because we were able to eat. Vera was working and we stayed with her parents so that we did not have a problem. At that time her father was working in the garment industry. Later on it because a problem when he was laid off and there was no work for him too. In the unemployed movement, we usually coordinated with what was going on nationally, and one of the first national demonstrations came, if I'm not mistaken, in February, 1930, in which we turned out in Los Angeles alone at least 50,000 people to a demonstration at the plaza. That's down near the mission in Los Angeles. Nationally, the demonstration attracted over a million and a quarter people to the demonstrations. New York had a huge one and ... was broken up. The major demands of the demonstrators and the unemployed council was work or wages, which was somewhat confusing to the unemployed members. Why not work and wages? How can you expect to receive wages if you don't work? I as a good member did not question the slogan but went along. It was only in later years that I began to realize that there is some question about it. We managed to raise the question of recognizing the Soviet Union, which was not recognized by our country, which also confused some of the unemployed. What has that got to do with us getting jobs? But as good party members we went along with it. And many workers understood what we were about, because when finally Franklin Roosevelt recognized the Soviet Union there were pleas that said, we have to bring that about, and it is a workers' country and should be given support.

Q: We're still talking about the Unemployed Council, and what we're interested in is, what other activities the Unemployed Councils engaged in. The last one mentioned was this national meeting, held in various places throughout the country in which over a million people participated. Was there any outcome to the meeting?

A: As far as I can recall, there were movement in the states to help the unemployed. In the city of Los Angeles, the city council voted a hundred thousand dollars to help the unemployed. In the city the unemployed were helped in the form of being given a basket of food every week, which consisted of 3 pounds of macaroni, 3 pounds of rice, and 3 pounds of some other starch, and 3 rolls of toilet paper. And so when we went into an unemployed home, which I did, ate with them, and we went to the bathroom, we found stacks of toilet paper lined up. This came about, in my opinion, because of the unemployed activity we carried out. We sent delegations to the city council, to demand relief, and in general....

Q: Excuse me, when you say "we sent delegations to the city council to make demands," did you accompany the delegation?

A: No, I didn't, and I don't recall particularly why, but the main reason was that we were advancing other people who were not Communist Party members, who could not be accused of membership or anything like that, and we felt that that would be a stronger appeal. We

sent women who had five children, who were starving, who were facing eviction. We dramatized it as much as we could. In my case it wouldn't have worked out, as far as I can remember. In general, I'm happy that I had the tendency to want to push others ahead all along. I was not looking for any glory, anything for myself, but this is the way the conditions are. I think when I was selected to do unemployed work, it was on the basis of some ability to do it. I think we had a good job. As I say to you, we often had meetings of as many as 500 people, and maybe next week or two weeks later have a meeting of 50. It fluctuated depending on condition.

Q: And now you're referring to the open meetings....

A: And sometimes we had indoor meetings too.

Q: Where were they held?

A: I'm trying to remember to the best of my ability. The indoor meeting I remember was where we selected a delegate to go to a national unemployed meeting in Washington, DC. We had a very good turnout for it. We selected a Cuban man, a delegate, as I remember, to do that. We collected about $125, which was a lot of money at that time, to send him by train to Washington, DC. Came the day closer when he was supposed to leave, and he disappeared. We were very concerned. We didn't know what to do. And so two men offered to go to Washington by rail, and we raised some few dollars for it. Our friend whom we selected to go officially showed up two days later. The money was held by a treasurer of the Unemployed Council, a man around 50 years of age, who was quite active. He had the money for it, and this [Cuban] man took the money and went to the race track and lost it all. ~~He~~ didn't know how to deal with it. He got drunk for a day or two, then came back. Some of the members were ready to lynch him. I acted as his protector; I said we all have weaknesses, and this was his weakness, he likes to play the horses. The money was there, he was sure he was going to win, and he turned out to be wrong. This is the instance of sending a delegate to the national convention of the Unemployed Councils.

Q: I take it you weren't sent.

A: No. [I was] always the fellow back, let others do it, who were more representative of the situation, and so on. I'm not sure since I was arrested and held for deportation in 1930. It may be that on that basis I did not go forward either, because here was a Russian-born Communist who's already being held by the government, does not present a good picture of the unemployed movement. So on that basis, I was held back. There came a period when it was decided to hold a California state hunger march to San Francisco the first time, and I was selected again to be the organizer for it, and before we organized it, I went out into the... My route was going to be through San Joaquin Valley, through Bakersfield, Fresno, Merced, Madera, all the way to San Francisco. So I went a month ahead, and arranged for places to stay overnight, to .... whatever friends we had to help in getting stuff, food and we did it. It was quite an effective thing. It was at this stage that I ran into Alice Hamm~~er~~, who's well-known here in the Bay Area. She was the wife of Sam Hamm~~er~~, and they had a cotton ranch in the valley at that time, and they were very helpful in getting things for me. One night I stayed in Merced. The chef in that Merced hotel was a very close sympathizer of us, so he not only fed me, but he got a room for me to stay in the

Food truck

Fresno

L Vera

L M.B

Med Truck

Hunger March - in California - 1930

From Los Angeles + San Francisco

hotel. The Tioga Hotel is the name of it. The local newspaper came out with headlines "Hunger Marchers Stay at the Tioga Hotel," and .....

Q: No longer hungry.

A: I had gone to the chief of police in that town and told them what we were going to do, and asked for his cooperation. He said okay, and he gave me a dollar donation toward the march to indicate his sympathy. It was very very nice. And ~~we~~ through Joffries, who was the chef at the Tioga Hotel. His .... was very helpful.

Q: Now you were merely planning....

A: Planning at this stage where The hunger march was to stay ..... how we would conduct the march. + Feed

Q: How many marchers were there to be?

A: Well, we started out with about 60 from Los Angeles, and ended up with about 200. We picked up "delegates" in different places. There were some interesting instances in that. But, just to get back to Los Angeles before we start on the hunger march. I don't know what else to tell you about the unemployed movement that we carried on, except that we also developed the ability to put people back into their homes whenever they were evicted. There were a lot of evictions in that instance.

Q: How did you accomplish this?

A: Well, we would go along and see a family's furniture on the sidewalk outside, and we would try to find out who it was, and where we were successful, we said we were ready to put your furniture back. When there were no lights we ..... ~~for cup~~ lights. We'd get water, something to eat; we knew how, I knew how. And so we would do that. In one case when we were putting the furniture back the police came on (the regular uniformed police, not the Red Squad) and they started to chase us to arrest us, and one of them chased me. He was about 200 pounds, and I burst out laughing, he seemed so funny. ~~If~~ I were a youngster I could get around him anytime I could, but he finally cornered me and let me have it with the blackjack. In the face ~~was~~ knocked out, three of my front teeth, and arrested me at that time. I was tried in this case, and Leo Gallaher made me show my teeth condition to the jury, and they acquitted me on that basis. But I had been punished; at least that's what they said after the thing was over. So this was part of our activity. In one case we came upon a family, where their lights and their gas had been cut off, but they had not been evicted yet. We came into them, and he was cooking some stew in the garage over a little fire, to make something to eat. And we went inside, and the mother is praying on her knees to her child that is sick, a baby that's sick in bed. She seemed to be a follower of Aimee McPherson, and had came here from Texas to be with Aimee, and this was the condition they were up against. There was also a boy about 12 or 14 years of age, who was part of it, and he didn't know what was happening, he was so upset about this whole thing. We said to the father, "let's go to the welfare office in the neighborhood and demand some welfare", so he agreed. She wouldn't go, but he agreed to go. She said, "God would take care of us." So we went there, there were about five of us, and we wanted to see the supervisor, and the supervisor called us into her office; we told her what the situation was, that these people were starving,

and so on. So she said, "it's too late for me to do anything today, it's already four o'clock, but I want to give you some money to buy some food", and wanted to open up her purse, and we said "No, we can't take your money. We want the state to take care of us", and so on, and we walked out. What we did is we went to the neighbors, and they were very generous. We got food for them. And then the next day he went and got this voucher, I don't recall how, and got money and food, probably money to buy some food. We kept contact with them until they were deported back to Texas, because they were not residents of California. .... came back to Texas, and we heard about them in Texas from the neighbors, who we got to know. The youngster was very embarrassed and very upset about being brought back to Texas under these conditions. He committed suicide by hanging himself in a barn where they stayed.

Q: Let's get back to the hunger march. You were the advance agent, so to speak, in organizing the march that was to leave from Los Angeles, and go up to San Francisco through the valley. I don't think you completed your account of that organization, or have you?

A: Basically, it consisted of the Unemployed Councils taking leadership in it, and other organizations helping. In the case of Los Angeles, the Women's Progressive Council offered to go along to help to prepare food for the hunger marchers as it went along. The way we would do that is we would start in Los Angeles, march out of town, get into trucks, and go to the next place where we were going to stay overnight, stop the trucks about five or six miles outside of the city, march in as a group with the trucks following us with some food and whatnot, and then hold a demonstration or a meeting in that town, and whoever came to that meeting we would ask for delegates.

Q: How many people stuck it with you?

A: My guess would be about 40 people started with me, and on this first march (there were two marches, one held the next year, and that went to Sacramento, and I'll deal with that later).

.....

An attempt was made by the police to break up the march starting from L.A., but they were not successful. We just marched away and got into our trucks. I don't recall anyone being injured, because they use their clubs and whatnot on us quite often. So we got away in that way. It did create a lot of publicity in Los Angeles because of the police attack and so on, a lot of sympathy for the march.

Q: You were the leader of the march. Not only the organizer but also the leader of the ..... march.

A: There were others too that participated, but basically it was my responsibility, and basically I initiated things to do and carried it through, but the support of others.... I wasn't just ordering people to do it, but we worked things out together.

Q: Did you pick up new members of the march along the way?

A: I was coming to that. In Bakersfield we marched into the city and the chief of police came over. We told him we were going to have a meeting, I had arranged it ahead of time, fine. And then he said, "where are you gong to stay tonight?" I said, well, we had not known where we were going to stay, we did not specifically know. He said, "we don't think you ought to stay in the fancy ..... Hotel." We said "why not?" And here's a newspaper man. He says, "well I've arranged for you to stay at the Salvation Army camp, but you will be required to do some woodchopping, some work to stay there." That's their regulations. I said, "forget about it, we're not on this march to do work, we're here to publicize the problem of the unemployed". He said, "okay, stay there anyway, and I think that would be alright. You will have breakfast there, we've arranged that for you." So we stayed there. We had some other contacts there. At this meeting we selected delegates. One of them was a black youngster about 16 years of age, and he wanted to go along with us. "Where do you live", we asked him. "I don't know." He said he'd been riding the rails back and forth, and finding ways to survive, that was his task, so we took him along. I make a special emphasis about no matter how much we put in front of him he would eat it, and if there was any left over, he would stick it under his blouse, to make sure he had something to eat the next day. This happened for a couple of days. Our women friends who were helping us came to me, said "what's going on here? Is that good for.... ?" I said, "no, he's going to stop as soon as he feels some security here." Sure enough, the next day he didn't take any food with...." But still, ... So we carried on, on to Fresno. Vera became the educational director of the hunger march.

Q: She had participated in the march from the outset?

A: Yeah. She was working at that time, either for the traveler's aid or the welfare department, I think it was traveler's aid. She took off her vacation time to go for the two weeks involved. So she became that person, she was accepted, she was known by other people there. Most of the people there were party members or sympathized very closely. They knew it was the Communist Party that was carrying on. We had what we called a red cross car, a panel truck which carried the supplies in case someone needed the medicine, and we selected one of the unemployed who said he had a medical education, selected him as the doctor, so he became "Doc." We also had a women who was a nurse. She became the nurse of the march. After a few days she came to tell us that the rubbing alcohol is disappearing very rapidly. So we don't know what's going on, we took some measures and realized it was Doc who was drinking ....., diluting it..... That was an experience in itself.

Q: I take it he was no longer the Doc?

A: I don't remember, I don't recall. What happened was that the nurse from then on took the rubbing alcohol and put it under her pillow. She had to make sure that it didn't disappear. But I believe he remained with us, we didn't make a big fuss about it. I wasn't too concerned about these little crazy things that happened. When we got to Fresno, we called a meeting in the Fresno auditorium that we had publicized. About 50 people showed up and the place holds about a couple of thousand.

Q: Had you rented the place?

A: Yes. I don't recall the details, whether we rented or we were given the lot to use for free. We also called for a demonstration in the park in Fresno for the next day. We stayed

overnight. The next day at the park over a thousand people turned out. Very good turnout.

Q: And who was the main speaker?

A: I think members of the group including myself presented the program. But no appeal for membership in the Communist Party at that meeting. And there again the chief of police was very sympathetic and very helpful.

Q: Did you pass that hat at these meetings?

A: I think so, I don't recall at this time. What was interesting was one of the big condensed milk canneries sent us two gallons of condensed milk, which was a very big item..... And we marched out of Fresno that same day after the demonstration and selected some members to join us, five or six of them from Fresno. One of them was a woman who got up and wanted to speak, and what is her problem. She said that she had been trying to raise a crop and it was failing. And her feeling was that she at the point where now they have eaten up all their chickens and they were ready to eat their dogs. She said "it was about time I root myself up and go with you to San Francisco to get some help." And she joined the group with us. A Mexican family joined with two children, and that was a big item for us to handle. We didn't know ..... discreet. So we decided against them. The man went with us, but the mother remained with the children. We really had nothing to lose by going with no food. So that was one of the experiences of that period. We went along to Merced where I stayed overnight in it, in Joffries' joint at that time, and we had a very good meeting there, very good publicity. Then we continued north, and at Madera we were stopped by the police outside of town. You can't go through town, and we had arranged a meeting in town, and ..... And he said "it's illegal, ... we don't want you." So I got up in the front car and I spoke to the group. I told them what the situation is with the police, and we had a choice, either to back to Los Angeles or go through here. "What is your vote?" Well all of them yelled, "let's go!", so I led the bunch right into the police with their guns, and they opened up for us. And we continued right through Madera. We got to town, where they had hooked up the fire engines, to wash us out. And they did. They turned it on us, and we continued, toward the hall on the main street. We got wet. We held a gathering outside the hall, and we got good response from the people who were incensed by what the fire department had done to us. And we cleaned up and we ate, and that evening we had a very good turnout for a meeting indoors. There again, we elected delegates to go with us.

Q: Was this during the summer months that you took this trip?

A: I don't remember the exact date, but it was summer, warm, hot in fact in some places. In Madera at the meeting, in comes the fire department with a huge slab of beef for us, and two boxes of apples. They showed support. We were asked by a couple of Mexicans to come and stay at their place. We were distributing and staying at different places. So we went there. They gave us their room. Their room consisted of a bed and springs but no mattress. So we slept on a blanket there, and that was an interesting experience, feeling the warmth and acceptance that took place. When we started out for Chowchilla, we arrived there again, the police department met us and also included the head of the American Legion, and said "we have arranged a barbecue for you, and a place to stay tonight", at ..... camp, I think it was the fairgrounds. So we went there, and they served us this meal, a very

tasty meal, with barbecue meat and whatever else goes with it. Then they decided that the men could stay in the hall but the women should be put up in motels, because the hall was too public for them. And we had already a black woman, and they put her in a separate motel. And our women, including Vera, said "no dice, we will stay together, and we're going to stay here." So they had to change their plans. Meanwhile, we heard the news that the group that started in L.A. and wend along coast got as far as Santa Barbara, and all of them were locked up overnight in jail. And the next night, they were told "you have a choice. Either getting into your cars and trucks and going to San Francisco, or going back to Los Angeles. But you're not stopping anyplace overnight." So they got in their cars and came to San Francisco. But they did make the newspapers. Eddie Black was in charge, about the same age as I was. That's the best he could do at that time. So we're at this time at Chowchilla, and everything seemed to be going well. We again selected more delegates, and as far as I can remember one other place we stopped and had a very good reception. I made contact with a young man who had joined the Young Communist League. He in turn had brought in some young friends that ..... come with us on the march. And they had musical instruments ..... Interesting experience, he took me to meet his parents. They were not approving of what he was doing, but still showed respect and didn't want to be negative. I was impressed with their real roots there, farmers, connection, recognized what was going on, but were not ready to do anything about it. We came in to San Francisco, and we were to have a demonstration there. We marched on Market Street, I can't remember whether it was the ferry building all the way out to Civic Center. And when we got there, Mayor Rolf was there to greet us. He wanted to talk to us. And we just passed him by, as if he was not there. He's talking and we're marching. Our way of rejecting him. And we ended up at California Hall, and there other speakers were involved from other places. Frank Spector was very active, one of the leaders. This was before he went to prison under the Imperial Valley case. At this meeting, the convention for the unemployed was being held with some kind of a state structure. ..... It was Frank's job to make an appeal for membership in the Communist Party, and nearly a hundred percent of those there joined the party. It was remarkable. After a day or so of rest and meeting, we started back in the trucks to Los Angeles, on the same route that we came. When we came within a few miles of Bakersfield, north of Bakersfield, our truck broke down. Who was the first one to leave us, but this black youngster. He said, "I'm going to ride the rod to Los Angeles." I tell him I'm upset about it, don't like that..... And so he left. We fixed the truck, we got going; when we got past Bakersfield, he's hitchhiking, he stops, wants a ride. No dice, we don't take him. "I'll bring you up on charges", he said. I said, "you just do that." We arrived in Los Angeles. We had to hang out at the co-op on Brooklyn Avenue and Boyle Heights. He's there already, and he's already told the party organizer that I wouldn't accept him on the truck, and I was discriminating against him because he was black. Of course they wouldn't accept his story. But he got a few meals out of it, because the restaurant, a co-op, that was run there served people who were ethnic,.... It was interesting how quickly he learned the use of that term "discrimination", because we spoke about it a great deal. How to exploit alleged discrimination. Fortunately, I was too well known to be accepted, because the party people were very sensitive to that. There were cases of discrimination, believe me.

Q: Could I ask you another question about the march? You started out with about 40 people. Did people drop out?

A: No. None of those who started out. I may be wrong in the number who started out, it may have been larger. I know we were about 150 or so when we got to San Francisco.

Q: In other words, you picked up individuals in various communities...

A: And they joined us. And some of them were prepared to go because they were party members at large, already knew what was going on, so they were ready to go when we came through.

Q: Now, did you return them to their homes in the various communities?

A: Yes, we dropped them off as we went along. This is the first hunger march.

Q: Did you have only one truck?

A: No, we had about four trucks. At least four trucks, five trucks. Because we rode most of the time. We had some passenger cars too, as I recall, because then we would get within four-five miles of the city, we would march through the city, and advertise our being.

Q: Did you ever reach the conclusion that possibly there were some stool pigeons in the group, that had joined to spy on what your activities were?

A: We were conscious of security, but my memory tells me that we weren't concerned with that too much. If a guy was a stool pigeon we went along. We did not hide things, everything was aboveboard, there was really nothing to do. It was true of what basically the party did in general at the time, they weren't doing anything underground to speak of..... But it was the interest of those in power to have to cordon {?} me.

Q: So you returned to LA...

A: And this is now 1930 or thereabouts. I took a job for a while working as an electrical for an electrical supply house. That didn't last very long. Business was just bad, they couldn't keep me. And so I became the trade union organizer. This was for organizing the unions. They had what was called Trade Union Unity League, with Bill Foster at the head of it. I may have mentioned that before. So I became organizer and got involved with a major milkers' strike in Los Angeles County. The county is very big, it involved thousands of square miles. Conditions were still very bad in Los Angeles and as a result [I was] unemployed. This was about 1930-33. At this point the Communist Party section committee or bureau appointed me the trade union unity organizer. The usual term used was TUUL, headed by William C. Foster, who was one of the national leaders of the Communist Party. And I had contacts among workers, in my opinion much more than many others because I was so active in the unemployed movement, and a group of unemployed milkers contacted me and I met them, and they said "would you help us organize a union?" I said "sure." I said, "bring about five or six of you together, we'll talk it over." And we set a date for it. We met at the headquarters of the Needleworkers' Union. That was also separate from the AFL union in Los Angeles, one of the few unions that already existed under the TUUL, and a functioning union at that. Well instead of five, he showed up with fifteen milkers, and they described the conditions that they were working under. I might as well indicate that to you now. They were getting $40 a month to work 30 days a month,

because cows have to be milked every day. If you miss a day the cows begin to have a chemical reaction that causes the milk to be no good, and to decrease in amount, and so they have to be milked every day, and they have to be milked at least two times a day, in many cases three times a day. The use of milking machines was very limited as yet at this time. Of course, now it's almost all done by milking machines. The work was very hard, they slept in the barn that was furnished by the dairy owners. I am not sure, but I think they had to prepare their own food.

Q: Were these single men?

A: Single men, yeah. Unmarried, couldn't afford to get married. We talked about that, and they indicated they couldn't establish themselves on what they were earning to do it.

Q: What nationality were they?

A: Many of them were from the Dutch and German extraction. Holland is known for dairy products, European-wide anyway. These were people who came over here to work. There were very few Mexicans who were milkers.

Q: Were these men young?

A: Around 35-40. No youngsters. [They] recognized their circumstances, this was their way of getting by. The way they would be able to take some time off was to quit the job, get paid off, come to town, buy another job on skid row employment office on Townsend street, then spend the rest of their money until they ran out in various ways. When their money ran out they went back to the job they bought. This was like a pattern; of course, there may have been variation. As far as I recall, none of them were married. There were maybe one or two instances, I shouldn't say none, who were old-time American, not foreign-born workers, who may have had families and were away from their families for the time being because they couldn't get any other kind of work. And so it was quite a tragic situation. So we talked it over, and talked about what kind of demands we would have, how we would go about it, and they were very anxious to [go to] action. So I said, "well, let's get a larger group together, let's get 25 or 50 on this." And we set a date, and a hundred showed up. And the word was passed around amongst them, they had a regular grapevine system. They knew each other because they had worked on different ranches, they kept changing, get sent to different dairies continually so they get to know each other.

Q: Were the dairies in town?

A: No, they were just in Los Angeles County, but out of town.

Q: How could you hold this meeting where a hundred attended.

V. TUUL; Preparing to move to New York

TUUL organizer in LA county; organizing milkers' strike.

Organizing restaurant workers.

Organizing furniture workers.

Attempting to organize Goodyear workers.

Organization, processes of Communist Party, role as educational director of one division.

Year in San Pedro; working with longshoremen, seamen.

Preparation for New York; mother and family.

A: RE becoming a Trade Union Unity League Organizer for Los Angeles County. I was contacted by a group of milkers, men who worked in the dairies, milking the cows. They asked me, would I be able to help them get organized and form a union? I said, sure, more than glad to do that. Just as an introduction, I already new about their conditions. They worked 30 days of the month, there's no days off. Cows have to be milked at least twice a day, in many cases three times. And that's why those conditions exist. There were no such things as milking machines at that time, it was all hand done. They were paid an average of around $40 a month. ..... They had to supply their own food, and they prepared their own food on the job. They slept in the barns, or whatever the accommodations the dairy man had for them. And this was a very tough life, none of them, as far as I can recall, were married or had families. There were a few, maybe exceptions, but they had no choice, they did have families, they came to work and left their families behind them. No immediate family to deal with, because at $40 a month they couldn't make out. I asked them to get together about five or six of them. We set a date, and about ten appeared, very eager to do something about the bad conditions that existed. These were all milkers who were unemployed for the time being because they were not ready to go back to their jobs, which they could go back... I think I already described how they did this. And so we talked about conditions, and so on. They showed a great deal of militancy, and knew that I was a Communist, that it didn't faze them, that they heard me speak at the unemployed meetings in the "slave market." So that was no problem. At the next meeting that we got together there were about 25 of them. This was within a week or ten days. At this meeting we started to formulate what the demands were. As far as I can remember, the demand was $60 a month, instead of 40, and two days off a month on their jobs. We indicated how it could be done by hiring an extra milker who would be the auxiliary man. They knew that too, but they said that the employers didn't care, didn't want to be bothered with that. They said that's the way the conditions were. I'm talking about an area of Los Angeles County which is thousands of square miles. At this present time, it's a population of about 14 million people, so it gives you an idea of what it's like. At that time it wasn't as heavy, but it was still a very large county. There was some bus service, some way to get in, I do not

recall just exactly how they managed because there were very few cars. A few of them had trucks, pickups, that they were able to get around with. And so we talked about it, and they were very enthused, and said "let's meet again next week, and let's bring some of our friends along." And I agreed to that. And next week the turnout was already a hundred. We found that the hall was too small, so we went into another, larger place on Los Angeles Street, as I can remember, around 5th and Los Angeles. At this meeting we decided to elect some kind of a strike committee, executive board, the things that are required to conduct this kind of organization, and at the same time I already began to realize that I had to do some educating and explaining what unions were about, brought in international situations, [how] workers everywhere were in the same conditions. One of the interesting things was that at one of these meetings we introduced the TUUL membership book, in which was also a general book for all people who belong to TUUL, not any particular industry. One of the demands printed in the book was to recognize the Soviet Union, and they were puzzled by that. I had no problem [with that]. I told them that the Soviet Union was under attack by the capitalist system and was a threat to them, and therefore as workers we must support another workers' state because it was basically a workers' state run by the workers. And they accepted that, there was no rejection, even though at that time, if you read the newspapers the poison was just as much as ever against the Soviet Union. But I doubt whether many of them could read or read the paper, under the condition they were in. They decided to call a large meeting this time, and to discuss this matter of forming a union and what to do, and at this large meeting 500 of them turned out. And it was overwhelming, it was very big. Our man who I developed as the leader was called Denver, and he was the chairman of it. He used a pistol butt to bang on the [podium] to call to order. [They were] friendly, the atmosphere was good, and their feeling of being ready was way ahead of mine. They already visualized strike, they visualized demands and all of that amongst the workers. They weren't all unemployed, many came in for the evening meeting, and we had that in mind. Trucks were arranged to bring them into the meeting, because of the problems there. One of the cute instances was that Denver would call a recess about every 10-15 minutes because he had to go to the bathroom once. I followed him to the bathroom. The recess consisted of taking a couple of shots of whiskey. It gave him more courage to carry on the meeting. And he smiled and I smiled; I made no issue out of it. And we carried on. We set a date to strike, to start early in the morning when they would start milking cows. At that time the word was passed out. I don't recall whether we had leaflets to that effect. ..... The strike was very effective. Right off the bat, we turned out about 2,000.

Q: Did you meet with the employers?

A: Not right away, no meeting beforehand. This wasn't part of the deal. The tool to use at that time was "boom", a strike. Because otherwise the employers would say "who are you, you're not working, you're this...", and so on. Because it [would] cause concern. At least this is the way we handled it at that time, that we called out a strike. One of the large dairy owners was on the Board of Supervisors of Los Angeles County. He signed-up the same day that we went out on strike. And we were sure that we were going to win because cows can't stand not to be milked. Well, it didn't turn out that way. Even though he signed up, others refused and the strike went on. Thousands of the animals had to be sent to the slaughterhouse because they were not milked. They were no longer productive enough to be kept and the owners became quite bitter. And by the end of a week we were raided at night by the police, and five of us were arrested on kidnaping charges. This was during the Lindbergh kidnaping case. Lindbergh's son was kidnaped so that the situation was hot.

What had happened was that a number of strikers had stopped some Mexican workers who were being used as scabs, and were told that there was a strike again. We had someone explain to them that they didn't have to do this, that they could come with us to the headquarters, and we would give them food for their family, and some money if we had any. And they went along with this group of workers that took them off and brought them to the headquarters. I happened to be there at there at the time, spoke a little Spanish. I was able to communicate, and they were very nice about this whole thing. At that moment I did not realize that they were wetbacks. Wetbacks were illegal aliens who came across the Rio Grande river or whatever it was, into the United States. That was the term used for these workers. And so when they left the headquarters, the police were downstairs. They were arrested, brought into the police station, and told they had a choice either to sign this piece of paper which was a charge that they were kidnaped, or else be sent back to Mexico. And they signed the paper. I don't know the details of it, but I gathered from later on that that's how it happened. So once we were arrested, including myself, we were not even at the dairy at the time, not on the job or anything. The main purpose was that it was a way of breaking the strike. It was effective. I was known, so the bail for me was set at $15,000, and for the others $10,000, because I was the ringleader of it. We could not bail out the others because we didn't know them well. We didn't know whether they would skip bail or not, so I was bailed out. The other four remained in jail. Me and Lee did what we could to keep things going, even though at this stage the AFL in Los Angeles wanted to take over the strike, take over the union. We rejected it. Their immediate demand was to call off the strike, and we felt that we would continue. The ones arrested got a hearing within three days. The judge threw the case out because there was insufficient evidence, or whatever it was. But meanwhile, it hurt the strike to such an extent that the Party told me that I had to settle the strike, to call it off, that I'd done as much as I could, that if I went any further there would be more repression of a much harder kind, including bringing in milkers from all over the country, which I didn't believe they could. By golly they started bringing them in by airplane from Chicago and other parts of the country to break the strike. So on that basis I called a meeting, a big one, to try to get them to call off the strike, but they wouldn't do it. They said Hell no. I had no control over it. Their attitude was this: what do they gain by calling it off? What do they lose if they don't call it off? Nothing. And they were right. And so the strike petered out. And slowly things came back to normal conditions, and there was no repercussions against those who were on strike. But the owners wanted them back anyway, regardless. Maybe they didn't even know exactly who struck and who didn't, because there was a mixture of other workers involved. But within a short time, the wages went up to $60, which was a very satisfying thing. And a number of them told me, "see what's happening? We're going to get more. We learned a lot of things." My work, of course, was not just only to organize, which wasn't really sincerely my motive, to get better conditions, but the Party motive was much more, more political, more advanced than mine. And their attitude was to develop class struggle ideology and involve them in it to such an extant that the leader of the Party, Lawrence Ross, later turned out to be a high-class stool pigeon, testifying against Harry Bridges. Lawrence Ross was invited tó a meeting of the strike committee and the central committee of the union, about 20 of us. He spoke to them as the head of the Party, explained what we were doing, and so on, and then handed me a bunch of applications and said "here, have these filled out." I distributed them, and all of them filled out applications for membership in the Party. It was kind of interesting how strongly..... Maybe part of it was due to the pressure of being with others, but they did that....

Q: Were they in the position to pay dues?

A: We had unemployed dues of 25 cents, ... Also, we recognized that they were not going to stay in the Party, they were wandering people of the kind I had experienced later on, but that's something else. [They were] beautiful people to me because they were fairly sincere and very simple and knowledgeable about life. They were not a bunch of stupid people in any way. This is 1934, I believe, when this milkers' strike took place.

Q: You said that the milkers' strike resulted in the employers increasing the wages on their own, after the strike was broken. Do you know exactly how long after the strike was broken that....

A: It's not an even date. [The dairymen] themselves were not organized, so in one place ..... say from none they would get more (?) where at the unemployment office where they got the job, they were told this one pays $50 a month or $40, and so they came up to $60. Now it may be a mixture. It may be that there were many others maybe not paying it, but the milkers came back to talk to me about it, saying "see what's happening? It's already on the way." Just to finish off on the milkers, because to me it was [one of] my dramatic periods in my life of interest. A few years later, when I was living in New York, and the Spanish civil war broke out, (1936, I'll deal with that later), four people showed up in my apartment. They were on the way to Spain, as Civil War volunteers. All four of them were milkers, including Denver, which I was very pleased to see, and Steve Summers was one of them.

Q: Did Denver bring his bottle with him?

A: I guess he did. Wherever he was, he was a big, powerful man. Very lovely, very good sense of humor. And so that I felt was a condition that had developed....stayed in the Party. The Party was encouraging this situation. They went ahead to Spain. At that time I also volunteered, but I'll deal with that later.

Q: Now we go back to...

A: To Los Angeles and the milkers' strike is over.

Q: What did you do after that in your organizing activities with the TUUL?

A: I got involved in the restaurant workers' union, organizing the food workers. We called it Food Workers' Industrial Union. It includes all workers, we were industrial. In other words, in any shop or factory or restaurant, we took everybody into the same union, we didn't separate. And so we started organizing that. The Party ran a cooperative in Brooklyn Ave., in Boyle Heights and Brooklyn Avenue. By that it was a placed where bread was sold, and also a restaurant attached to it. There was another restaurant called Ginsberg Vegetarian Restaurant. And so we of course went to the easiest spots to organize. We organized a co-op restaurant, and ..... we asked for a much increase in pay. Whatever it was, they signed up. Gave us a kind of start. In other words we organized ourselves. Ginsberg's was a little more difficult. In the case of Ginsberg, an anarchist was one of the workers there. And he came in with his strong philosophy, I admired him for it, saying "let's do this, let's do that", and some violent action, "let's not prepare the food properly, and the

boss will begin to understand the signal." I wouldn't accept it, others wouldn't accept that. And so we did organize Ginsberg's. And Ginsberg says "here I've been contributing to the Party, I've been doing so much and here you are, making me appear as if I was a bad boss. I don't want to be a bad boss. I was paying what everybody else was paying. Why don't you organize Boose (?) Brothers' big outfit?", and so on. Anyway, it was an interesting experience for me. And then a group came to me from the furniture workers, mostly Mexican.

Q: Ginsberg was organized?

A: Was organized, yes, even with the anarchist and all that.

Q: Do you recall what changes were made, if any?

A: I don't recall, unfortunately I don't recall. Because it was certainly not a five-day week I assure you. They were probably down to 48 hours a week instead of 60, or something like that. Because the restaurants that kept open long hours, Ginsberg's was open until 11 o'clock at night.

Q: Do you recall organizing any other restaurants?

A: No, I don't.

Q: But then, from there you went to the furniture...

A: Furniture workers, yes. And there was a fairly good sized industry developing in Los Angeles.

Q: Was there already an AFL union?

A: No, there wasn't. But we had a Party man who worked there, who was kind of an organizer. He prepared the ground, and he really led that whole thing and we did organize the furniture workers with a number of factories. And we had some factory owners that were sympathetic to us. That was a help too. I wish I could remember the names. Maybe just as well that I don't mention them because they became nationally known, or at least statewide known for their products which were advertised. So on that basis we organized that.

Q: Where were these factories located in LA?

A: In the Central Avenue district, the south end of Los Angeles, towards Slauson, and toward the Goodyear plant. That was out there. We struck one of them and the workers turned out very well, and I thought it was my duty to join the picket line, and the Red Squad came out to point out to them that [they] had a Communist on it, etc., and this isn't what they wanted. So the captain of the picket line said "it would be better if you leave." And I left, that is, I got off the picket line feeling that their needs were greater than my own. I was criticized by the Party..... ...we were giving in to the terror that these police were representing. These are things that kind of accumulate about Party leadership and whatnot,

as to how things occur. We also developed a concentration at Goodyear rubber factory...

Q: Excuse me, were there any results from the organization of the furniture workers?

A: Yes, there were some settlements made, and it was still relatively pioneering. The Chamber of Commerce was still very anti-union at that time, and any group that struck was immediately a Communist group and so on. The AFL was very weak. It had some work in the construction.... [It was weak] basically because many of them were government projects, and therefore it was easier to accept work that wasn't.... The contractors were not penalized by having union men, because the government paid for the jobs. Same thing in San Francisco and many places. In that respect, our attitude toward the AFL was very bad, basically because of William C. Foster's position on it. He said that they acted as a damper to keep workers down. That was his argument, that [they] in fact collaborated with the employers and very little strike action.... On the other hand, in the short time when the Social Security bill came up, and the Wagner Act came in, we saw that the AFL had a great deal of muscle.... They did a lot of work to get those bills passed. Those were very important bills, we supported them too, of course, very heavily. But the AFL was very effective in helping it. At the Goodyear rubber factory, where they make the tires, we worked very hard, but we could not get a foothold in it.

Q: Did the AFL have a foothold in it?

A: No, they didn't try, didn't even try. They only went for places where the possibilities were greatest, because it cost money to organize, and so they didn't do it. In our case we used volunteer Party people. We went out there in the morning at the gates and distributed handbills with literature. Quite often in other parts of the country, as a result of doing that after six months of so, a nucleus developed, of people beginning to agree with what was said in these articles that related to their job, and then the union started.

Q: You didn't have any nucleus at the Goodyear Plant?

A: No, we had no Party member inside. But we still tried. We carried on. It was not too smart because a worker would be fearful of losing his job if he was seen talking to us. Goodyear security people were around. We didn't realize that, but we had hoped....because it did happen in other parts of the country. In fact, my own feeling is. the success of the CIO which came in the 1930s, much of it was because of this work that the Party did all over the country, in educating and discussing. So when that thing came came up with John L. Lewis as the leader it just shot up like mad.

Q: How long were you an organizer for the TUUL in Los Angeles?

A: I would say approximately from about 1931 to 1933, after the work done for the furniture workers, restaurant workers, and the milkers. About 1933 I was taken off of that. A young man from the garment industry offered to take on my position. We were very glad to have him do that. I was put in the position of becoming the educational director of the Party for Los Angeles County. Shall I explain what that consists of?

Q: I was just going to ask you. What was the work that you did?

A: [The] Los Angeles party was the third largest party in the country. It was New York, Chicago and then Los Angeles. The Party was organized in what was called units, groups of 5 to 10 to 20. If it got much larger than that it would be split in part. It was also organized on the territorial basis, and also on the industrial basis. In Los Angeles because we had very few people in industry, we were organized on a territorial basis. If you lived in Highland Park there would be a unit out there; if you lived in Hollywood, and so on. And that altogether, as far as I can remember, about 14 units consisting of, altogether, about 500 party members.

Q: 14 units, five hundred party members total.

A: And some units were larger, some were smaller, depending upon..... We met every Thursday, four times a month.

Q: When you say "we"...

A: We, the Communist Party members. And everybody went to the meetings, including the officials and whatnot.

Q: In other words, the 500...

A: Went to the meeting every Thursday. My task was to develop an educational program related to the Party policy of the time, what they were trying to advance.... We had an educational director in each unit, there was an organizer and an educational director in each unit. A treasurer and a literature agent, to sell literature, maybe one or two others. We would form kind of an executive board of that unit.

Q: You were the educational director...

A: I was the county educational director.

Q: Was this a paid job?

A:No. It could have been a paid job if Vera wasn't working, but Vera was working, so it was just taken for granted. If it would be a paid job, it would have amounted to about $10-12 a week. That was about all they could pay, enough to get you by. Because I was [paid] for awhile. When I was in San Pedro they gave me $7 1/2 dollars a week because Vera was working, but we were already separated. She was in Los Angeles, I was in [San Pedro]. So these educational directors of the units would meet with the others once a month, when I was in charge. We would discuss what program to bring back to the units and outline a monthly program for the 4-5 meetings that were held during the month. And that consisted of the issues raised by the National committee of the Party, the state committees, and so on. It was good stuff. We used a lot of literature that we produced, the international publishers produced, and also anything else that could be used to advance us. We at times studied some of Darwin's work, we studied some of the work of other advanced historians of the period who tended to be toward our position of class struggle. I remember especially Morgan's history of the world. That had become a very important book.

Q: How do you know that your intentions and purposes were carried out locally in the units?

A: I didn't know, except that in my own unit I could see it was done. Because we looked forward to it, that was an interesting part of the meeting. That's what held these meetings together. The members would come because these things..... There was no pressure really, that you must come, it was accepted and attendance was very good. I assure you, it was much better than most unions or literary clubs and whatnot in that respect. I enjoyed this work. There wasn't very much for me to do during the daytime as I can recall. I don't remember whether I took any other work. I'm not sure. I don't recall any other work that I took on at this time. I'm trying to think of something that brought in additional funds for us.

Q: How long did you do this work?

A: About a year or so. Then I applied to be transferred to New York.

Q: You had mentioned, however, that you went to San Pedro. What was that in connection with?

A: In connection with my request to go to New York.

Q: Would you explain that?

A:Well, this is at a period right after the general strike of the longshoremen in San Francisco. We found that in this general strike all the longshoremen were affected, all up and down the West Coast.

Q: This was 1934.

A: 1934. And it seemed that in San Pedro the workers were out on strike, but after they went back, there was not much improvement in the conditions there. And one of the reasons was they felt that it was more or less under the leadership of the IWW in San Pedro. On that basis the Party felt they had to add additional forces in San Pedro to try to change it more in line with what Harry Bridges wanted to be done, and what we wanted to be done to develop a stronger union among the longshoremen and seamen. The seamen were a very important part. When I approached it to go to New York, they say "we would let you go to New York if you spend a year in San Pedro as an organizer there. Then we'll see." I accepted that suggestion.

Q: Can I ask you a question, however? Why did you want to go to New York?

A: Vera had a BA in English and was working as a social worker, but she wanted more training as a social worker. There was no school that she could go to in Los Angeles, and she heard of the school in New York, which in time became part of Columbia University. It's in social work, and she wanted to go there. So on that basis we were going to go to New York, and she was going to get her Master's there, which she did in time. So on that basis I accepted the idea of going to San Pedro, which consisted basically of me being there

six days a week, and on weekends coming back and staying with Vera. We located a little house away from San Pedro, and it was going to be an underground kind of a place, without too much publicity about it. I came into the scene, and there were some good members already in San Pedro but were not qualified for this position. They were businessmen, tailors, servicing the scene, and so on. I came there pretty much cold and began to make contact. I was especially attracted to the Wobblies, to the IWW members who were working as longshoremen. Many of them were German, and they had German parties and outdoor picnics that I went to, and I integrated quite rapidly into the scene there. [I was] accepted by the seamen who were on shore. The seamen on shore were usually unemployed seamen, waiting to ship out, until they could get a job. The longshoremen worked under fairly good conditions, but I approached them about publishing a monthly bulletin, outlining the problems of the longshoremen and seamen, and they accepted that, and we formed a committee. There were about five of us, and we published a bulletin, a mimeographed bulletin. We had a mimeograph in another part of the city of San Pedro, not where I stayed. Because we assumed that they would be looking for it, and we'd have to be careful. And the authorities were quite conscious of the fact that the Reds were working, that Harry Bridges's type of people, and the CP and so on, and so forth. I enjoyed working with these people, and I also joined the Teamster's union, with the expectation that I would be able to get a job from time to time, because the Teamster's worked quite often, it was not steady work. .... pick up as there was work to be done, a load to be handled, they called in for extra help. The union there had fairly good conditions. Usually the driver had a helper, who got fairly decent pay on those trucks. And we worked on it, it was hard work, it was with that condition. My activity consisting of keeping touch with the seamen and with the longshoremen, and putting out that bulletin, and seeing that the Party unit functioned as well as it could, and we did fairly well in San Pedro. Long Beach was something else. The dramatic part of it was to wake up one morning and hear two seamen who I know, who tell me that they've just killed a person. What happened? He said they had word that they were going to raid our shack, where the mimeograph machine was. We had gotten word that a goon squad, organized by the seamen's union, SIU, to come and take care of us. Our seaman had also put out handbills exposing the business agent, Fidel, at that time. So they told me that when they prepared for them in advance, because there were no firearms, fortunately. And when goons came, they took them on into a street fight, and one of the fellows, I don't recall his name any longer, lifted one of the men and smashed him against the curb and killed him. They came to me, [asking] what should they do? They'd been looking for me. So I said, "stay here, I think it's safe", and I would take them into Los Angeles at night, because they'll be watching for them on the roads. There were ways and means to get around. Mr. Citred came in with the car, the tailor who was a party member who we trusted very much..... We went into the city, and one of them said, "let's stop. My sister's at USC, I have to tell her what had happened", so we went in there, and there he tells his sister that he had killed someone. It was quite a dramatic moment. She just couldn't accept it well. We brought in Leo Gallagher on this, and his recommendation was to stay undercover until the thing quiets down, and then they would leave Los Angeles by freight train, not to ride the regular trains and buses because they would be watching for them. Meanwhile the headlines came out....

Q: Had they been identified?

A:Yes, they were arrested. In fact, they were later tried and acquitted. Two of them were tried and acquitted. The two that went in time by freight train back East were never

arrested. There were others involved too, and a couple of them were tried. Leo Gallagher was the attorney. By the time they were tried we were already in New York, so I don't remember the details. Within two weeks the business agent of the SIU is killed. This is the kind of thing we were dealing with in San Pedro. He assumed that the reds would go after him, that they were trying to get even for what had happened, for the raid and all of that. And the struggle was very personal. He was armed, and some plainclothesmen were watching for him. And he said CPMs were reds. He took a shot at them. They shot back and killed him. It was more or less in the press. So that's the situation that we were faced with. In general things were very tense. My friend Ben from Los Angeles would visit me in San Pedro every week (I'm indicating this on purpose because I just talked to him; he's just passed his 97th birthday and now lives in Santa Cruz). So we'd have a nice conversation. He would come there, give me a good feed at a restaurant, leave some money as a contribution, and was very much interested in what the Party was doing... And we remained friends for all of this time with many other experiences at other times.

Q: Were there any further activities that you engaged in in San Pedro?

A: I didn't engage but others were engaged in activity. Soon after this another young man appeared at my place which is supposed to be secret. No one's supposed to know where I'm staying. And he said, "I just killed a woman." I'm shocked. He told me who it is, and I know her as a party member. He's a party member. That's my first reaction: "Bring in your suitcase and let me have your party membership." He said he didn't bring it in; we went over to remove the Party membership, which he was proud of, and also any literature .... so that if they did get a hold of him they couldn't connect it to the Communist Party. We had to do that. In this case too I said "You stay here. I'm going to Long Beach." This happened in Long Beach. He was a seaman, unemployed at the time, and I would see now what was happening there, and so he agreed to stay there. I went to Long Beach, but instead of going directly to Mary's house (I figured the police may be there, and so on) I went to Hortense Alison's house in Long Beach. She was a very loyal party member, and had great influence on me in the times we associated. We'll make a tribute to her later on, explain why she meant so much to me. So she agreed to go there, and I drove her up within a few blocks of where Mary lived, and she walked over to Mary's house, range the doorbell and who answers the doorbell but Mary. Hortense went in and Mary told her what happened. They had a quarrel, and this meant being broken up. So in a fit of jealousy he started to stab her with a knife. I don't know the details, but she being a nurse had bandaged herself and did not go to a hospital or anything, and he didn't stab her enough to cause her to faint or anything like that, but he assumed in spite that he had killed her. I told her what the situation was, and she said "the best thing for you to do is to tell him to get the hell out of town, because if I get a hold of him I'm not going to use a knife but I sure am going to beat the hell out of him." She was a big woman, a very capable woman. So we kind of laughed about it, and we wanted to make sure it didn't get into the newspapers. On the way back was stopped by the police. Seemed that they were following me. They brought me into the Wilmington station. I was concerned that here was that guy waiting. I didn't even ask for charges. They did find literature in my car. And I don't think ..... knew who I was. They called Los Angeles immigration, and then they discovered I already was on immigration hold. That is, I'd been arrested by immigration. ..... The Los Angeles police had no need of such. So they let me go about 4 o'clock. Jim, who I left in my little shack, did not wait, didn't know what to do. He came back. I told him what the situation was. I came back to San Pedro, found Jim waiting for me, very nervous, very tense. I told him that Mary was

okay, that he had wounded her, but it would be best for everybody concerned if he rode the routes back East and ship out at the Great Lakes or New Orleans or something, because they may try to pin something on him. I didn't think they knew anything about it at the time, I assured him. So he left. This was the major experience. The German longshoremen took a liking to me, knew, of course, who I was, and ..... and some were sympathetic to the Party, too. I went to some of the gatherings which I enjoyed. They really maintained their cultural group. I'm talking about 50, 75 men and their families that were there. I enjoyed it very much. At that time, little did I realized what Hitler would do to that country in a relatively short time. I then left San Pedro to go back to Los Angeles. Louise Todd arranged a banquet for me, a farewell banquet. Louise urged me to bring my mother and my family to the banquet, which I did. It was attended by a couple hundred people. It was a nice gathering, a kind of unemployed type of banquet, very little fancy foods ..... on it. My mother knew very little English. Louise decided to make a talk about me, and my mother caught on to some of it. She said, "how the heck does that woman know more about you than I do?" And I said, "Well, in some ways she's been more of an effect on me than you have in the recent years." And I think she agreed and recognized that this was wonderful that they should give such attention to me. Basically, I was glad to be with mother to indicate that we weren't a bunch of people who were plotting the government. It was a nice sendoff.

Q: This is the first reference you've made to your mother for quite a little while. During your activities as an organizer for the TUUL and your activities in San Pedro, did you maintain a contact with your family?

A: Yes, I did. In visiting Friday night for the Sabbath meal, and holidays. We had a habit of going to see Mother in synagogue, where she was either fasting or whatever it is. I, at least I feel I can speak for the rest of them, had a love for our parents, and we were a family.

Q: Was your father alive at that time?

A: No, I think he had already passed away. Yes, I think he had already died at that time. It was just at that time that he went. I followed through my other brothers who were there. All of them of course knew of my activities. Some disapproved, "you can't make a living being a Communist." I agreed. Things like that. Vera was introduced to the family.

VI. Emmanuel Levin; discontinuing membership; political development to present

Association with Emmanuel Levin.

Communist International.

Discontinuing membership in Communist party, change in political thinking.

Political development to present:

Recent trip to Soviet Union, viewing cynicism of people about the Communist party.

Phil Draft campaign.

New American Movement, Democratic Socialists of America.

A: In the last statement we talked about Emmanuel Levin, who was the Communist party organizer or head in California, with his offices located in San Francisco, who had quite a bit of influence on me at that time, and also caused some difficulties, not only for me and for Emmanuel as a result of what I did in Berkeley, in the struggle against military training and the ROTC, which was a required activity that you had to be involved in. The Communist International was a form of a parliament where all the member groups belonged to it and affiliated with it; the C.P.s would send delegates to a convention or conference, which was held once every five years. During my period at U. of Cal, this convention was held. I would say it's around 1925, or '26, I'm not sure of my date. This organization had an executive committee, that held its meetings in Moscow. They were very much the organization itself. It was very large, involving many kinds of Communist parties, from extremely illegal parties, whose members were subject to being killed by their government and by the police ..... organization like the Soviet Union, which was a party in power, which is right now very much in the news. This international met, and delegates went to it from the United States, and there they were confronted with printed material that I helped to put out on the campus of Berkeley, stating that military training and the ROTC should be done away with, because they were teaching young men how to kill others, and that was a very anti-social act, and that in general militarism was a very bad thing. It attracted a lot of attention, both on the campus and off the campus, and a number of churches asked to come to our meetings and help us to develop this movement, and later on some of the unions who were quite progressive, began to participate, and our judgment was that we were representing at least 50,000 organized people in various forms that were coming to our meetings. I was very elated with this, and felt that what I was doing was very useful. At no time did I believe I was a pacifist, and I was against war in general or against militarism in general, I just felt that it was unnecessary on this campus. As a result it aroused a lot of discussion in the Communist International, and a condemnation of this activity, saying that we were not building a revolutionary organization, we were building a pacifist organization. But Emmanuel Levin, the state chairman and organizer, knew of this, and we were friends. At no time [did he] stop my activity or criticized my activity, as far as I can remember. And

so when he was called in by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the United States, asking him how come he allowed such activity to take place in Berkeley, and to allow members of the Young Communist League to carry on in this manner, he had very little, as far as I could tell, to defend. As a result, when he came back from New York he called me in and told me "this is what went on, that I in turn had voted that I must disband the organization," which to me was very very disheartening, but yet I carried out the orders, stopped calling meetings. People would ask me about it, I'd say "well, I have no time for it," or some other form of excuse. I don't recall that it caused much repercussion, because for one thing, military on the campus began to take a stand, and becoming more active, defending their position in the ROTC. The ROTC was trained by American military men. It was under their full control and their expenses that ROTC training went on. They were doing a good job. So this was it. Now as a result of this activity, Emmanuel Levin was removed as state chairman and organizer, and brought back to New York, and in turn sent to Louisiana and into the South to do underground work for the Party. He could not be ..... otherwise. A very difficult situation. A lot of personal involvement, personal dangers involved, in getting caught there doing this kind of activity. In time Emmanuel Levin came to New York, and we renewed our acquaintances, and as a whole I looked up to him regardless, a great deal. My thinking is that secretly or unconsciously, he agreed with what I was doing on the campus, but of course at that time he was in no condition to differ with the official position of the Communist party.

Q: You were telling.....

A: While we were together in New York, Ann and Emmanuel decided to have a baby, and she became pregnant at the age of about 45, and when she became pregnant, both of them decided that they ought to get a marriage license. That would be easier for them, they were living together without it. I was invited to come along with them to City Hall as a witness, that was required in a marriage ceremony. By this time Ann was about 7 months pregnant, quite a big woman in that condition. So we came down there, had to stand in line to wait our turn for Emmanuel and Ann to get married. And while we were standing in line there was a lot of fussing going on. The main question that this fussing caused was, which one was the husband, Emmanuel or I? This continued until we finally entered in there, and a recording agency clerk took Emmanuel's information about wanting to get married. I was along with them, and after the man recorded the information, Emmanuel who was green about these things gave him a five dollar tip, which was fine. Then after that he had to appear to some other agency, and again he gave them a five dollar tip. When he finally came before the judge or marriage- maker who did the ceremony, the man did it and then waited for a tip from Emmanuel, and when he said "but I gave over at the ....." he said "I don't get a penny of that, sir." And so poor Emmanuel had to tip him as well, and money was scarce. But the point is, he really didn't know his way about these kinds of things.

A: I want to record what I know about the Communist International, which was disbanded during World War II, as far as I recall, it started very early in the '20s, with the main organizer of this world body the Soviet Union, the Communist party of the Soviet Union. It became an organization that met every five years, and practically adopted resolutions that were expected to be carried out by the various delegated members to this body. It also published a monthly newspaper on onion skin, very thin, which carried the decisions of various parties all over the world, including much of what was going on with the Party in the Soviet Union. The name of that publication was Imprecor, it's a combination of a number

of words, "International Press Correspondence...." or something, to that effect. The reason I'm indicating this is that not much is said about it any longer, and yet it was an extremely important document which influenced my activity, in my life, and I looked forward to reading the information. I would not exaggerate if I would say that it represented three to four million members of the Communist party from all over the worlds. Many of the parties were illegal, and members of the Party in those countries that they came from were subject to death sentences if convicted of their membership in the Communist party. Many of them came there as delegates under assumed names, with various kinds of masks that they would wear, so that they could not be identified by any means of the Communist International at that time. It was given up as an organization after World War II, on the basis that it had outlived its usefulness. I would also like to mention that the ..... Dimitrov of Bulgaria was the head of the Communist International. He in turn was arrested by the Hitler regime, accused of causing the Reichstag fire in Berlin, and through international pressure it seemed, that he was acquitted. Another person was put to death in that case. Dimitrov became a world symbol, to me too as a person who was ready to give it all to the cause that I believed in.

Q: At this point, Meyer, what we're interested in is the development of your political thinking. You were a member of the Communist party for many years, and finally you discontinued that membership, and your thinking changed. Where are you today? What caused you to change your thinking? So maybe you'd better start and tell us why you quit being a Communist. Can you do that?

A: I'll do the best I can, and besides why I quite being in the C.P. involves the fact that my understanding of what Communism was about, and also my understanding of what the Communist parties have been doing, is very important in this respect. Because basically I must present the fact that my membership in the Communist party, and my activity in the Communist party, had the best of intentions. That's very important, because I do believe that I have a great feeling for the underdog, for the poor, for the downtrodden human beings from all over the world. In ways I'm even now at all times very heavily do think of in terms of a million children starving to death, hundreds of thousands, millions of people not being able to live as human beings, having to live like animals.

Q: So what you're telling me is that it was the economic injustice that possibly impelled your membership in the Party.

A: Definitely, that was the most important thing to me, and still remains the most important thing, although other issues, such as the ecological conditions around us, and the social discrimination and racism, anti- semitism play a role, but the economic one is the most important one. It may stem from the fact that I was raised in very poor economic circumstances, where I looked forward to enough food every day to survive, and understood what was happening as far as the fact that my father could not earn a decent living, that my mother had nine children to look after. All of these things left its impression. So along came a condition where someone mentioned to me that I could do more than just talk about the injustice or feel it, but participate, and this is when I joined the Young Communist League. At the age of about 22, if I'm not mistaken, is when I started in it, and throughout all the period of my activity, basically I was concerned with the economic needs of the people, starting in with the depression in the '30s, where I became the organizer of the

unemployed, through the Unemployed Council, with the understanding that that in itself was not enough. Those people who became active in the Unemployed Council, I would urge them to join the Communist party in one month, and I found a condition where it was pointed out to me that I signed up 50 members to the Communist party. Whenever anyone applied for membership, someone had to endorse it, and I was doing that without consciously counting the number. So this was a very important part of my life. Vera, who was with me, who had started out as a member of the Young Communist League, and later became a member of the Party the same as I did, was not as active. She is a different type of a person, she's more withdrawn, but she carried on, so we were politically always in agreement. We had no problem in that area. Our life together for some 65 years has been a good one.

Q: Why did you withdraw from the Communist party? Now was that a sudden decision, or was it a gradual thing? You were active in some other capacity, and you had no further time for the Communist party? How did you change your association?

A: It's even more than that. I dropped out of the Communist party about 1947, living in San Francisco. I had been working as an electrician, specializing in electric motors and controls, and then a condition arose where I found myself becoming a businessman, and hiring other electricians, and I felt that ethically I do not belong in the Party, because I was exploiting labor. The fact that this labor was well- paid, etc., did not influence me. As a result I dropped out of the Party. I was still sympathetic, and still went to meetings of the Party, public meetings that they held. I helped in the labor school in San Francisco. I helped in the People's World, at that time called the Western Worker ..... it was called. But in the main I felt that I did not belong. It is in later years, when the Communist party had a lot of inner struggles, that I began to see that there were a number of things wrong in the organization as such, that their need to discipline people and to expel people became a struggle for power, rather than a struggle for principles, and that turned me off a great deal. This was in the early days in my withdrawal from the Party.

Q: How did you learn of these disputes within the Party?

A: Through friends who talked to me, who still felt that I was friendly to the Party, that I was not in any way anti-party. We discussed it amongst them because my main friends were in the Party, still active in the Party. They accepted me on my basis that I said I did not want to belong to the Party, basically because of being an employer, and employing labor. I'm trying my best to be as honest as I can with my own feelings about it, because this to me I record not a light discussion. It carried on to the extent that when we finally went to the Soviet Union, and there we had good contacts and formed relations ..... in four different cities, and talked to the people there, we began to realize that there was a great deal of corruption under the rule of the Communist party in the Soviet Union, that things were quite different than what I thought it was, that conditions were not good for people. They were not starving, but that they were not happy with the way things were, that the material goods that they produced in the main were shoddy, not well made. I bought a bunch of electrical equipment to take back with me, and later examined it and found that it was very poorly made. That gave me thought as to what was going on. My main feeling was this strong cynicism that I discovered among party members that I met in the Soviet Union, that even though they were members of the Party, they were not really fully accepting of the

Party organization ....., not so much the philosophy, I don't think, but the way the Party ran, with its rules and so on. Much alienation of the people from the C.P.

Q: Before you continue, you notice of course that you have shifted. We started out, or at least you were discussing for a while the fact that you had learned that the Party differences were an attempt on the part of some to secure power, and that this turned you off, so to speak, from the Party, because here they were not carrying on the program of the Party, but individuals were looking for power. Now you go to the Soviet Union, and you get acquainted with the new aspect of Communism, and you discover that the people aren't too concerned in carrying out the program of the Party. Isn't that what you're saying? no!

A: Not only too concerned about not carrying out, but quite the cynical, quite ready to break the rules of the Communist party, for their own benefits that they needed in the form of material goods, or position that they held, both in factories where they worked, and so on and so forth.

Q: Your own experience was that the production was rather poor. From your own experience, the quality of the goods that you brought back from the Soviet Union was poor.

A: That's true, very much true. And it gave me thought that being idealistic about the theory of Socialism and Communism is not enough, that there has to be development taking place in human beings to be able to accept the ideas of a just society, a society with no exploitation, and so on, both here in the United States, I saw the so- called leadership, who claimed to be the leaders of the working class, the Communist party, was not functioning at all according to my beliefs. Then when I went to the Soviet Union, I found the same thing there. In the case of the Soviet Union, the added fact that they lost a huge amount of their population in World War II, where nearly in every family one or two ~~or three~~ people were either killed or maimed, left its effect on the population there. It slowed them down, recognizing that maybe fighting for Communism was not the thing that was going to accomplish very much. And as a result there was this amount of cynicism I found there. It developed me, it developed my ability to see and understand much more after I left the Party than I had at that time. Maybe I would have come to it anyway, I did not know. Whatever it is.... Even now I separate my thoughts from Socialism and Communism as a philosophy against what those who claim to be Socialists and Communists are doing in this society. It's in contradiction in many ways. On one hand you want to survive; on the other hand you want to do something that is more than just for yourself. This has been my thinking. And of course we're coming into this present period, which is extremely involving, and follows through some of my thoughts about the fact that the leadership in the Communist parties has failed the people who they represent.

Q: Before you get to the present time, you had shifted your position. You had gotten out of the Party because you were a businessman, and this seemed to be inconsistent with the philosophy of the Communist party. And then you were concerned with the power struggles in the Party, vocally, and then you were concerned with what was happening in the Soviet Union from your visits there. Now what did you do after that, in consequence [with] this awareness, did you engage in any political activities, or were you for awhile outside of any political action?

A: No, I continued in political activity.

Q: And what were you doing?

A: Well, I was, for instance, organizing, raising funds to run a democrat for congressman in Marin County, Phil Draft, a Quaker, a pacifist, who ran, and we made a fairly good showing. We did not win, but we carried on, carried on a great deal during the struggle in Vietnam, demonstrations and whatnot, and organizing meetings in Marin County. We also became very active in the struggle for liberation among the black people.

Q: You were a citizen by that time...

A: No, not yet a citizen, and yet I participated.

Q: So you participated in local political activities in Marin County.

A: Marin County, definitely in Marin, we had moved over there. And I've continued, still am involved.

Q: Yes, but I was thinking ..... more slowly.

A: Well, I have always been a political animal, and held on to the ideas that the need for a more just society is very important, and that has never left me. And so, even though I dropped out of the Party, which I basically found was not accomplishing anything anyway, and besides the struggle for power. And I wasn't entirely naive about the struggle for power, I recognized that when you deal with these things there's bound to be some already. I went through the experience of the Stalin struggle in the Soviet Union, the trials there and all of that, it was recognized that it was a form of power struggle there too. And so some of my naive attitudes began to get knocked apart, but I still recognized the need that justice carries on. I had not become hardened to that, and I wanted to do whatever I could to help it along, to overcome these conditions that exist in the world as a whole, really. And I'm very much interested.

Q: Now you're talking about local activities that didn't spring out of any political organization. Did you after awhile become associated again with any political action?

A: Yes, I did. I joined the New American Movement, a Socialist movement, that sprang out of the SNCC (?) movement of the 1960s. I became a member of that, a Socialist organization, in it, and I stayed with that for a few years, and then it combined with Mike Harrington's Democratic Socialists of America, and became known. His was originally the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, and the two joined together, NAM and DSA joined to form DSA. I went to the forming convention that was held in Milwaukee, as a delegate from Marin County, and in turn became the chairman of DSA in Marin County, of which I am still listed as such, although we're doing very little politically at this time, mainly because most of those who are members of DSA are very much involved in other organizations. The head of the official Democratic Club in Marin County is a member of DSA, and spends a lot of time working in that organization, and in general there isn't much activity. The national office knows about it, and this is a condition that exists throughout DSA, where the people are members, they pay their dues, but do not do much politically

at this time, do not [work] through DSA, they do political work with others. I'm also a member of the Democratic Club and the Grey Panthers, but I feel either that I have become lazy or else I've become too old to put in too much effort. I do not recall things as well as I used to, and I feel that since I'm older, now I'm more of a supporter, and that's satisfactory to me, to support financially and morally the organizations I belong to.

Q: Well tell me, what does DSA stand for? In what way does it reflect your political thinking at the present time?

A: I've given it a lot of thought, and it reflects the fact that it's a gradual approach towards Socialism in the long run. DSA to me stands for an organization that is not advocating the overthrow of a system or a government by force in any way, knowing that it would be a very bloody thing, and probably would be very difficult to do at this time, especially in the developed countries, in which the United States is one of them, and that it will have to go more through legislation, through democratic actions, on this thing. For instance, an example of Social Security, where people after they retire get a certain amount of money.

1926

1922

VII. Current political thinking; activity

Current political thinking, activity:

- Activity within Marin County; local issues, Boxer campaign, etc.

- Changing attitude toward religion, seeing need for it in people's lives.

- Disappointment in official Communist and Socialist parties.

- Affect of current changes in Eastern Europe on political thinking.

- Changes in US, including influence of electronics.

- Thoughts on people's thinking, activity in US; disappointment in apparent lack of concern, especially by young people.

A: I was still active, to some degree, in Marin County, where I lived, and basically it's a sustaining activity. I'm not doing much of a creative type of activity. I basically am contributing some money to various causes, attending gatherings. We're developing a coalition in Marin County of about six or eight major progressive organizations, ... basically around the peace movement, and we are working to tackle the Board of Supervisors, which is quite reactionary in Marin County. They're not accounting for how money is distributed for various needs of the county, to the people..... simply, they make the decisions. They're attitude toward the nuclear freeze movement has been very bad, insofar as they broke it, and forced it to go into another election, but then would not support it. Then [they wanted to build] a very large prison in Marin County, which we've fought now for a number of years, in which they've tried to put over through a sales tax, and we defeated it very badly, and when I say "we" I mean a number of us who are active and able to get around to do that. But even so they were able to find ways to go ahead with building this big prison, which we feel is unnecessary.

Q: So to put it briefly, you have been engaged in good causes of one kind or another, politically in definition. They're good political activities that you have been engaged in, where people have gathered together to put pressure upon the Board of Supervisors or whatever group, to secure change of a political nature. Is that right?

A: That's right. Basically, it's with immediate things. In some ways it cannot even be related to socialism, which I strongly believe in, but everyone had his bit. Through the Grey Panthers I was able to be active with a committee on housing, which is very critical in Marin County. I was the chairman of the Housing Committee for the Grey Panthers. The state issued an order that every city in the county must adopt an ordinance in regards to second units, where another family can live in one house, in another unit of the house. We agitated to make it as liberal as possible, because many cities did not want to carry through with it, the people didn't want to. Especially more traffic, more population, more inconvenience, but I felt that the need for housing was so strong that there should be some pressure on it.

And so we covered some 15 cities in Marin County, throughout. [We formed a] committee to talk, to explain why there was a need for it. I don't know if it did very much good in Marin County. In Mill Valley, where I live, there's been about six or eight units established at discount. To establish such a unit you have to get permission from the planning commission and from the city, to allow another family to live. As an example of how critical the situation [is], in buying my daily needs in Mill Valley, I asked the [check-out] clerks where they lived. Invariably, they do not live in Mill Valley, either in Novato or someplace else, but not [Mill Valley] because the rent was so high, it's so difficult for them to do that. So that is an example. I'd like to go into some of the [other] things [I'm involved in]. On the ecology situation, which is a very strong issue in Marin County, I had poo-pooed it at one time, I did not give it much attention. Now I'm beginning to realize that it's an important condition in the lives of people. They're concerned about the smog, and about the waste that's going on, and that they're active and involved, and that they should be supported. For the immediate, I know it's no answer for the person who's out of work, or who's homeless, and who is not able to live a decent life because of their economic condition. But yet I have to respect that ..... And of course, the one that doesn't bother me, but I observe, is the fact that I'm giving religion more of a concern. I'm beginning to realize that it's an important part in the lives of people, and it cannot be just shoved aside, or acted as if it's something that is not good, and that one should be tolerant and accepting of what their needs are. [This is] exemplified by the fact that we've gone to a number of Catholic masses, we've gone to religious services in the synagogue. With this last trip to Paris, I went to Mass three times, in two or three different churches, to see the churches themselves, like Notre Dame. We went to see the response, and it was quite interesting. All of them were very full. Paris is a sophisticated city, it's not a backward place. People of all colors and all conditions are there. We also, to equalize things, went to the synagogues. We were there during the Jewish New Year's, and went on Yom Kippur, and noticed that at both of them we went to, a number of police were guarding the place against Nazi actions of a kind that would disrupt things. The services [were] of the kind that brought me back to my childhood, when I went there too, and seemed to be something that people need. Especially in a city like Paris, there's plenty of other things you can do besides go in to synagogue, and yet they were there in large numbers.

Q: Are you suggesting that you felt a personal need for religion?

A: No, I still feel..... at one time, I thought of myself as an atheist, and now I'm more inclined to being an agnostic as I go along, although I do not separate [them] too much, but that's the feeling of it.

Q: There's another aspect that we haven't given any attention to. You became a citizen, and had secured voting privileges, while you were residing in Marin County. Did you become active in any political campaigns of politicians outside of the one that you mentioned? You mentioned one man who ran for office and was defeated. Now did you become active in any other political campaigns?

A: Yes. Barbara Boxer, who's our congresswoman, came out of our ranks, originally belonged to an organization called Marin Alternatives, which grew to a membership of about 500, and she was one of the leaders of it. I was too. And she in turn started working in John Burton's office, and then from [there] ran for Board of Supervisors. [She] was the first woman to be elected to the Board of Supervisors in Marin County, [and] did a very

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good job there. [She] understood what she was doing, and in turn was elected to the House of Representatives. Now she's either in her third or fourth term. I met with her in another group of Grey Panthers on Wednesday, and she's friendly, and anxious to do the right thing, and we feel very appreciated that she's doing that. She's now talking of running for the Senate. I said, "Why do you go to such a small step forward, why not run for President, like Jesse Jackson did?" And she said, "Time will tell, time will tell." We will see how we come along. I'd like to go into.... She is now a U.S. Senator!

Q: You also mentioned another person to me. Last time you were going to a meeting in Marin County, at which a senator was going to appear, [Alan] Cranston.

A: Yes, he did appear.

Q: Were you active in his campaign?

A: No, not at all, no. There was none, at least no specific actions in Marin County, as far as I know. There was no special committee around him to do that. In the Democratic Club they endorse all the Democratic candidates that come along, in some cases support them financially when it's necessary. The Democratic Club is only a part of the Democratic party in Marin County. There's a Central Committee of the Democratic party, elected by the people, who has the more say about it there, the one that distributes money to candidates, etc. And the relationship are close.

Q: Do you belong to the Democratic Club?

A: Yes, I belong to the Democratic Club. We're doing, in general, a good job. We are on the right side. Now with the president of the club being quite a socialist-minded person, were having good programs that are coming there. The problem of women, the problem of blacks and minorities, all of these things are being raised. For awhile I was disappointed in this club. It seemed to be a place to promote people to office, and that's [about all]. Very seldom was there any discussion of a program as to what they stand for. It seemed like just wind, wind, wind. Well that was not enough for me, but now with this change [that is] taking place, why we're hoping that they're will be a better situation. The ..... Democratic Club at this time has about 120 members. About 20-30 attend meetings, which is a fairly good percentage of attendees, and for special functions there is a better turnout. Frank Scott - my friend, is President doing a good job!

Q: Did anything happen with this senatorial meeting of last week?

A: I haven't read about it.

Q: Well, you were there, weren't you?

A: No, I didn't go, I was just too tired at that time that it occurred. It was, I think, in the afternoon, at 5 o'clock, and I did not go. I'm of course quite busy playing bridge in the daytime, and other activity. I do a lot of gardening at this time in my place. That's quite a job. I enjoy doing it very much. Keeps you in good health. The development that has taken place within me basically is consistent with my general philosophy in life, my disappointment is in the organizations representing the outlets; the Socialist party and the Communist party. The Socialist party is practically nonexistent in this country, and here's

a population of 240 million people, with no movement of that kind. And yet it at one time did have a movement, a strong one, under Eugene V. Debs, with Norman Thomas and others, and yet it's fading away, which indicates to me that it's not the proper tool to bring about change and win over people to that philosophy, and that it may require more time until people will reach a position that we must have some form of a Socialist society.

Q: Do you think the Democratic party is a proper vehicle to secure the kinds of changes that you want in society?

A: It is better than the Republican party. That's about all I can say because too often it goes along with some of the conservative actions of the [Republican party]. I expect a very large change to take place If we are successful in removing the danger of war. I expect that there will be more energy beginning to be put into examining the fibers, the conditions of our society. Right now much of the energy of society goes into maintaining the war machine, making the machine of a large scale, which has been now recognized, both by the Soviet Union and the United States, and to a lesser degree by other great powers, that it's just not accomplishing [anything]. And in thinking about this, I think it's logical to recognize, with the atomic bomb being around, that it's useless to have military forces of any other kind, the hundreds of thousands of planes, tanks and men to feed everyday, with nothing creative about it. We're beginning to realize that, and that needs to be emphasized, because the atomic energy makes war in the usual way obsolete. What I'm concerned about now is that the lesser nations are beginning to talk about building atomic [weapons], and they may not be as readily controlled as the United States and the Soviet Union have in their negotiations. There is talk that they are working along that in places. Why a country like India should need to build atomic bombs I'll never know. Or even a country like Great Britain. So, the thing is in flux at this time, it's not clear to me where this thing is going. Here on one hand the United States and the Soviet Union are trying to lessen the danger of warmaking, and here are the others who are coming on and saying, "we want to have a say in it, and the way we'll have a say in it is by us having the instrument of destruction."

Q: Now politically great changes are taking place in Europe at the present time, in Communist countries. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, East Germany, the Soviet Union. How does this affect your thinking?

A: It affects my thinking very much, insofar as first, to be very honest, I can't fully understand the consequences. I recognize the base for it, the fact that people are unhappy in those countries mentioned by you. By that I mean a large majority are unhappy. They use the term that "we want freedom," but if you take that term apart, well, what does that freedom mean? Will it fill your belly if you're able to get up and call the head of the state a "son of a bitch"? The best example now is in East Germany. They find themselves with factories working, and they don't know why they're working. There's no head, the head has resigned, the workers haven't elected someone to replace him as yet. They are completely confused as to what it is. They're waiting for elections in February, 1990, to try to develop some authority. Meanwhile, that's a long time to do that. What do you do [in the meantime]? There is confusion, and East Germany reflects conditions in Poland and other places.

Q: Now they're urging political freedom, are they not, not economic freedom. The emphasis is on political freedom.

A: Yes, very much so. But, how the hell can you have political freedom if you don't have some economic freedom? What the hell does political freedom mean to the person on the street who's homeless, who has no job, who doesn't know where he's going to get his next meal.

Q: But they do have a kind of political freedom, do they not? ..... which failed to work.

A: Yes, I think they did. I even watched what was going on in Moscow, in the Soviet Union. Even before there was quite a bit, it hasn't been completely a free "If you say something we don't like, your head is going to come off." This is in the past, under Stalin and so on, it's changed a lot in that respect. We saw it in person, the way people talked to me. "Pravda, I wouldn't read that paper, it's a bunch of lies." I recently talked to a person; they didn't know who I was fully, and so on. So things are changing. In East Germany, we visited there, we toured and so on. The country was in good condition, basically. Not a single beggar in any of the cities we visited. We didn't hear of any bread lines, or unemployment much. And yet these changes are taking place. One can accuse the CIA of having a hand in it, causing disruption, because that's part of their program ....., but I think it concerns the CIA more with South and Central America, rather than do that in Europe, and so that cannot be a reason for it. In general, a feeling of uncertainty. For instance, the United States coming into Poland with a 100 million-dollar loan, or something like that. Where will that take the country, what can you accomplish with it. They have terrific plants in shipbuilding, in many electric plants in Poland, and yet they were not able to produce in it. So I'm searching, at this time I have no answers for it. I still feel that a form of socialism will develop, under a free market system. My best example is right now in this country, the need for childcare, for women who are working, and leaving their kids at home. Pension plans -- a little more health care.

Q: You notice that in some of these European countries, there is the agitation for, even action for a multiple political system, that Communism would not be alone, in fact might be voted out of power.

A: I'm very much aware, and I'm not at all surprised, because I think it lasted almost too long, the way it has been, where people have no confidence in the government that was ruling, and this happening in all of the "Socialist" countries. Of course, you can say there's many millions of people in this country who have no confidence. They have no faith in their government.....

Q: Well, do you think the political system in this country will survive?

A: I think it will survive, and that it will give to the needs of the people. By that I mean that, even though there is a lot of corruption as you've seen, and all that, in the main there is a striving in this country, through the political process, of improving the lot of the people. I want to bring in one other thing that's been on my mind, and which I'm going to try to do something about. That is, the development of electronics, of computers, ... A very important revolution is taking place, where a factory can be set up, where material is put in in one end, no human being touches anything until the end product comes out, packaged

in the end. In Germany they set up a ceramic plant that makes dishes, completely electrified and not managed, so everything moves ..... What does that mean in this society?

Q: That's right. ....., have unemployment.

A: For instance, in Marin County five new newspapers have sprung up. They're needed as much as I need a hole in my head. There are newspapers there already, you see. Why? Because the advertisers find that the rates are so cheap, that they give away these papers. The Guardian here in San Francisco is an example of it. It has very good articles in it too, and yet it's a give-away paper. I suppose you know that. And so this is a condition that developed. Communications is becoming a very big thing, and if they ever talk about one world, this will bring it about, where you can immediately distribute it through TV and forms, immediately all over the world. What does that do to thinking?

Q: What does it do to the economic life of the people generally?

A: There's a big change about it, and I place quite a bit of significance on it, and as yet do not know what the results are. But, of course, there's some stumbling blocks. Those who have the power now, they want to keep it indefinitely, as long as they can. They may throw us a bone once in a while, but in the main they'll come back to it. I'm especially watching what will happen on the saving and loan situation, where they've been indicted, and indicated that there was a great deal of fraud involved, and now Bush's son is involved in this thing too. Or in the case of Cranston now, [illegible] situation. It breaks through, there's so much of it that it's bound to do that. I haven't much dealt with the civil liberties people, both nationally or worldwide. I recognize it to be a very important instrument for people to be able to express their needs and thoughts, and to organize towards that. I think civil liberties are making progress in a big way. It may be still backwards in South and Central America, and in Africa; of course, the example in China is not a very helpful one. But, the response of the violations of civil liberties is getting a better deal than in the past. There's more concern showing for it. It's reflected in the press. The press quite often reflects what the people's thinking is, and if people are interested in..... they do that. There's the example of Bush sending the envoys to China, that's a good example.

Q: I'd like to ask you a question about the interests of the people. We were speaking about freedom, under a constitution I assume, or throughout the world. To what extent are people in this country interested in political activity, in freedom for themselves? How do you see the situation of freedom, and economic freedom, in this country?

A: I have had some experiences now that I haven't had in the past. I associate myself with non-Socialist people, who are not Socialist, and I can see some of their reaction to it. The main reaction I see is that they take it for granted. "Why talk about it, it's here, we have the right to vote, the right to speak, we have all these things, there's nothing much to say about it," and they don't particularly get excited about it, because this is part of their life. This is the way I see it in this thing. Those who are politically and socially active tend toward what their particular cause is involved. For instance, in the peace movement, it's a question of disarming the country, and so on, to win more adherents to it, get more support, but [not] even there do I find any critical concern that we may lose it, and so on. We've feature it (?), to the best of our ability, but I think the people involved are responding to

the reality, because we're not faced with an enemy that is ready to shoot us down any more.

Q: I have a feeling, or an impression, that people today are more concerned about themselves rather than other people. Students, for example, are not concerned very much with causes, but with their own lives, careers. What's your reaction?

A: My reaction is very similar to what you are saying, the personal concerns are the most important one it it. I've acted to some degree in the senior citizen's center. This means retired people, and they're concerned that certain benefits that they can get, meals and whatnot, and .... and so on. They're concerned that other citizens, senior citizens (?), should be taking care of them. But in a limited way, politically to me they're quite conservative. I've talked to them on it. We have a tendency not to discuss religion or politics, when we are playing cards or when we're in a group, but discuss the issue that confronts us. In general, I find that they're satisfied with what's going on, there's no great striving for change, and so on. This is the conditions, in my opinion, of the vast majority of the American people, especially in this area. I think it's even more so inland. They do not express any dissatisfaction with the government, even in the case of the Democratic people that I meet with..... They're not particularly anti-Bush in any way, an so on like that. He's doing okay, as far as they're concerned. That's the sense that I have. I guess people only respond when a crisis arises. Something happens that strikes them home. And at this time, there hasn't been anything very much. I mean, here's a state where the majority of people are registered Democrat to vote, and yet a Republican is elected as governor. So try to explain why 30-40 percent are not even bothering to go to the polls. I think it's because they don't see anything dangerous, or anything very much that can happen. If anyone that they do not favor is elected, it's about the only way they could. The younger people are very cynical. They feel that the older people have done a lousy job as far as government's concerned. I've talked to some of them. They have a gathering in Mill Valley on Lytton Square, near the bookstore, right downtown. I go there once in a while to talk to young people there and to other people there, but nothing concerning. Of course you're 100 percent right about the students. I'm very disappointed that they're taking such a career-minded attitude. A large amount are going in for MBA's, it's remarkable..... Knowing that they had the capacity, that in the past they have acted, acted strongly; [I'm] talking about the Vietnam war, and so on. [But] they do not do that any longer. It almost confuses me. Why? Is everything so good that they won't do it? For awhile they were dealing with South Africa, and have stopped doing it, and the activity in that area, too. And racism is quite strong. I'm feeling of first-hand reaction to people that I meet..... There's not very much that is being done, a little that is being done, selecting certain blacks for certain positions, senior people, black faces on TV. Otherwise there's no very big concern. And my Jewish friends tell me that there's quite a bit of anti-semitism. I do not feel any of it at all. I don't know where you have to go to feel it, maybe to a meeting of the KKK, or something like that, but otherwise I don't feel it. How about you, do you feel any anti-semitism in your surrounding?

Q: No I don't. As you suggest, I apparently don't get around to the meetings of the people.

VIII. Moving to New York; Communist Party; Teamster's

Moving to New York: stops in Chicago, Milwaukee, etc.

Arriving in New York; staying temporarily with Vera's relatives in Brooklyn.

Meeting with Communist Party in New York.

Getting work as an electrician, and then working for WPA.

Joining Teamsters Union, local 807.

Starting IBT News; exposing corruption, etc.

Nonunion haulers, how some Teamsters members dealt with them.

Organizing for election in Teamster's Union, bringing in progressive officials.

More corruption. Teamster's Union business officials taking bribes, taking merchandise for self, etc.

Spreading out to other locals.

Q: How did you prepare for your departure?

A: The number one thing was, we had very little money, and we did not intend to take a train or any public transportation, because we did not have the money that was required. We assumed that we would go on a trip by car, and buy our food and eat together, which we did. I had an old car, and overhauled the engine on my own, I remember, on Rangeview Street. Vera's folks owned a home, and we were staying there at that time. I got the car into pretty good condition, and we received gifts. We had gatherings of the family. Both Vera's family and mine. Kind of separate, the two were different kinds of families. I don't recall the two families coming together. They gave us some money. If I'm not mistaken, it came to about 2-300 dollars. That was basically about what we had. How the heck we expected to get by, I don't know, but we were willing to start on the trip. Vera's mother prepared some food for us. We didn't realize how long it would take to cross, and we didn't have any schedule, which was very good. And so one morning we got up, and had everything ready the night before, put the stuff into the car, blankets, a sleeping cot, and things to sleep in, in campgrounds. I think we even had a tent, a small púp tent, which we made good use of on this trip. We headed for the East Coast, for New York City.

Q: What make [of] car was this?

A: It was a Chevy. At that time, this is 1935, this was a 1922 Chevy, quite old. I paid $20 for it originally, or something like that, but it was running. It had fairly good rubber at that time, they had inner tubes in the casings of the car, and a spare. We tried as much as we

the reality, because we're not faced with an enemy that is ready to shoot us down any more.

Q: I have a feeling, or an impression, that people today are more concerned about themselves rather than other people. Students, for example, are not concerned very much with causes, but with their own lives, careers. What's your reaction?

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Joining Teamsters Union, local 807.

Starting IBT News; exposing corruption, etc.

Nonunion haulers, how some Teamsters members dealt with them.

Organizing for election in Teamster's Union, bringing in progressive officials.

More corruption. Teamster's Union business officials taking bribes, taking merchandise for self, etc.

Spreading out to other locals.

Q: How did you prepare for your departure?

A: The number one thing was, we had very little money, and we did not intend to take a train or any public transportation, because we did not have the money that was required. We assumed that we would go on a trip by car, and buy our food and eat together, which we did. I had an old car, and overhauled the engine on my own, I remember, on Rangeview Street. Vera's folks owned a home, and we were staying there at that time. I got the car into pretty good condition, and we received gifts. We had gatherings of the family. Both Vera's family and mine. Kind of separate, the two were different kinds of families. I don't recall the two families coming together. They gave us some money. If I'm not mistaken, it came to about 2-300 dollars. That was basically about what we had. How the heck we expected to get by, I don't know, but we were willing to start on the trip. Vera's mother prepared some food for us. We didn't realize how long it would take to cross, and we didn't have any schedule, which was very good. And so one morning we got up, and had everything ready the night before, put the stuff into the car, blankets, a sleeping cot, and things to sleep in, in campgrounds. I think we even had a tent, a small pup tent, which we made good use of on this trip. We headed for the East Coast, for New York City.

Q: What make [of] car was this?

A: It was a Chevy. At that time, this is 1935, this was a 1922 Chevy, quite old. I paid $20 for it originally, or something like that, but it was running. It had fairly good rubber at that time, they had inner tubes in the casings of the car, and a spare. We tried as much as we

could to foresee the possibilities that may occur on the trip. The first night we spent nearby Lake Tahoe, as far as I can remember. On Highway 395, that runs parallel to Highway 99, was on the other side of the Sierra [Nevada] mountains. [They were] beautiful settings that we were in, in the park, where they allowed us to pitch our tent, and sleep overnight, and a place to cook.

Q: What time of the year was this?

A: It was in June that we left ....., and from there we went to Yellowstone National Park. It was very exciting to be there. We went toward the North, from Los Angeles, and I think we hit Highway 10, as much as I can remember. Then we came to a place in South Dakota, called "Ten-sleep City" or "Ten-sleep", I do not recall. How did that name originate? The indians used that term to indicate how long it would take to go from where they were to this place, to this area, where they camped, and [it would be] about 10 nights, and translated this into "Ten-sleep City". I did some fishing there, I had a rod with me, and we picked up some nice trout. I got relatively small ones but they were very delicious. We had a cook stove with us.

Q: Of course, you had a fishing license.

A: I don't know whether they required one at that time. I would say, in the area, I doubt [it]. But the trip was in general very beautiful. We ended up in Chicago, where we stayed with Frank Spector, who was there at the time. He was active in Los Angeles, and did some time in San Quentin, and he had a one-room apartment. But I do remember that Frank Spector, a man of about 6' 3", would take a bath in a tub, in the kitchen, and his wife would poor hot water into it. From there we went up to Milwaukee, WI, to meet Vera's cousin, Ann Cartman, who now lives in San Francisco, and has become very much a part of our lives throughout the years. There we had a nice rest and reception. And there we knew that Gene Dennis was the state organizer, so we looked him up at his office, and we talked to him about our experience in Los Angeles, and the Party, etc., etc. At that time he of course was married to Peggy Dennis, who was a Los Angeles woman who became active in the Young Pioneers and later married Bill Snyderman. That lasted only until Bill sent her to a training school in Seattle. He sent her to be trained, and Gene Dennis was the instructor, and he instructed her mostly under certain trees and whatnot, and it ended up with her leaving Bill Snyderman and going off with Gene Dennis. She remained with him until his death. [Peggy?] Dennis lives now in San Francisco, and has had a major stroke, and is having great difficulties surviving. I'm at this time in Milwaukee. There we took Ann Cartman, this young woman who is a very fine pianist; we took her with us to Chicago. We spent some time again there with her, a day or two, and then she went back to Milwaukee by train, and we went on to New York. The next major experience was someplace in the coal mining districts of Pennsylvania, I don't even recall.

Q: Your destination was New York. Who were you supposed to report to?

A: Nobody in particular in New York. There was no requirement that I report to the Party, which of course I did when I got to New York, but we came there open, and as I recall I don't think we had any friends as such.

Q: Now the main purpose of the trip to New York was to enable your wife to go to school, wasn't it?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: And where did she go to school?

A: Let me finish off our trip, and I'll get into that. When we arrived In New York, Vera had some relatives in Brooklyn. So we decided to go there with the car, and on the Brooklyn Bridge, going to the relatives, our car broke down, with a broken axle (?). We had to be towed off to a repair shop and so on, and Vera's relatives helped us get established. We stayed with them for about a week, they were very nice to us. We were quite crowded, there were a number of families there. [That's] a story in itself, but I'm not going to go into it, the Smith family. There were five children, orphaned at the age of about 3 to 10, and all five of these children turned out beautifully, one a symphony trumpet player in the New York Philharmonic, one of them a physician, and one of them a poet. It was kind of interesting. Here [they are], without a regular family as we know it, living in orphanages, where they were half-starved to death, and yet they came through so well.

Q: You say these were relatives of Vera?

A: [Yes]; and on my side, I had nobody there in New York. We found a room, a little apartment, on 18th St. and 7th Ave. in New York, and that's where we started. Vera of course had already had some correspondence with the school that she wanted to go to, and at that time it was known at the New York School for Social Workers, later became affiliated and part of Columbia University. She had about a month or two before school started, because I think we came there around July 4th or 5th, and we hung around for awhile. I didn't immediately rush to the Party to report, because I knew that meant working on assignment, and so we had an interesting period. The main thing was that Joe Louis defeated Schmelling of Germany in boxing, and that already meant a defeat for fascism as far as we were concerned. We drove to Harlem, and Harlem was just an uproar, they were so happy about Joe Lewis beating Schmelling. One of the [things that I recall]. The other thing that we were very excited about was the fact that the theater was very cheap to go to, including opera. We could see opera for 55 cents, and theater for a dollar, and so on, and we took part in it. I got some work very quickly as an electrician, in the garment industry, earning about $18 a week, which was okay, and we had a little money that we left on, so we were managing, and did not have to call on anybody for help at that time. Soon I reported to the Party, and they said, the person in the district committee said that "we've been looking for you. You have been recommended for a training school, to go to a training school. We will have to have some local references about you before we can send you to the training school." So I talked it over with Vera, and Vera said "well, if you have to go to the training school, you go to the training school." We located a woman who was very active with me in Los Angeles, beaten up by the police many times, but they had sent [her] back to New York where [she] had come from. I asked her for a reference; this was an example of the type of people the Party consisted of. She said "I can't give you a reference, I haven't seen you now for three months. Maybe you've joined the FBI by now, or become a stool pigeon. I really don't know. I haven't been involved with you lately." That turned me off, something awful. As I'm leaving this area of the Party, on 13th St. and University, I meet these two young men who had killed, or thought they had killed, a person in San

Pedro. They had been riding the [rails] across the country, managing someway or other, came there, and we went to the Party office for help. They told their story to a party secretary. He turned them out, he said "I don't want anything to do with you, because we will be looked upon as collaborators in this thing if we help you", to escape justice, etc., etc. They were very disappointed. They were sure that coming to the Party was like coming home, and they would get help. They'd been having a difficult time, panhandling and whatnot. Talking to me. My approach was not the same. I said "that's outrageous, regardless". I said "come, I'll take you to the ninth floor." That's where Browder was. I knew Browder's secretary, she was an Oakland woman, a very lovely person. I can't recall her name at this time. I brought them up there, and I tell her the story. She knew of me, and she trusted me. She said "okay, we'll give them a hotel to put them up for the night, we'll give them some money for food, and we'll help them to get a job." An entirely different approach taken, it was very interesting. In other words there were differences even then in the Party as to how to deal with it. The sixth-floor people, that was the district people that turned them down, took an attitude that "we're not a social agency, we cannot be involved in trying to help people survive. It would overwhelm us. These people must be organized to fight the system, demand from them what they can get." This is exemplified by the homeless now in San Francisco, where the main line is to see that the city does something to help them out, rather than live on hand-outs. This was the experience in New York. Vera started school, and I continued to work, then my work petered out. And so at this time it was suggested that I go on WPA. To get on WPA you have to go on welfare first, so here I had to sign up for welfare. I'm accepted on welfare, then I go to the WPA and ask for a job, classified as an engineer. I got a good job, paid about $45 a week, which was a lot of money at that time. My job was to run a surveying crew, to survey for 2nd Ave. subway at that time. That meant we had to go into all the basements of all the buildings, and record what structures would have to be removed, and what work would be done. It was fairly simple work, after you get routined. I did that. And then of course the Party gave me..... when I turned down going to the school. That's the way it was, Vera didn't want me to go off.... She just had more difficulties, and stopped ..... herself, than I did. So I turned down going to school, and was assigned to a group that was organizing among the Teamsters of New York.

Q: If you were working all day, how could you carry on your party activities?

A: Well, it so happens that I can recall, I practically opened up an office on the job. This was a loose type of a situation, the WPA, and the workers would meet me on it, and we would talk on the lunch hour and whatnot. There was nothing hidden about it, but I managed. Then the night meetings. A lot of night meetings. I'm not exaggerating; when I ended up in my Teamster work I had as many as 12 meetings a week to attend to, some of them as late as 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning, like in the Washington Food Market. That's when the workers start moving things at 2. A.M. Life was interesting. I found time, mostly on weekends, to go to opera, to get some of the culture of New York, which was fabulous, including the symphony, and everything else that goes with it. The work in the Teamsters became extremely interesting for me, and so even though I was expelled from the union in San Pedro for being a Communist, openly stated so, I joined local 807 of the Teamsters union in New York.

Q: Why were you eligible?

A: I was not eligible. I gave another name. Instead of Meyer, I gave the name Mike, and their research department wasn't worth a damn, for some reason. I got my membership through an employer.

Q: You weren't a Teamster.

A: No, I wasn't a Teamster, and yet I got it, through an employer connection, who in turn asked the union to give me a book, and employed me as a helper for a few weeks, working in the truck, and I nearly broke my back working with it, it was very hard.

Q: How about your WPA job?

A: I gave up, at that time, when the Party suggested that I should go to work in the teamsters, and they'd give me $15 a week to do it, and I gave up WPA. I recall, it did not peter out as yet. [The Party] work came first, and at that time I was dedicated to such an extent that there was no problem giving it up. Vera, I think, got part-time work at Traveler's Aid, which helped to. Besides her schooling she brought in some money, so money was not a problem to us. We did not live very high. I think we paid something like $30 a month for rent, or $20 a month. We managed pretty well, and we started to develop a lifestyle, making friends.

Q: Meyer, your intention is to discuss your association with the Teamsters Union. You may have talked about this in the past, but you'd like to review and possibly add to your previous statements. So the floor is yours.

A: We arrived in New York in 1935. This has been recorded previously. The main reason was for Vera to go to Columbia University and get her Masters in Social Work, which [she] proceeded to do, and I went to work for the WPA. Since that was not a full-time job, I was assigned by the Party, the waterfront section, to work among the teamsters in New York, mainly along the waterfront. The major concentration of this section of the Communist party in New York was to work among the teamsters, longshoremen and seamen, which were considered the key group of workers in the country. When they would stop working much of the rest of industry and production would stop because of the importance of their position. I was put in to work with another young man by the name of Cap Matthews, who was in charge, who was a teamster. I worked with him for awhile, and then he decided and volunteered to go to Spain, so I took over his position. This was about 1936, when the Spanish civil war started. I did want to work on the WPA because it paid fairly well, considering, and it would give me some time, but I could not get on WPA unless I applied for welfare. So I applied for welfare, we actually didn't have much money, we didn't have much of anything, and we [were] welfare approved, and in turn I was assigned to work in a project for surveying New York City for a 2nd Ave. subway. It was an extremely interesting project. My job was to be one of a group of a surveyors that did this work, and we got into all kinds of buildings and basements and whatnot, that represents New York. Some of the places were there during the Revolutionary War, we found places of that kind. We found sewerage pipe made out of wood, that was still in existence, not in use but it was still in existence. And this all was recorded. General Somerville, who was in charge of the WPA, felt that this project showed the public that it had some uses for it. Just for mention, to me the big project in New York was the arts, which consisted of the theater, Writers' Project, and the painters. They did some terrific murals during that period in New York,

especially mostly in hospitals and public buildings, and it was a real contribution. It was very exciting to be with some of the people who were involved, who previously were practically starving to death, now suddenly found themselves getting as much as $40 a week to do this work. To get back to my project: I was assigned to take over Cap Matthews' job as the leader, for the activists, for the group, for the concentration in the Teamsters' Union. I met some very interesting other people, who also were involved. Some of them were party members, and some of them were just plain sympathizers. They knew what it was about, but were not ready to join. So we continued the work, and one of the tasks was to issue a monthly newspaper; we called it the IBT News, International Brotherhood of Teamsters News. That became a very powerful little paper. I heard a number of teamsters say that if it was in that paper, it must be true. This was their feeling. The paper exposed employers and jobs where the employers weren't paying the full union wage scale; [it] was called "working under the hat," an expression that any teamster in New York at that time would know exactly what we meant. And it struck the heart of it, because they were very disappointed, and here on one hand they were working, putting in their full time, working very hard, and yet not getting the full pay, also knowing that their officials of the union were getting a part of that. That was the thing. So there was a lot of sentiment for what we were doing. We were quite successful, so successful that for the largest local in the Teamsters, local 807 of the IBW (IBT?), the officials had been in power for some 25-30 years, very seldom calling a meeting, very seldom responding to any complaint. In fact, there were cases, a number of cases we were told, when a worker would complain about the fact that he was supposed to get $25 a week, [and] he was only getting $15 or $18. He complained, [and] he'd get beat up. He had no recourse. So the whole thing was a very sick situation, as far as we were concerned, but we went into things like this. This is one of the things that I found especially emotionally satisfying to me was to know that I belong to an organization that was basically extremely honest, there was no politics being run to try to get ahead on jobs, and so on. I'm referring to the Communist party of that time. And they supported the Loyalists in Spain and supported any other struggle that took place, was done fully with no strings attached. It kept me up. I'm responding to this at this time because of what is happening in the Socialist and Communist movement worldwide, which is affecting me a great deal. It arouses in me concerns as to where the hell we are going in this movement, at the same time trying to thing things through, and it's not easy. The work we did in local 807 was consistent of teamsters, who hauled material goods to the docks to be loaded on ships, and then took material from the ships and hauled it back, in some cases over the road, away from New York, to other states and other places. A number of teamsters were going after nonunion haulers who came in to New York. They would stop them in some area, and tell them that they would have to pay a union fee to unload there ....., and also a day's pay. These guys would ride with ....., ... would ride with them and take them to the docks where they would have to unload their merchandise, and then make them pay them a day's pay, like $10 or $15, I don't recall the amount.

Q: Who was this money paid to?

A: Individual teamsters, who were making a racket out of it. We would have to deal with that, and they were members of local 807. They felt that they were doing the right thing, because here were these men taking away their jobs. But it didn't stop at that.

Q: They didn't divide this money....

A: No, no, they didn't, but it simply was a form. Probably 15 or 25 were involved in this thing, because it really [was] very hard to tell what was going on. They were capable men, they were not just a bunch of hold-up guys, but this is the way they thought they would satisfy their needs. This was basically local 807, although other locals involved were closely related with local 807; 282, the building material handlers, and so on, they too to some degree were involved. In local 807, to me, was the typical example of what can be done when you concentrate on a certain task and decide you want to make it. Our task in local 807 was to clean out existing officials, elect progressive teamsters in it, and see that the wage scale was enforced. It was not a question of more money, it was more a question of getting the money that the union contract called for, and they were not getting anyplace with that. So we started working. We had some wonderful teamsters who were not members of the Party in any way, not even Socialists, but saw in us the possibility of honest people trying to help. Outstanding of them was a man by the name of Tom Hickey, a 6'2" teamster about 45 years of age, who we all began to love. He'd been fighting for years in the local, but because of his personality and so on, he was not destroyed or punished by the existing officials. They tried to leave him alone and stay away from him, but he carried on. We centered our activity around him, and he accepted that, and within a matter of a year we forced the officials to call an election in the local, first time in 20 years. We, from our position, had other contacts. We got to La Guardia, who was the mayor at that time, got his help in giving us protection for our meetings, places to meet, and things like that helped us a great deal, and within three months the election was held. It was guarded by groups sent down from the mayor's office, to make sure that those who voted had a right to vote. We found ourself facing individuals who were members of the police force, but had union cards, and so they had a right to vote. We stopped that. We had fireman with union cards. The officials had passed these out, as complementary ..... or for various reasons, but they brought them down, and this time to try to save ..... Well we beat them, very badly, about 2-1, and as a result a new era opened up, where previously they wouldn't even bother to come to meetings. Suddenly we found 4-500 men coming to a meeting, out of a local of about 4000, which was considered very good for them. We started to try to clean up the situation, and it was not easy. Of the seven members we elected to the executive board, 2-3 business agents, and the secretary treasurer, who's the key person in it, Devry (?) was the president of the local, a terrific man in his own right, an old-timer who used to drive a horse and wagon in New York to deliver goods to the docks. So we had a good ....., but it didn't last for very long. Two of the business agents were discovered taking bribes from the employers, and their argument was that this wasn't a bribe, the men were getting their pay, and therefore they weren't being hurt. It was just kind of a gift. Well it didn't work with the prosecutor. Tom Dewey was the prosecutor at that time, and they were sent up to Sing-Sing for a year or so, and that shook us up very badly, and developed a lot of questioning among the teamsters, because they too had an ability to go on for petty larceny. Certain merchandise you deliver, you can always set aside something for yourself. It wasn't long after I was there that I was offered a radio, a floor radio. "Ain't gonna cost you anything, Mike." I said "I'm sorry, I don't.....". He said "well, there was one left over, they shipped one too many." I said "you keep it"; he said "but I've already got two of them." I knew to keep my mouth shut about it, and not to criticize it because he was honestly thinking that he was doing the right thing, taking something away from the insurance company and from the employers, and that he was not hurting anyone. And I'm not sure whether he would have done it anyway, but that's the way it worked. I had those experiences with him. The local maintained itself, and did quite well. We started to spread

out to other locals. Before we knew it, we were already working in six of the major teamsters locals, out
of 22 in the New York area; bakery workers, milkers, food handlers, furniture workers. I was in New York when the first local of Parcel Deliverymen -- Local 810 was formed -- now has 30 to 40 thousand members nationally.

IX. Organizing United Parcel Service employees; business in SF; partnership with Bob Cooper.

Organizing United Parcel Service employees.

More comments on IBT Newspaper; financing of it, contributions of material from teamsters, etc.

Major strike (about 1938).

Life in New York; experiences, people.

Working in munitions plant during WWII; bringing in black workers.

Almost being drafted into army.

Vera in New York; getting her MA, working at a hospital, etc.

Moving to San Francisco.

Various jobs held by Meyer, work experiences that he had.

Working for O'Keefe; being demoted, forced to do heavy work, etc.

Working in Abe's ship - repair sewing machine motors

Setting up business with Bob Cooper.

Union business agent gets involved.

Money disappears from cash box.

A: The United Parcel Service, which was then already a nationwide service to deliver small parcels from less than a half a pound, up to tons of material. They had the capacity to do that. We (?) found them very difficult to organize, and our people... by that I mean progressives, truck drivers, etc.; we would meet them on the road, on the route, as they're working, and then they start talking union to them, "look what we accomplished in our union now, and look how much better pay we're getting than you are". And as a result, enough of them signed up, cards at that time, to ask for an election. An election was held and the Teamsters Union was selected to be the representative, and local 808 of the Teamsters was formed. I'm saying that, mainly as a result of what happens when a progressive development takes place, how there follows other consequences. What the elections and local 807 not only helped there members there, but began to help other teamsters working in other jobs, where the employer saw what carried on. And I must say this: that when the administration is helpful, it's a big help. And La Guardia indicated that he was not going to allow any violence, that he's going to protect not only the employers but also the employees. It's a big

Voice Of The Rank & File

IBT NEWS

Written By And For Drivers

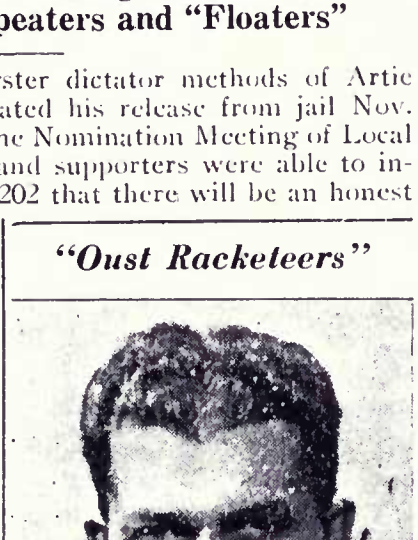
VOL. 3 — No. 19. DECEMBER 8, 1938. PRICE 5 Cents

Joint Council to Supervise Local 202 Election

Rank & File Forces Use of Voting Machines; To Be On Guard Against Repeaters and "Floaters"

Notwithstanding the gangster dictator methods of Artie "Record" Waldorf, who celebrated his release from jail Nov. 26th, by acting as chairman of the Nomination Meeting of Local 202, the New Deal candidates and supporters were able to insure the rank and file of Local 202 that there will be an honest election Sunday, December 11th—the first election in more than 20 years in our local! Every attempt of an honest union man to speak was drowned out and chocked out by the professional gangster stooges and hoodlums imported from the wilds of Jersey City by the chain gang. In spite of the efforts of the mob ruling the local to make it a closed meeting by hiring a hall large enough for only 800 men, 2500 New Deal supporters flocked down to the meeting to make sure that their slate was nominated. Hundreds of honest union men were kept out on the sidewalk by the Hitler tactic of the present "officers," and within the meeting no discussion of any kind whatsoever was permitted. However, the committee of the New Deal had already done its splendid work in protecting the democratic rights of the membership of 202 by means of a conference held with Mike Cashel, International Vice-

"Oust Racketeers"



Councilman CHARLES BELOW

807 Meeting Seen This Month

With rumors of the next regular local meeting running wild, and the officials of 807 still "searching" for an open hall, the rank and file of 807 have once again started circulating petitions for regular monthly meetings. Many members, who have been milling around the Union office asking about the next meeting, and anxious to take up their grievances there, have received nothing but blank looks and lame excuses from the officials. The inability to find an empty meeting room, which is being peddled as the real reason for not holding meetings is getting so stale, that it isn't funny anymore. Somehow, during the last strike, with things more upset and confused than they are now, the local managed to find halls, and the city was glad to help supply us then. Today, with the election campaign over, and most of the meetings halls empty for weeks on end, any talk of not being able to find one is nothing but a ridiculous farce.

Time and time again, the rank and file has stated that the Executive Board has nothing to be afraid of from the men, in calling regular meetings. It's only when they refuse to call meetings, or stall around while men are loaded down with beefs and complaints that are

Progressive Slate Bucks Sheffield Co. Control

With the December 16th Election of Officers for the Sheffield Unit No. 3, of Local 584 only a few days off, the campaign is taking on the appearance of a house on fire. The slanders, personal attacks, and Red-baiting being spread against the Rank and File Progressive Ticket by the Asnep-Company combination, are all part of the general attempt to continue the brand of "unionism" which has operated to the benefit of the Company up to now. Sensing the revolt of the inside and outside men against the pro-Company efforts of the majority of the old present Executive Board and officers, the Asnep crew are stooping to the lowest forms of anti-democratic procedure, in order to remain at the helm. Attempts have been made to keep Progressive Ticket men off the ballot. The nominations meeting in the Jamaica plant, was purposally called at a time when the Rank and File Candidate was working.

Unfounded rumors are being spread that certain men on the Progressive Slate were scabs during the past struggles of the Sheffield men. The men in Sheffield know best of all who has been operating and fighting for their interests for the past few years and they also are aware of the fact that time and time again the present officials, with the exception of two who are running on the Progressive Ticket, have betrayed the men by forcing the exceptance of our Contract with Sheffield without an actual vote of ratification

(*Continued on Page 4*)

Nat Laut Nominated for Trustee

At a well attended and spirited meeting of Unit 1 of Local 584, nominations for the position of Trustee for the Unit were held. The position usually considered a minor one, suddenly sky-rocketed to high importance as a test of the sentiment of the men for a clean and rank and file controlled Union as opposed to the Company dominated as opposed to the old conservative Unionism now in evidence in present incumbent Trustee, was visibly surprised at the opposition he received for his re-election. Opposing Hausler, are Nat Laut, Joe DeCicio, Louis Freidman, Moss Herman, John Rosen and O'Brian. The man most favored for the job

(*Continued on Page 4*)

help. I'm saying this to indicate how important political action is, in a democratic society especially. Of course, it's a different deal in a dictatorship, and the example of it is what's happening in the Soviet Union now, and in China, where a lack of democracy actually spoiled something that could have been very wonderful for society as a whole. I'm getting in my little propaganda in this manner.

Q: Never miss a chance!

A: "I never miss a chance," he says! We carried on our work. I want to emphasize the importance of this little newspaper we put out, which started out with a circulation of about 200 copies. It was a four-page deal, that cost us about $100 an issue to put out.

Q: Did you mimeograph it?

A: No, we had it printed somewhere, in some kind of a printing form. This was much better than a mimeographed job, much clearer to read. We also had a policy that when letters came in, they were published exactly, with misspelled words and everything else. We had letters come in on pieces of scrap paper, from truck drivers. It went to a box, a post office box. We were afraid to have it in anyone's home or office because it may be raided and destroyed, so we [dealt with it] in this manner. The way it was financed was very interesting. We would organize a raffle, and we would give certain shops or certain garages 10 books, and so on. They would give us $10, and then they would throw the raffle into the wastepaper basket. But we were legitimate, we were giving them something for it. And we knew it was going on, and they accepted that as a way to raise money. They never questioned us as to how much, and ..... we were anxious that they should know more was going on. It was limited in number of people involved. Many of the truck drivers did not know how to read or write very much. They would ask others to do it for them, and we felt very complimented when they would come to us and say "take this down, take this down. I talked to Jim so-and-so, and this-and-this garage, and he said that out of the 15 guys working there, only three are getting full pay. All the rest are not getting it."

Q: Did the truck drivers have any particular nationality?

A: In the main, they were Irish-Americans. Second came Italians. And again, some Jews, but very few compared to the overwhelming number of Irish-Americans that got involved. There were Polish; Tony Miller, one of our main persons, was a Polish immigrant who worked on one of the trucks. I myself went to work a few times, as a helper, not as a driver, and helpers got about 60-80 percent of the pay of the drivers. It too was a fairly good pay at that time. When 50 cents an hour was considered very good, the truck drivers were earning as $1.25-$1.75 an hour.

Q: Were you receiving any pay?

A: Yes, I was receiving $12 1/2 dollars a week.

Q: From the Party?

A: From the Party, as I recall. The paper financed itself, and we did not have to get money on the outside. I think the reason I was paid relatively low is that Vera had already started

help. I'm saying this to indicate how important political action is, in a democratic society especially. Of course, it's a different deal in a dictatorship, and the example of it is what's happening in the Soviet Union now, and in China, where a lack of democracy actually spoiled something that could have been very wonderful for society as a whole. I'm getting in my little propaganda in this manner.

Q: Never miss a chance!

A: "I never miss a chance," he says! We carried on our work. I want to emphasize the importance of this little newspaper we put out, which started out with a circulation of about 200 copies. It was a four-page deal, that cost us about $100 an issue to put out.

Q: Did you mimeograph it?

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working. She had started working as a medical social worker in one of the New York hospitals, so we financially were not in a bad spot. We had a nice apartment, and paid as much as $30 a month, which was considered very good. The cost of living was such that we enjoyed, we took in much of New York's culture, saw the opera, the ballet, theater, whenever we could, although I worked very hard, and my main work was at night, in meetings, because during the daytime there were..... There were weeks when I had as many as eight or nine meetings, including meeting with the food handlers in Washington Market at 2 o'clock in the morning, and things like that, depending on what the condition was. I want to bring [in] two other things about my activity in New York. It relates to the teamsters. One is that at a certain point in our development, around 1938, with the Spanish civil war still going on, the men in a number of the locals were dissatisfied that their officials were not doing enough to organize the unorganized, who were working under scab wages. It was not so much a struggle to get the wage scale, which was beginning to be received by the union shops, but using nonunion people on their lower scale. It went to such an extent that even though the officials of the unions who have been changing and improving their attitude tried to say that "we were doing the best we can," the teamsters as a whole were not satisfied, and they forced through a strike, which could not be recognized by the union officials because they had signed contracts with the garages, with the barns, to receive certain conditions. Our strike was basically a strike not only against the barn but against the officials not doing enough. It lasted for about two weeks.

Q: Who participated in that strike?

A: Rank and file people, including our group as the leaders of it.

Q: Did you have most of the employees, or the teamsters going out?

A: I really don't know. The best we can tell is that when we called meetings, as many as 2-3000 would turn out. But then there were 50,000 in the industry(?). La Guardia furnished us armories to meet in, and police protection, which the teamsters didn't like, but we insisted that they do that, that we would stay nonviolent in this manner. It was not easy, because we had all kinds of people in there. During this period the Hearst press, the New York Examiner, just poured poison against us, urging that Roosevelt take action with the troops, and that the National Guard be called out, and whatnot. And so the teamsters, who mostly read the examiner for their own reasons, especially [for the] racing pages and sports and so on, they developed a hatred toward that newspaper, we added to that. We felt that that was a paper that was causing [many difficulties. A fire broke out in the warehouse where they kept the rolls of paper for the printing presses, and so the teamsters egged on the firemen who were fighting the fire, not "don't try to put the fire out", but [rather] put the paper out of business, and their idea was, if you wet down all the rolls of paper in there, they would not be able to run the damn thing. So sure enough, they just poured and poured water into that warehouse until the whole damn thing was no good. They had to bring in paper from Philadelphia and other places to carry through on the ..... It gave us a lot of satisfaction. Also, the Communist party was putting out a newspaper called the Daily Worker. They found themselves without paper. And of course, ... they said, "what do you do?" So they came to us, ... and asked us [if we could] help, and we said "well, what do you want?" He [asked if they could have] "two rolls of paper, it would take care of us for at least a week, otherwise we're in real trouble." So the fellas got together. I didn't know much what to do.

They got ahold of a panel truck, and they rolled the paper from the News to inside the truck, and they delivered it to the Daily Worker print shop on 13th St. in New York.

Q: Would you clarify that a bit? Where did they get the paper from?

A: They got it from a warehouse that the Daily News ..... It was particularly sympathetic, but they knew the people in there, among them friends, relations, connections, that's what ..... And they were able to get one roll at a time, they got the two rolls the Daily Worker wanted. The Daily Worker, in a way, was breaking our strike, but we didn't mind it. They came up to us on the question that they want to ship medicines, supplies, to Spain during the civil war.

Q: That's the Party now.

A: That's the Party now. They couldn't get through to the docks, because of the picket line, and what could we do? I said "okay," the boys started thinking about it and said "well, we'll get a trucking company that will take the supplies, [and] we'll ride with them, in the front seat. And when we get there, things will be taken care of." And by golly they did. The police knew, and the pickets knew who it was, what was going on, and as a result we were able to get it done with. That was a big accomplishment. I myself didn't know how to do it. I offered to ride with the truck; they said "no, let others do it", and they did it. They understood my role, among those who were working, that I wasn't just another truck driver that they had to deal with. This was an instance that I always feel very admired. Meanwhile the Party says to me through the organization, "you have to call the strike off. You've already made your statement, and if you continue they will bring out the National Guard against you, and there will be a lot of trouble and violence, and we don't want that." So I said "okay". We called a meeting for that purpose. Harold Gates, who was our leader, local 807, very capable man and a good brain, considering that as far as I know he didn't even have any high school education, but was very understandable. He called a meeting, spoke to the men, and they shouted him down. Big meeting, but he didn't give up, he kept on plugging away, explaining over [and over] again ..... why, that we made our statement. The teamsters themselves, who didn't know what, really had no program as to what to do, all they knew is that they wanted their officials to respond more fully in organizing those who were not organized, and were taking their jobs away. We finally won out. We stayed till 1 o'clock in the morning to convince them. No one was allowed to leave the room, because they were afraid they would get to the presses. The press did get to it. They had headlines, inciting type of headlines, saying the teamsters were fighting among themselves, and so on. But in the main we got our objective through. I'm trying to give you some highlights of what took place with me in New York at that time. It included also family life and friends, and whatnot. One of the instances that I think I should record is our 10th anniversary party in 1939. So Vera called together our intimate party friends, and we had a party. .... more or less of a high level of discussing world problems. And so Gates heard of it, and he said "we're giving you anniversary party." Even though he was invited to it, he said "I'm going to give you our kind of party." Well, it was a ..... party, where about 90 percent of the those present were Irish-Americans. And they raised holy hell, and they had a jolly time, and none of them got drunk, and whatnot, but it was a lot of fun. It was such a contrast between the two that I thought I ought to have it recorded.

Q: Where was that party held?

A: It was held in Gates' home, as far as I can remember. I'll bring up one other instance of Gates'. Gates became a member of the Party, and fully understood the role that we were trying to present. In fact, a lawyer who questioned things in the Party organization unit about what we were doing, he would explain to us that he had so much education but that it twisted him, so that he could not understand what was going on, so we would have to allow for that. That kind of an attitude toward it. The Gates' things [are] worth mentioning. Gates was married to a little woman. He himself was a small person too. They had three sons, no daughters. They became good friends with us, we lived about a block apart. They'd come over or we'd come over. Come the day before Christmas, I decided to go over there and to take some gifts over, for the children. I came in about 4 o'clock in the afternoon into his apartment. The place was in a shambles. The children were in the closet, hiding, and Violet was crying on the floor. He had come home drunk, and she had accused him of being out with some other woman. At least that was his interpretation. "And no one was going to tell me, after I put in a hard day's work, ..." And then he turned to me [and said] "what the hell do you want here?" I looked at him, didn't answer, laid down the gifts, and I walked out. There's nothing that I could do at that time to ....., because later on I realized how important it was that I had walked out. So the next morning, Christmas morning, he appeared with the kids at my place. He had come over to apologize; he was very sorry that it had happened, that he had been working very hard, and he had a few drinks with the boys on the job, and here he felt that he was accusing him incorrectly, and therefore he lost his temper at the time, and so on. Later I went with Gates on the drinking party. You could get in New Jersey, in certain bars, in Hoboken, you could get all the beer you could drink for a dollar, all evening long. So I went with him, and we drank. By 12 o'clock they stopped serving beer, but then you could have hard drinks. Gates went for some hard drinks, [and] I said no, I couldn't, I was driving, and so on. Meanwhile, some longshoreman there made some insulting remark about the teamsters, and Gates went after him. I'm not exaggerating, I don't think Gates was more than about 120 pounds. A little guy. He went ...., and he got this .... longshoreman on the floor, and if we hadn't stopped him he would probably have killed him. [He] showed such anger and feelings that he wasn't thinking. So therefore he wasn't anyone to fool around with. I didn't know it at the time; the other teamsters knew that he could be capable of doing that, and they were watching out for it. On the way back, we had to go through the Holland Tunnel. I found myself stopped by the police, by a motorcycle cop. Brought out my license. "How come your going through a tunnel the wrong direction?" At about 2 o'clock in the morning. I took out my license. At that time I had taken out my license under the name of Michael Baylin, because I had been expelled from the teamsters union under the name of Meyer Baylin. He looked at it, and said "oh, you're one of us. Turn around, I'll lead you out of this goddamn place." This is the only saving grace of changing my name. So we came out of the tunnel safely. It was soon after this that Tom Dewey and other members who were Catholic in our group began to see how effective we were through organization. And Tom Dewey started an organization called the "Association for Catholic Trade Unions", to teach them how to act. And there main objective was to prove them, and it was not too hard, that the Communist party was doing it in their way, through fractions in the unions, groupings [of] all members in the union, and planning ahead of time, and that [the Catholic Trade Unions] must do the same thing. And they became very effective. And the employers were supporting of this, more of an understanding that they could deal with the Catholic group than they could with the Communist. There was not very much we could do. It was about this time that the war broke out, and the Party instructions were to drop this activity. Not in anyway to interfere

with the war effort, and strikes of any kind, and so on, would stop, and so I accepted that as a decision. Not too much debate about it in the Party itself, which wasn't unusual. This made sense, that you couldn't fight Hitler and do this at the same time. The argument that this would help the employers make even greater profits did not hold with us very much. We weren't concerned with the profits that the employers were making at that time, we were concerned with winning the war, to such an extent that I went to work in a munitions plant, where they made tools for anti-aircraft bullets. It was a specialized kind, and I had the ability to run the equipment. That in itself was an experience that was very interesting. In this job came the question of allowing blacks to work in this factory. Nearly all the whites in the factory said "we will not stay here if blacks are brought in." There was a great shortage.

Q: This was in New York City?

A: New York City, in downtown. I was elected the chairman or the group leader for the union, UE, United Electrical Workers' Union, a left-wing union. I brought them together, talked about the need to allow blacks to work for various reasons, discrimination and so on. Finally they said "let's try it," and we brought in two black men to work. These same workers a month or two later swore that they'd never war against us. Everything worked out fine. They indicated that they really didn't mean to discriminate against them, because the union did select a proper kind of black, who would not get angry, [who could take] insults readily, and so on. So that was a very interesting experience. I was registered for the draft....

Q: Excuse me, were more blacks employed then? You said there were two.

A: Two we brought in at that time. I don't recall others being brought later. I just do not remember. Because [the employer] did put on a night shift. I don't want to make any guesses about it. I registered for the draft, we had no children, so on that basis I was eligible to be drafted. Both of us knew it was coming soon, so I said, "why don't I enlist? I think I'd get a better break by giving the enlisting officer the information, my college background, and all of that. So we went down on Yom Kippur, I remember, 1942, and he listened to my qualifications and said "fine, we'll probably give you a rating of a sergeant, and you'll [be] going [into] the specialized work of communications," because I had that experience. "Then go to your draft board and get a clearance from them, so that they will know what is happening to it. We agreed to do that. A few days later Vera and I went to the draft board, and they said "we have you listed and going in about 10 days. Do you want to start the thing going? It may take three months before you get cleared otherwise." So we decided to go in for the 10 days. The coincidence of life. This [was at the] end of August. On September 1, Roosevelt went on the radio broadcasting, announcing [that] those who were 38 years of age or over would no longer be drafted. That came at that time. And so that means that I would not. I was 38 on August 17th.

Q: You were just over....

A: Over by two weeks. My birthday's on August 17, this was September 1. So I'm out. I'm relatively discouraged. I had been rejected when I volunteered to go to Spain. Not that I first accepted, but the Party central committee came in to it, and said "it's too important in this context among the Irish-Americans. We had plans for it, we don't want them to go.

Besides that, he's not a citizen, and he will have difficulty being brought back to the states. They're going to watch for people like Meyer to do that." So on this basis I was let down. I wasn't the only one, there were other people in similar circumstances who were not permitted to go. In the draft, to be honest about it, one of the reasons I wanted to go into the service was [that] I would receive my citizenship as a result of being in the army. So here I'm knocked out again. I didn't like New York, as far as the climate was concerned, from the beginning, although compared to other people we lived fairly comfortably in New York. In many cases we rented with friends ..... summer cottage or some place outside of New York during the summer months, and so we had some relief from the heat. Otherwise I was ready to go back to California. So vera said "I'll go back to California, but I don't want to back to Los Angeles," where we came from. So we compromised on San Francisco, where we had friends, and we wrote to them that we needed a place to stay, and they responded that they would find something for us to live on. And then we left New York for San Francisco in June of 1943.

Q: Off the record, you stated that you hadn't brought Vera into the picture enough, and that you wanted to make a special statement with respect to her. Would you proceed with respect to that now?

A: All right. Vera graduated with her MA from the School of Social Work, which is now part of Columbia University, and took a job in a Lebanon hospital in the Bronx, about a 30-minute commute, and proceeded to professionally do quite well, and was fairly satisfied with the work that she was doing. She was complaining that they were receiving a lot of patients from Hitler's Germany, nearly all being Jews, who she found were quite difficult to deal with. It was kind of interesting; [they were] kind of demanding certain things, not realizing what kind of a service it was. This was one of the features of her being...., but she had no answers for that. The other one was the competition in the mothers of newborn babies, who would come and ask Vera for help. Not the medical staff, but Vera, a social worker. How could she get around to medical staff to get their babies to grow faster and bigger. Kind of interesting. "Mrs. Smith next door, her baby was six weeks old, was already 10 pounds, and mine is only five pounds, and I talked to the doctor, and he laughs at me; can you help me overcome that prejudice?" Vera joined the Communist party and was a member of a unit in the waterfront section. I recall the place that I worked out of. Made friends amongst them, we made a number of close friends who were also members of the Communist party, and participated mainly in cultural activities, including seeing a lot of theater, ballet, and so on. In this part she contributed to me a great deal, because I knew nothing about that activity, and she enjoyed and understood it. She had taken some courses at college that involved some classical dancing, and whatnot. So in that respect, I found it a new experience. As a whole, she was fairly happy in New York, I would say, but when I started indicating that I would like to make a change, especially the climate in New York was extremely hard on me, extremely cold in the wintertime and too hot in the summertime. She preferred to stay in New York, but when I was not accepted by the army, we agreed to make the change because Very had a job there. We left for San Francisco by train, and we arrived in San Francisco and we were met by a friend, Minny Carson and Al Bock. I don't know if you know either one of them. They're both gone now. They said "yes, we have found a place for you to stay," and they took us to a place on Twin Peaks, a beautiful apartment overlooking the city. And they took us in there and we had dinner together, and so on. We got the impression that it belonged to them, and so we didn't do much about it. And then toward the evening they started packing to leave, so we asked them "where are you going?"

And they said, "this is your apartment. We are going home." We were very surprised. We of course remained there, and about 11 o'clock at night someone knocked on the door. It's the landlady, the manager, a woman. She said "I'm just curious who's spending the night here, because we've had so many different people spending nights here." We didn't understand it, and said "well, we're not moving out, we want to stay, can we bring you the rent in the morning?", and so on. And she said "okay", so we ..... It seemed like the apartment belonged to Harry Bridges. He and Nancy had been shacking up up there, then he decided to marry Nancy. This was his second ..... at that time, and so they moved into a larger house on their own. This one remained to be occupied by people who came along. Other people had used it too, and now we were the ones that were living there. A fabulous apartment, on Clayton St. overlooking the whole city and the bay. It was a very very beautiful setup. And that started our career in San Francisco. They already had the blackout, and we had to close our windows and curtains, and all of that. We one night forgot to do that, and we came home about 11 o'clock, and the fire department was there with ladders, covering up the place. We felt very stupid about it. Vera had written from New York about a job at UC Medical Center, and got back a telegram saying "come as soon as you can." So she was assured of a job, and the apartment on Clayton St. was not very far from the hospital, so that was a nice thing. I went to work in a warehouse, under local 6 jurisdiction. Harry Bridges told me to go there. At first other party people and so on wanted to know whether I wanted any kind of a organizing job, and I turned it down. I didn't want it at that time. Lou Goldblatt of ILWU especially was after me to help to organize, and I said "I'd rather work for awhile." So I went to work for McKesson-Robbins. I worked there for awhile, and then I got a job in an electrical shop on 8th St., Bazel Electric, in a motor shop, rewinding motors, and worked there until I had a major accident where I nearly lost one of my fingers through a saw. I quit that, and went to work again for another outfit, Dale Beck Elect. in San Francisco, which was doing necessary war work, an electric shop on the waterfront. There I experienced something unusual. This electric shop was mostly staffed by Finnish workers, who were brought down from up North, from Ukiah and that area where they worked in lumber. They were anti-war in general, and they were not helpful in the shop. I found it very difficult to see them doing some sabotage work, and the owner of it knew it too, but he was becoming very rich, doing very well. And so I saw another aspect of how things can be sabotaged by workers on the job. They would not accept my position that at this time we do not try to do things that interfered with war effort, and their argument was that it was an imperialist war, that the employer was going to get theirs anyway, and we don't give a damn. It was quite a shock and deal for me. I worked seven days a week. Six days a week we worked 11 hours, and on Sunday it was only 8 hours. The pay was fair, we were in local 6 of the IBEW, but I was exhausted [afterwards], it was a very long hard stretch for me, although I was fairly young yet, in the early 40s, but it still was very hard. I recall the conditions were such that to go uptown I would take a streetcar going toward the ferry, to get on it and stay on. It turned around and went up. I had a place on it ...., otherwise you had to hang on the outside. It was very difficult. We quickly adjusted to San Francisco. We had some friends already who previously had lived in Los Angeles, Minnie and Al (?), who were of our age group, and saw life, ... quite well. I was an expert in direct-current motors. I got that experience in New York, which was still using a great amount of D.C. motors of that kind. There's alternating current and direct current. San Francisco was basically alternating current, relatively more new, but the ships that came into San Francisco were old-timers, and many of them were using direct-current motors, and some of them would break down, would be brought to the shop to be repaired, and after they were repaired they were taken back and

installed. I could not pass the security. My employer tried to get security, but couldn't get it. On the basis that I was on deportation, but they did not tell the employer on what basis I was being held. They were under the impression that I had a criminal record, and I let that alone. I didn't push it. But there came two instances where they needed me aboard a ship, to show the men how to reinstall these direct-current motors, and I told them I couldn't go. The boss said "I will send you with two other men. There will be one on each side of you. You will pass by the guards, and you'll have no trouble," which we did. And I went aboard the ship. So I didn't know fully what the consequences were, but I still had a strong feeling that the war effort was worthwhile. I'm looking back and I think I'm being very honest about it. That I felt was my motivation for going, because I know I could have refused. In one case a ship came in with its bottom practically shot off by submarine shelling. They had to have ventilation in the holds. [They needed someone] to go into them, clean them out, and they selected me to go aboard the ship, to stay there some 48 hours, ... until the ship was cleared out so they could do the repair work at Hunter's Point repair ..... And that was an experience in itself because I did not bring any reading material much(?). My job was only to look after the electrical equipment, it would be a check and the ventilation, I was there to correct it or substitute motors and whatnot. That was very important. So I learned about the ship itself. I crawled into every corner of the ship. It was just like a little city, with its own sewer system, own electrical system, heating system, and whatnot. It was kind of a good experience for me. I also later took a job with Westinghouse Electric Corporation. There's two, electric supply and manufacturing. They were in Emeryville. They needed someone in the testing department, for their equipment, that before it's sent out it's tested. So I took this job. As I recall the pay was about the same, and I worked there. My job was testing special transformers they were building for the Soviet Union. I was very excited to see that it goes ahead, gets shipped out, because that was something they needed very badly. The place also employed women who were transformer winders. The core of the transformer would be put into a lathe that turned, and they would feed wire into it like a spool. But the wire was always under one side of their body. As a result one side of their breast would develop larger than the other side, and the women had enough of a sense of humor to laugh about it. Some said it didn't do much, "mine was always bigger than the others," and that of course got a big kick out of the men. And in general I enjoyed the job, although the transportation and the trip was quite hard from San Francisco to Emeryville and back. We went by ferry at that time, actually. And then one morning I came on the job, and the foreman I believed said that "you would have to go home that day, we have noticed that you have no clearance, and this is security work. As soon as this is cleared up we'll call you back." I knew that was the end of it. The shop foreman of ..... came to me, and said "shall we make a protest out of it?" And I said "no. I don't think we'll get anyplace for one thing. Second, I don't want it to hamper any of the work. ..... Somebody may not understand what this was about, because meanwhile I had made friends there, we're getting along. So I'm back in San Francisco, and that is when I went to work for O'Keefe, the fan man. O'Keefe was basically an employer that was an opportunist, fairly young, who got himself elected to the Board of Supervisors, and in no time was caught stealing money or taking bribes, and whatnot. He quit, that is he resigned from the board. And I worked for him. He made me the shop foreman, basically because he sensed that I would help to produce, and I did. But that meant a lot of problems for him. He was doing motor work for ventilation, restaurants, and hotels and whatnot, and my job was to see that the equipment that was brought in was in good condition and repaired. While I worked there the pay was better, and I think it was a six-days-a-week job, which was good. I found myself working very hard, and my back beginning to give me trouble. The

war was over, but he continued to have me, except he immediately reduced me to a journeyman's pay when the war was over, because he no longer had the same kind of situation. He also became more critical of all of us, the employer, Jack, that we should produce. He was very concerned about the fact that certain parts were disappearing from the shop, especially ball-bearing units, that cost $6-8 a piece. And so he comes to me, to see if I could help him to find out what was going on, and I rejected him very strongly. He wasn't happy with me because I wouldn't cooperate with him, and I in turn was not happy with the job because he was beginning to take on much heavier equipment, now that he didn't have the war jobs, the motors that I had to lift, that were 60-80 pounds, from the floor up to the bench. So on one or two occasions I called for help, I would get one of the workers in the area, and sure enough he steps in, he says "this job doesn't require two men, it requires only one man." I saw the handwriting on the wall in that respect, because he felt that I was interfering with the other workers. Meanwhile I made friends with a man by the name of Abe Stollowitz who had a sewing machine business on Mission St., very well-known in the city. I met Abe's brother Morris. He lives in Marin County, and I became friends with Morrie. He, in turn, introduced me, and Abe found out how I was working, and says "why don't you come into my shop, repair my motors, and you'll do very well, and I'll get you work from others." These were small sewing machine motors, 1/4, 1/3 horsepower. I thought about it and said "why not?" He said "you'll make in three days what you're making there in a whole week." He was right. He knew what was going on. So I quit the job, and went to work in Abe's place, and sure enough it turned out to be very good, very profitable to work. And along came a young man by the name of Bob Cooper. He was not working there, he was working as an electrician in construction, that is. He was wiring homes and buildings and so on, and Abe, an experienced man, considerably older than him, said "why don't you set up a partnership with him? And you will be the man on the inside, and Bob Cooper will be the man on the outside." He said "and you'll do the work." Abe knew nothing about unions, didn't care about unions, was quite conservative. He said "you'll do the work, and you'll do quite well." So sure enough we took his advice. We rented a place, we formed a partnership, and we started working.

Q: Where did you set up this place?

A: On Sixth St., between Howard and Folsom St., in San Francisco. I was friendly, found out later about Cooper. He used to be a member of the Young Communist League, a progressive. I liked his wife very much, and got along very well. We were doing very well. Along came the union business agent, and he said "Mike you're a good union man. Why don't you throw the tools away, I'll send you a good union man to work for you." He said "and you'll be a union shop. You go out and get more work, and I'll get you more men." Charles Fore is his name and he was very well-known in the union field. I did that, and the IBEW sent for a guy, and before a year or two was over we already had three men working for me.

Q: So you went out and sought jobs from....

A: From various factories, and maintenance and whatnot. Bob Cooper would do the outside work, and the man that sent me would do the inside work, would do the motor work. I would do some too, to a degree, I believe. As far as I can remember I also did some of it, but in the main the direction was to get more work. At that I became very proficient. I guess at this point there was concern about exploiting other workers. My justification, which

was a phony justification, was that they were earning at that time at least as much as I was drawing, not more. They were getting the union scale. Union scale was pretty good for them. $1.75 an hour at that time was fairy good, but it weighed on me. And the thing began to grow more, more work coming in. This was a very good period at that time. Meanwhile, the money in the cash box began to disappear. I told Bob about it, Bob said "I took it".

X. Partnership with Bob Cooper; relations with family while in San Francisco

Working as a businessman in San Francisco, in partnership with Bob Cooper.

Working with SF Electrical Contractor's Association and bid depository.

Problems with Bob Cooper; breakup of partnership.

Sale of business.

Buying property and building houses in Mill Valley; McGee Ave., then Marguerite.

Political activity while in San Francisco.

Relations with family while in San Francisco; other notes about various members of family, general comments about family life.

A: My experience as a businessman in San Francisco, [as] an electrical contractor was started with Bob Cooper as my partner, a man about the same age as I was at the time. He was what is called a house- or building-wire worker, [who] works in buildings and new construction, old construction, to wire houses, offices and factories. I was a motor man, and an electrical control man type of work, quite different from working on construction. But [we] both understood each other's function quite well. It was on this basis [that] we started taking jobs of relatively small size, and he would go out and do them, and I would do work that came into the shop in the form of repairing motors and rewinding motors. I may be repeating some things here but we can knock that out later. Soon the business agent, Charlie Fone (?) called me and asked me to come in and see him. He was the business manager for local 6 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers,usually referred to as IBEW, a national organization, and a very strong one, part of the building trades as well. I was taking in all motors, and all work related to electricity, in various forms. Charlie in turn said "you are quite a capable person. I've worked with you on wage scale committees and others, and I know you could be successful as a businessman. Why don't you throw away the tools and let me send you a good motor man, or any other electrician that you need, and you will be able to get the work easily, and if you need more I will see to it that you get good men." I accepted his approach to it. I also had a feeling that that would be the proper thing to do. I almost felt, as a businessman, [that] I was not in an easy situation for myself.

Q: Now what was the name of your business?

A: The name of the business was Bay Electric Company.

Q: And where were you located?

A: We were located on Sixth St., between Folsom and Mission St., right downtown in the skid row. It was a storefront, now used as a porno film display place, just to indicate the kind of situation that exists.

We hit it off pretty well, Bob and I. I met his wife, Verna, who was very nice, very capable woman, and knew what she was about, and we made somewhat of a friendship, and things went along awhile, till one Monday morning I came into the shop and discovered that the cash box had been raided, and $40 taken out of it. So I confronted Bob; but I didn't confront him with it, I told him what had happened. I didn't particularly accuse him. And he said "yes, I took the money. I'll take it out of my check the next time we draw." We were drawing $40 a week at the time, and the men working for us were already drawing $80-$90 a week, which we accepted and understood that that wasn't going to last very long. And then finally he said "do you know what, I have been gambling over the weekend, playing poker, and I took this money because I needed some money to gamble away." And he said "I'm broke right now." So we both laughed about it, and didn't get too excited about it. I thought maybe it was one of the instances. Of course it wasn't that easy. He was a habitual gambler, and from then on there was no more cash in the cash box. He was having a difficult time in that area. My next suggestion, I believe, was "why don't you go see a psychiatrist."

Q: Incidentally, did you have a partnership between you [and him]?

A: I don't recall whether we had anything in writing. I don't remember any document in writing. It was just simply a matter of verbally agreeing that we were partners. Bob Cooper got the contractor's license by taking the exam required to get one, and it was in the name of Bay Electric Company, not in his name. And so we functioned well. We joined the bid depository, and we also joined the San Francisco Electrical Contractor's Association. I attended meetings throughout the time I was in the business world, but I seldom ever spoke at these meetings. I kept in the background, because I did not know how they would respond if someone accused me of being a Communist or something like that, I didn't know. So, in that way. There were indications that the FBI had gone to the head of the Association to tell him that I was a Communist, and that I was on deportation, and he in turn talked to me, looked me over, I sensed then that he knew what was going on, but [he] made no comment, no threat of any kind. Because basically I was behaving properly, following the rules required. The bid depository was something else. You paid a fee to belong to it, and whenever you bid a job you had to give a duplicate copy of your bid to the bid depository, and the person who came in with the lowest bid got the job. This was for the purpose of avoiding people trying to cut each other down, saying "I'll do it for less," after they've made one bid. In that respect it was helpful to maintain some stability in the industry. Previously they'd had some trouble in San Francisco among the electrical contractors in the form of violating Sherman anti-trust laws, where they'd get together and decide who was going to get the next big job that came up. And after that a number of them were fined. As far as I know, none of them went to jail. But from then on, at the time I came in, they were extremely careful not to get involved, although I'm not convinced that behind the scenes there was still collusion going on in getting certain jobs.

Q: Who ran the bid depository?

A: A person was selected who was not a contractor in any way, just someone who knew how to run such an organization. I gathered later on, I found out, that there were other, similar organizations all over the United States. And since then I met one of the men who ran it, who lives here in Marin County, and he said that he got the job through the Electrical

Contractor's Association. They interviewed him. He is a college graduate, knows very little about electricity but did know how to run an office, and how to do the business required [of] a bid depository. In regards to Cooper, this instance that occurred where the cash was taken repeated itself in other forms, in the fact that he would come to work on Monday morning practically asleep. He had been playing cards from Friday through the night, through Saturday, through Sunday, and was beat, and told me so. So I recognized that it was a problem ..... The main difficulty was that I found him no longer reliable. He would go out to see the men on the job, and see what material they needed, how the job was progressing, and instead of going there he'd end up in a gambling joint. And these were run illegally in San Francisco, known by the police department, who got a payoff to allow them to operate. Same with the Chinese lotteries that went on, and a number of others. I later did work in some of these places, so I'm speaking from first- hand information about it. I talked to Bob about the fact that I cannot continue in the business under such conditions, and he had not really any answer. So then is when I suggested that he go see a psychiatrist, which he did, a Dr. Wassermann at San Francisco Medical Center on Parnassus St. Dr. Wassermann talked to him and then said "we'll have a suggestion," and at the end of the session he said "you'll have to come back, of course, for some more, and I also expect you to pay me the $15 in advance the next time," because his attitude was that gamblers were not capable of controlling these things, and that once he owed the psychiatrist some money he wouldn't come back. So he stayed with Wassermann for about six months. Wassermann's recommendation was that they have a baby, and that did not work out, Vera could not get pregnant. So finally they decided to adopt a baby, and as soon as they adopted a baby two weeks later she became pregnant. Dr. Wassermann recommended that he get an old house to remodel and redo, to buy. That would keep him doing something, so he wouldn't be required to gamble. Anyway, this went on for about a year, maybe longer, and it did not help. The condition got worse, and finally I said "we must separate," and he would say "okay", but was not ready to do it. So we went to our attorney, Dick Worthimer, [and we] talked about our condition, and Dick listened. This went on for a few months, and nothing happened, and finally Dick said "look, you have no right to punish Meyer with your problem. He's been tolerant, and I think you must make a break for it." And at this time Bob Cooper said he would give up the business, his partnership, if I would give him $12,000 in cash, give him a truck and tools to start on his own, to do some jobs, which I immediately agreed to. At this stage I think Dick made him sign papers that he had no further recourse to me, and I gave him a check for $12,000. I gave him a truck, and carried out all the conditions. We left relatively friendly about it. Two weeks later Verna called me and said "why did you give him that money?" I said "I had no choice. I wanted to get out of this situation." She said "well, he has gambled it all away, and I'm taking him to court, and he may go to jail for lack of wife support." She was a friend of Pat Brown, the former Governor of California, and he was the District Attorney for San Francisco at the time. And so he arranged for Bob, whenever he went to work, that he would bring his check and give it to her, and she would collect the check, and then she would allow him so much money for living expenses. I don't know whether that's of importance, but this is the way it was. Soon after, I received a notice from the federal government, that Bob Cooper had applied for a job overseas in some military installations in the South Seas, and would I please give him a reference? I called Verna and she said "no, I don't want him to go. He can find work here, and he is getting work." And here he is, the government's asking me, of course not knowing what my situation was, to give him a reference. He did not go. Meanwhile [he] took the exam for electrical inspector for the city of San Francisco and passed, and was put to work there, which was a good job. She collected the check, and he would get his work done in about three hours for

the day, and then spend the rest of the time gambling in small gambling ..... This is the way it went on for him from then on. I meanwhile improved the business and it began to grow like mad, and before you knew it I had a payroll of $10-15,000 a week to meet, and the work was going well.

Q: What year was this?

A: 1965-6. I was netting at that time approximately, after income tax, about $40-50,000 a year.

Q: Did you lose contact with Bob?

A: More or less, more or less. We were not on bad terms in any way, but I did not associate myself with him anymore.

Q: Did you have any political association with him?

A: No, although he fully knew, and he himself at one time was a member of the Young Communist League, and knew what I was doing. There was nothing hiding. But he himself was not involved in anything, although I've had him go to parties or concerts for any of the time we were together. (??) Meanwhile, in my group of men I selected Bob Hupp to be the foreman, which meant an increase of about 25 percent in the pay scale that he would get, and he was doing quite well in it, and getting some very good work for me, and his activity. He also began to make contacts with other contractors, and pretty soon he was taken away from me by Charles Langess, a well-known contractor. That was fine with me. He was with this man for a year or two, and came back and said he would like to get the job, and so he came back into my organization. At this time I began to think that I was not anxious to become a rich man particularly, and that I was having an income outside of the business now which amounted to $5-6000 a year, and I felt at that time, in '67, that was quite a bit of money, and I could live on that. We had a house. And I talked it over with Vera, and Vera said "okay, but I'm quitting too." So I started to negotiate to sell the business. I thought the business would be very valuable, but no one wanted to buy it. Those who were qualified to buy it said "hell, I don't have to buy your business, I can start it myself." It didn't take very much to start. And so I gave up. One man offered me $25,000 and I accepted that for the goodwill of the business, and within a week he came back and said "my wife says if I stay in California, in San Francisco in the goddamn fog, she's going to leave me." So that [deal fell through]. So I started talking to Bob Hupp about taking over the business, and he said he had no money. I said "let's make an arrangement. I'll give you a $10,000 loan from the bank. There's about $50-60,000 worth of work going on now. You have credit in the supply houses, the standing is very good. I always discounted all my bills. And therefore I think you can do it, and you're running it." So he undertook to do that, he accepted that. Also, two other men that started with me in the early days remained, Jack Owens and Russ Baum remained. These three men were friends about it, so that they worked together. Baum was put in as a junior partner in the business, and they went on. The agreement was that he would pay me out the money that I would lend him, and that I wanted for the business a nominal amount, I think, I don't recall the exact amount, like $10,000 over a period of three years, and after that I would be out, which was okay with me. A year or so went by. He was contacted or made friends with a man by the name of Don Grey, who owned the Grey Electric Supply Company, who seemed to treat me nice at all times, we got along. But I got

the impression from Bob that Don was telling him not to trust Jews, that they may go back into the business after you pay them out, and that as soon as you can get out of it, the better it would be. So Bob got a hold of some additional money and paid me off right there and then within a short time, and that was the end of that. I didn't get excited by it, I recognized these things. It would happen, I didn't in any way argue. I can't recall how I got that kind of impression, but this is what I believe happened. I have no evidence that Don said "get rid of him because he's that nationality."

Q: Now when was that business sold?

A: It was sold about 1967. I was in it altogether about 9 or 10 years, and my feelings as a Socialist still were strong in many ways. Exploitation of labor bothered me, although the men were very well paid compared to other cases. They were, at that time, getting about $2.50 an hour, where the regular people were getting $1, $1.50 on it. Now they get about $20 an hour, $25 an hour. And of course, besides that there were other benefits involved in it too, vacation pay, etc., etc. I was happy to get out of the business, and spent my time in Mill Valley at this time.

Q: You say you had bought a house. Was this house in Mill Valley?

A: I bought a lot, not a house, in Mill Valley, on McGee Ave. This is near where I live now. We had made friends with Harry Shaft and Jessica Fredricks, who lived there. Both of them were around the age of 75 or 80, and both of them were members of the Communist Party, and they invited us to come to visit with them through Minnie Bock. We went there on a weekend, this was about '66, I was still in business of course, and they said "we are going to Mexico for a month. Would you like to sit on our house for a month?" And we said "oh we'd be happy to." We had a car. We took over the place for a month, and we loved it. We slept outdoors, and it was just a huge change of lifestyle, but we like it very much. When they came back, took over the place, Harry said "I have a lot right below me. I was going to put in a lot of apple trees, have an apple orchard, but if you want it, I'll sell it to you at a very reasonable amount." I said "what is reasonable?" He said "well, if you give me $50 a month, for a certain number of months, and I'll tell you when to stop." I accepted that. After 10 months, for $500, I bought this building site. The building site is now worth about $150,000. That's the way our crazy society works. We started building a house on our own. It was going to be a summer house for us, a one bedroom place. This place in San Francisco that we had occupied on Twin Peaks was extremely convenient, and a very lovely apartment that we had. The rent was extremely low, so we were not rushing to move to Mill Valley. So we built it physically, actually put in work ourselves, together with our friend Jim Chestnut, who's a carpenter, a builder, who helped us, and others that helped us, and we put this house together. We started living there. The house was about 80 feet above the street level, and we built a walk up to it, but we soon found some of our older friends were puffing and huffing. It was very hard. We also faced the prospect that we would find it hard to walk up 80 feet back and down. So Vera started looking for another building site, and she found the one we're in at this time. Extremely low cost again, two building sites for $5000 is what we paid for it. We retained an architect at this time, because we were in the money, if [that's] what you want to call it, and we had the architect draw plans for the new house where we are living now. We put it out to bid, and our friend Jack Broman who was specking houses wanted to bid on it. I allowed him to bid, he came in about $500 higher than Pete Dreyfus did (that's Barney Dreyfus' brother). He said "give

me a chance to let me build an architecturally designed house, it will give me better status as a builder if I build it." And I accepted that deal, and he started building the house, and found that he didn't know how to build a difficult house, he had difficulties. But we pulled through, and the house was completed. We also got a good landscape architect, Lawrence Halpirn, to do the garden at the same time. So the house turned out to be exceptionally comfortable for us, and likable.

Q: How many rooms?

A: Two bedrooms. There was room downstairs to build another room, and I did that myself later on. I put it together, put in a water heater and a toilet down in the basement. We used it for guests at times, and I would use it for storage, a place to store stuff we can't use, and the place is just jam full of.....

Q; And also to make wine?

A: To make wine, that's right, and also to keep preserves, canned food, canned fruit that I can each year. I wanted to have it used by some student in Marin County that needed some help, but Vera said it would interfere with her privacy, and I had to respect that. She didn't want someone around at this time. So this is the situation. Coming from New York to San Francisco. I had at arranged a transfer of my membership from New York to San Francisco, in the Communist Party. And after a few weeks, I don't recall how long, I appeared at the Communist Party headquarters in San Francisco on Market St. I can remember 943 Market St. is where the location was, and meanwhile I had friends in the form of Bill Schneiderman, who was in San Francisco at this time. I don't recall whether he was a state organizer or not. I know he was later on, but I don't know what year he became the state organizer, because before him there was Sam Darcy, who had left. I was assigned to a unit in the Twin Peaks area of San Francisco. Vera was assigned to a unit for professional people, doctors and lawyers and so on. I met in this unit and was accepted quite well. The activity in the unit tended towards state legislation and one or two people who were members of the Party were working with state legislators in Sacramento, and said that there was a possibility of developing certain legislation that would helpful to the working class, and to the people of California, and we accepted that as the activity.

Q: Now this activity was all at night.

A: At night, yes.

Q: So it didn't interfere with your business.

A: No, it did not interfere with my business, although at this time I'm also still working for others, for O'Keefe the Fan Man at the time. There was a convention held in San Francisco that was important to me, a convention of the Communist party, and I was selected as one of the delegates to this convention. This was a period when the Communist party was under a name of an educational organization, not a political party, and this convention was aimed toward bringing it back into being a political party Browder. This is what's called the "Browder Period", when Browder was the one that turned the Party into an education political organization, and there [it] became back at this convention. Bill Schneiderman played a big role He had been at a national committee meeting, or central committee

meeting, and there a resolution was adopted to bring back the Party into line as a political organization. There were a lot of differences at this convention, a lot of discussion, a lot of people opposed to going back to a political party. Their reasoning was that the same thing could be accomplished as an educational society, but we were not able to draw many votes anyway, and a lot of energy went into electioneering, but not very much was accomplished. The convention ended more or less on a somewhat divided feeling, a lot of differences, but not in organized factions like in previous years, which was something that was important. And Bill Schneiderman was the main person that was send as a delegate to the national convention in New York. He presented a resolution adopted at the national committee meeting, to be approved by the convention. The convention would not approve it, and Bill Schneiderman said "I will not accept to go as a delegate if this resolution's not adopted." And so he or someone made a motion to reconsider, and the resolution was adopted. To me it was kind of a form of, almost like blackmail, to a degree, because we felt that we did want him to go, he had been the leader, he was the most knowledgeable person there, and yet he made us accept the resolution when the majority did not want to. The attitude was "why should we adopt the resolution, make decisions now? Let the convention decide." And Bill's argument was that the convention must know the sentiment of the state conventions, and this was a way of doing it.

Q: Now what did that resolution say?

A: The resolution basically was saying that the Browder line was wrong, and that there was the need to come back [as] a political organization. This line came definitely from Moscow. It was done through the French leader, by the name of deCleau (?), who sent a letter to the American party, saying that "what you are doing is not good, and that you should go back." What interests me is, that to a degree, the Communist party was made up of people who stood out on principle, and who had their own thoughts about doing it. Not all of them were ready to accept something because someone told them to, and that with this convention showed this fight. Even the previous factional fights between Lovestone and Foster were also examples of the fact that we were not accepting orders from above. There were certain members, and I was one of the kind that did accept orders from above pretty much. I'm taking an attitude [that] these people above had better knowledge, better understanding. I didn't take it on a basis that they in any way wanted something for themselves, but they thought this program was the correct program. I'm in a period now, right now, where I have great feelings and thoughts about what's going on, both in China and the Soviet Union, with no clear understanding [of] what direction this may take, although I'm very much influenced by Mike Harrington's position of a social democracy, and I feel that because of the lack of democracy, both in China and in the Soviet Union, that they have come to such difficult situations because we already saw what happened in China in the form of killing so many people and carrying on in this unhealthy manner, that I consider, and I think that Gorbachev and the Soviet Union are not out of the woods yet, and the problems that they are going to be facing because of a lack of democracy. One of the things that a lack of democracy does is it tends to destroy the economic base of a country. It's not just based on the fact that I can't say what I want to, and so on. It's the fact that those who produce, both farmers and workers, feel that there is nothing accomplished by producing better and more, and so on, that it's not going to solve any problems. Therefore the economic situations in both countries are becoming stagnant, and [destroy] their will. I tend to place, in my whole lifetime, a great deal of emphasis on the economic basis of a society. I find that if the

economic basis is not good, everything else is affected. Even the arts, the literature of a country, the daily life of the country, is bad. I'm especially influenced by my period of activity in the Unemployed Council, where I met hundreds of workers with families, who were hopeless, didn't know where to turn. They were not interested in anything else but "how can I ..... myself?" And now, at this period, we're coming into a period of the homeless people. And I've met a number of them in San Rafael. [They] are saying "what's going on? Why can't I live like a decent human being? What did I do wrong?" And yet I have no answers for them, because I don't think they did anything wrong. They are victims of the system that is not able to provide for people, and therefore they have to sleep in the bushes.

My activity at this time, this is before I went into the business situation, was to support the work of the Party in San Francisco. One of their main supports was the workers' school, which was established at 250 Golden Gate Ave. Dave Jenkins was head of it, of that project, and it required taking some courses there, and required supporting it financially, and getting others to go at it. The other big project that we had was the Western Worker, later on changed to the People's World. That too required raising funds, going to gatherings of a various kind. Those who were in the unions were asked to carry through certain activity by the Party, especially in my case I remember I presented a resolution against lynching, [which] was still happening in the South. And Charlie Fone (Local 6-IBEW), who was the manager, gave the signal to the chairman of the meeting to let it be taken to a vote.

David Jenkins Died this Week - June 1993

Q: Who was Charlie?

A: Charlie Fone is the manager of the IBEW, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. I was a member of the union at this time. The way the chairman handled it, he recognized it as a red-hot communist thing, indirectly, [which] Charlie approved. He said "all those in favor say aye, those against...". It passed, no discussion of any kind. It was adopted. So I recognized what happened, but yet I felt I'd carried the thing through. At this present time I would have handled it a hell of a lot bigger. I would have put out a press release, I would have gotten a lot of notice, that here's one of the important locals of San Francisco, relatively conservative, it passes a resolution of this kind. But on the other hand, I was either not capable of doing it, or didn't realize that..... I reported it to section committee, San Francisco area, that this resolution was passed, [and] they were very pleased, but no big action was taken about it. The other activities in the Party were more social. I got to know a number of people, and I was offered positions to go on, which I turned down. I don't fully understand why I did that, because in New York I was more-or-less on the payroll of the Teamsters rank-and-file group, arranged by the Party. But in San Francisco I was not anxious at all. Lou Goldblatt was after me a number of times, because he had visited with me in New York and met the teamsters that were active with me. He came to New York to organize, and I positioned him to the ILA, the International Longshoremen's Association ..... And he got the signature of thousands of people who thought they were longshoremen, to they formed a union. The West Coast local, ..., probably spent about $10,000 in its attempt, but it was a complete flop. Nothing was accomplished by that attempt. So that takes care of that incident in New York. Coming back to San Francisco, Bill Schneiderman came in as state chairman, and was developing the Party right along, recruiting was going on. There were, as far as I can recall, eight different units in San Francisco, with an average of 15 or so people, which ~~gave~~ gave it a membership of 2-300 members, quite active. The ability to maintain the Western Worker, later known as the People's World, was a big job. It meant a budget of as much as maybe half a million dollars

a year, to carry this on. I later on did some electrical work for them, both in the People's World offices, they needed ventilation and whatnot, and I wasn't sure I was going to get paid, and I was not wrong, they did not pay me. ..... very much, but that was part of my contribution. Same thing for the workers' school. In the case of the longshoremen, they had to do a remodeling of their headquarters. I think it's in one building at 150 Golden Gate Ave., I went in there. But I already was a little more careful, and I looked upon the longshoremen, with dues-paying members--it was a large organization--as being more qualified to work to be paid, but Lou Goldblatt still thought that I should make a contribution. I was very unhappy and I refused to do it. And it involved quite a bit of money, I'm talking about $2-3000 worth of work that had to be done in there. So this is the work, and I for myself know that I did not in any way overcharge them, and ..... showed some shortcuts that could be done to get it brought up to standard. I'm trying to think of any other thing that happened. Basically there were no major strikes that I remember during this period, and we were very proud of the way the Longshoremen's union was conducting activity and organizing all over the place, including local 6, which became far larger than local 10 of the ILWU. I attended some conventions by the Longshoremen's union. I attended one in Hawaii, in Honolulu. I found it to be a very interesting organization. I placed a great deal of hope in the Longshoremen's union. They being able to show the way toward militant trade unionism, not the kind of unionism that I had seen before, where the business agent, the official, lived a fairly easy life, and did very little in return.

Q: Now we've lost sight of your family in Los Angeles in the recent discussions. Maybe this is the proper point to record how you had maintained the relationship with your mother and father, and sisters and brothers.

A: Okay. The family as a whole, both my family and Vera's family, were very meaningful to me, through all the periods; except in the recent years, there's been less contact. For one reason, there's less of them that remain. Both Vera's parents and my parents were alive when we came to San Francisco, and since then all four of them are gone. But we made trips to Los Angeles and visited with family quite a bit, and some family including my sister Hannah came up north to visit with us. Their existence was normal. By that I mean no extremes were occurring. There were some illnesses, of course, in the family that would concern [me], and some of the illnesses they were not able to survive. But in the main I had a strong attachment to my family, and I place it basically on what my mother carried on, as far as family is concerned. She showed a great love for her family, and it passed on to us. I am saying this basically because I find the family such an important unit in our society, and that I can't imagine that there can be a society without some form of a family. And that's how it has affected me, and although I did not see much of my family after we came to San Francisco, there was always communication, thoughts, and visits with them. Interesting part is when my mother had to go into a home because of her age, around the age of 85 or 90, she had been staying with my oldest sister, Goldie, and Mother looked upon Goldie as her little child, and when Goldie would leave the house without putting a sweater on, my mother would raise hell. And so it became very difficult not for Goldie alone, but for her husband, who we felt should not be punished because of her ability to interfere in their life. When they would have company, she would come in and take over, participate, and we saw the signs of it, and we wanted to respond. Finally, I convinced Goldie to let's try it, and put my mother into a home, a Jewish home, where they kept kosher, and it should be near a synagogue. And by golly they found a place like that. We visited there with her later on,

and she was quite happy with it, and in no way made any indication that she had been driven out of her daughter's house.

Q: There was no resentment.

A: No resentment. This was what my sister was concerned about, the feeling of guilt. And so that occurred, and she stayed there until she died in her sleep at the age of 97. My father died at an earlier age, due to a lack of medical care. He had developed a tumor, that developed into a bad condition of cancer, and when he did see a doctor it was already too late. This was in Los Angeles, and I was a very active member of the Communist party, and we stupidly carried on activity against religion, holding meetings on High Holy days, in opposition to religious activity, looking upon religion as a way of keeping the working class down. This was the thought. So came the time when my father died, and I went to the funeral. My other four brothers were there, they all stood up to say kaddish (?), which is a prayer for the dead, before being buried. I would not do it because of my position, and my mother standing nearby said "I guess that means that you will not say kaddish when I die either," and I more or less said "yes" at this time. Later on, it came the time when my mother died, I did say kaddish for her ....., and I did it with a lot of feelings about it, and felt that she will probably be very happy to have me do that at this time. The family was large and scattered, but we saw each other fairly regularly. My sister Hannah was our big problem. She is the youngest daughter. She's four years older than I am. She had contracted tuberculosis in San Antonio, at the age of 17, where the doctor told my mother she had six months to live. And we started sitting in mourning for her right away. Mother could not be talked to. Mother discovered that there was another doctor in town, a Jewish doctor. She called him in for consultation, and he for one reason or another convinced my mother that a non-Jewish doctor does not know how to treat a Jewish patient, and she switched to him. And he in turn gave her directions on how to save my sister, and by golly it worked. He told my mother to feed my sister food that would make her very fat, and that the cavity in the lung would be surrounded by fat and so on, and that it would not spread. My mother carried out the orders, she gave my sister bacon to eat, she gave her various other things. She put on 30 pounds in the period of a few months, and became much better. I mean, it did not cure the lung. Then we moved to .....

XI. Family association; activities of other family members; problems with immigration

Family association, activities of other family members:

Hannah.

Two brothers.

Nettie, Tina, etc.

Brief discussion of San Antonio; finding out about involvement of Catholic church in social services, Cisneros becoming first Hispanic mayor, etc.

More discussion of business; "nuts and bolts" of how it worked, various jobs worked on, relationship with union, inspectors, etc.

Discontinuing membership in Communist party, due to becoming an employer.

Problems with Immigration, going to court, eventually being granted citizenship.

A: about 1925 or so. My sister Hannah went to work in a factory that produced storage batteries for automobiles, and within six months, she broke down again, and her other lung was affected, and again we went through a very difficult period. She went to the Duarte sanitarium, it's well known there I recall, and she managed ..... One of her lung was collapsed, I don't understand the details, which means probably that it wasn't functioning, but the other was able to function. And she managed quite well from then on, as far as TB was concerned. She also developed terrible allergies, and the Los Angeles area is famous for them because of the growth of things, so she did have a difficult life. She's the closest sister of all the family, of all brothers and sisters. She also joined the Young Communist League at one time, and she tried to carry on, and she followed the politics of a progressive person. I probably should end up in a negative point, insofar as I saw her often and tried to be helpful to her in every way I could. Her marriages, twice, did not work out, and she was left with a very minimum amount of income, and had a difficult time, and so she moved to Santa Monica, and I visited there as often as I could, and tried to help her to stabilize her being. She was involved in some activity there, and one morning she called me in Mill Valley and said she needed me very badly, would I come down that same day? And I said I couldn't, but I could come tomorrow. I came [the next day] and she had died, and I felt very bad, had felt bad about the fact that I did not get to see her before she died.

Q: How old was she?

A: She was about 75 years of age.

Q: Did she have any children?

A: No, she had no children, and in general lived a fairly active life, with a number of experiences, such as buying a chicken farm in Ontario to produce eggs, which was a very bad thing for her, a lot of dust involved and whatnot, and living in other areas. But in the main, her experiences probably weren't particularly worse than other human beings, except for the TB, the illnesses that she had to deal with. I'm trying to think of any other incidents that are important in the rest of my family's life.

Q: I was just going to ask you whether you had any other relatives in Los Angeles at the time.

A: Oh yes, I've had two brothers and three sisters in Los Angeles.

Q: That is besides Hannah?

A: Yes, and Goldie, and then there's Nettie that remained in Texas, [who] is still there, alive, at the age of 97 at this time. I kept up with my family, to the best of my ability. There was no particular excitement with them, they were just middle-class people basically, in businesses and whatnot. One of them had a dress shop in Watts, and was there during the riots, and was not harmed. His shop was not destroyed, like many other shops there, indicating a relatively good attitude toward the black people of the community. But he was fearful of staying, and sold the business to a black man, practically gave it to him, and in spite of that this black man could not make it in the business world. This is one of the experiences I had. My other brother, Abe, who's the oldest of the family, he was supposed to be the rabbi of the family, the best educated one. He ended up basically as a teamster, hauling groceries to stores and so on, and made out. Married three different times in his life, and two of them died on him, [I would] get to know them, meet them, and so on. So we knew each other pretty well. We helped each other. My brother Abe got into trouble financially, wrote checks without any money in the bank. I got a letter, even in New York, "could you help?" And I told Vera "we've got $300 in a savings account. Can I send that?" And she said "yes". So we sent the $300, and others helped, and got him out of any legal trouble, as it was, which indicates a feeling of responsibility for each other. He never became well-to-do. He's gone of course, and then never paid it back. Vera, in her way of arithmetic, felt that he should have tried to pay back, so I accept her understanding of it, and [let] it go at that. The one that we least expected would do well was the youngest one, Morrie, who went to work for a furniture shop. He didn't graduate high school, I think he had two years of high school. He went to work in a furniture store, and became a qualified salesman, very good. The owners of the store like him very much, he was doing a good job, and [they] said, "why don't you open up your own store? Don't wait any longer. I will help you financially to do it." And so he opened up his own store, on North Broadway in Los Angeles. Again, the thing boomed very well. A party lent him some money, I don't know how much, to open up, to stock the place, and he paid it off within a few years....

Q: What do you mean by the Party?

A: I mean, the person who he was working for, the individual who lent him the money to start in business, got paid off quite well, and he to, at the age of about 70 or so, decided to retire, and has a very lovely home in the Hollywood hills, and has done quite well, outside of illnesses for both of them, they're still alive. He's the only brother at this time that has remained alive.

Q: How old is he?

A: He's two years younger than I am, that would make him 82. I see him whenever I'm in Los Angeles, and also see his offspring. He's got a daughter ..... involvement of that kind. I don't think I need to burden anyone or myself by trying to bring all of them, but there is family and there is concern.

Q: Was he interested in politics?

A: No, not interested much at all. For some reason they never discuss politics very much. And yet they were not right-wingers. In other words, I could not judge their political thing. But the closest thing I would say is that they probably vote Democrat, which is [not (?)] unusual. I'm trying to think of any of my family that were involved in politics, outside of Hannah. None of them were. And Hannah was a member of the Party, and a member of her group, and carried on to some degree in Santa Monica, made friends amongst them. We tend to look for friends among liberal people, progressive people, and I do the same thing. I think it's a weakness in a way, that we need to stay only with people that think the same way as we do. I think we should spread out. And yet at this time, I play bridge at the Whistle-stop in San Rafael on Thursdays. This means about 30 people come together, about 25 are women and about five are men, to play bridge together, and I've learned not to talk much politics, nor to discuss religion. We accept that as a way, there's no rules about it. When Steve Bingham was acquitted on a charge of murder in San Rafael -- Steve Bingham was considered to be a progressive lawyer in his time -- I was so excited about it that when I came to the bridge table I had to tell my partners that he had been acquitted, and one of them speaks up and said she would have lynched him. It gives you an idea.

Q: Let me ask you this: did your brothers and sisters ever criticize you for joining the Party, for your political activities?

A: No. If anything they were kind of proud of the fact. They didn't agree with me, but they were proud, and partly it was because, when my name appeared in the newspapers, people who knew more than other brothers would say that he was a great person to have done this. They indicated support, and that helped to make them feel that it was okay, that what I was doing. That's the way I judge it. On their own feelings, I feel they lacked much knowledge as to what the hell I was about. My mother's feeling at times, when she wanted to get at me, said "you have time for your black women friends, but you have no time for me," or words to that effect.

Q: Now, did you at this time want to bring in any other family?

A: About the only other family, a little bit about Texas. My sister Nettie, who I kept in touch with through her offspring, she had four girls and one boy, and they've come to visit us in Mill Valley from time to time. They're nice people, Democrats, none of them very left in their opinion, but tolerable people, not to bourgeois or anything like that. And one of them told us her problem with her mother, which is my sister, that they had built a duplex where she lived in one side in the duplex, and there's a door passageway to where Tina lived. She said "even though the arrangement is very good, and we have help" to look after my sister constantly, she said "it's still a hardship on us." So my reaction is "well, why don't

you put her into a home? Make her as accept". [She said] "Oh, we wouldn't think of that." This is the same story. "We're not going to turn our mother out of the house." So I let it go at that, I didn't argue, and then one day I decided to make a trip to San Antonio. Vera did not want to go, so I went on my own. I stayed with Tina, as far as I can remember, and met the rest of the family that was there, and found them to be nice middle-class people, in business of one kind. Tina's husband and she ran a special business exchange, that help businesses promote their products. They're doing quite well, both of them are involved. They each had two children, a boy and a girl. So I talked to Tina, and said "why don't you arrange for your mother to be in a home for about a month, and see how she likes it."

Q: What was your sister's name?

A: Nettie. And we talked about it, and she said "Okay, let's try it." So they found a home, but it was not a Jewish home, and so I said "maybe it wouldn't make any difference." They are not very religious, but they do maintain contact with their religion. So they agreed to do it, and the best argument I had is what happened to "Grandma", to my mother, the fact that she was put into a home, she was quite able to do it. My sister was at that stage in a condition where she didn't recognize me any longer, and she quite often didn't recognize some of the kids, so [she] was a vegetable in many ways. And so they did it that, and it worked out fine for them.

Q: Is she still alive?

A: She's still alive, and I phone from time to time. They all go and visit her on different days, and they transferred her to a Jewish home, not because of my sister's complaint but because they're feelings for the community, they needed to do that, so they transferred her there. They also hired a woman [who] comes and spends the waking hours with my sister there. I don't know what the hell she does, because the place is ...., but that .... carry on. The big item for my youngest nephew is fishing, and he took me fishing twice in the week that I was there, and we enjoyed it very much. We keep track of each other. He's married to a non-Jewish woman, who adopted the Jewish religion, where's a necklace with an A, the word "God" on it. Probably makes a much better Jew than her husband ..... That's the way it works. And their children are in turn very lovely, lovely people.

Q: How old is Nettie now?

A: Nettie would be about 95 years of age.

Q: Quite a few members of your family have lived into the 90s.

A: Yeah, Goldie died around 90, ... My father was about 75. So the prospects are for me pretty good.

Q: Prospects? You're already enjoying those prospects.

A: Oh, yes. This one mention of San Antonio. In my younger days, when I lived there as a child, and even as a teen-ager, I saw a city made up of American Texas, plus a lot of Mexican people who came across from Mexico, and they still look to me, in the way some of them dress, like Indians, and so on, and were very much taken advantage of by the

businesses, and whatnot. The black people who live there, they have for Americans, were more adjusted to dealing with the whites than [the Mexicans] do, and so it left quite an impression on me. Merchants would sell them ladies' coats to wear, or high-heeled shoes to wear to the Mexican men, not knowing the difference because of their own backgrounds, and so on. So these things remained. This time, when I was in San Antonio, I found a Mexican population who were businessmen, who are basically running the city to a great extent, including the fact that the Catholic church had a big hand in it. Before I left for Texas I happened to talk to Mike Miller, telling him I'm going to San Antonio. He said "yes, it's a unique city. Why don't you look up Miss so-and-so in Social Services. You'll find out something interesting there." So when I went to San Antonio, I went and looked up the person that he mentioned, and I talked to her. She was [in] the welfare department, and she said "You know, I'm not by law allowed to wear my habit on the job." I didn't know that, Mike didn't tell me that, it was very interesting. She said "Well, the whole Social Service is under the auspices of the Catholic church." I said "In conflict with the law?" She said "No, the city has passed a certain ordinance that permits us to run the services there." I thought it was quite interesting. Nearly all of them are bilingual, they speak both Spanish and English, and their things were going quite well. She said "we can pretty soon [boast (?)] some Mexican millionaires. They're mostly in cattle-ranching, and are doing quite well." And she said "In the main, we have been able to gain more respect for the Mexican people." She was not Mexican, by the way, a Caucasian woman. She said the ones that are now very much on the bottom of the pole are the blacks ..... I ..... at what time, but I lived to see a mayor of San Antonio elected who is a graduate of Princeton University, got a doctorate in sociology, and is also a Mexican. Cisneros is his name. I thought it was kind of interesting, that in a period of 50 years, how a society evolves, and that can happen most anyplace, [and] the ability to accept now the Mexican people as equals to the whites. That's San Antonio, Texas. My little great grandnephew went out with us fishing, and who caught the biggest fish? He did. He was about 36 inches high, the fish he caught was about 35 inches. We took a picture of him standing there, both of them. I got a big kick out of it. The relationship with his family, an intermarried one, with a non-Jewish family, is very good. They visit each other, very acceptable in that way, although I get the impression, I'm not sure, that the family that I'm talking about, five or six people, about two or three couples, they all go to synagogue and high holly days. They're involved in Jewish community activity of various kinds. I guess this is representative of any other areas of this country, in carrying on their thing. Cisneros appointed by Pres. Clinton to Housing

I want to deal with my experience in business, which lasted about 9-10 years in all, from about 1947 to about 1957, and started from scratch. As I described, I had a partner, Bob Cooper, who did the work on the outside, and I did the work on the inside. He did the electrical wiring, and buildings, and installations outside of the shop, and in the shop we had motors to repair, and to bring in, to put in to condition to run again, and to prepare material for the jobs on the outside. That involved establishing some credit in some of the wholesale houses that sell electrical material, which at first wasn't easy, but after awhile it became quite good because conditions were very good, and I did discover that electrical materials were scarce, to such an extent that I would have to go to retail hardware stores to buy some of my material. But that didn't last very long. As I became more established, and wholesale houses realized that I was going to be in the business, that I wasn't going to be one of the many casualties, where electricians start out opening up their business, and after a year or so they realize they can make more money working for an employer than working for themselves, and so they give it up, and quite often these wholesale houses are

stuck with debts that they assume. I soon learned that there were ways to get better prices in these wholesale houses, and I quickly took advantage of it by asking for bids on material that I was going to use on jobs that I had, and as a result was able to increase my earnings by as much as 10 percent in some cases. I didn't know that I had to learn it the hard way. The procedure of getting jobs was quite interesting. There's too kinds of jobs. One kind of job is small jobs, up to 1,000, 2,000 dollars. It's called "jobbing", where you do some addition to an electrical installation in a factory, or in a business establishment. The other [kind of job] is to do new construction. I quickly learned that new construction in homes did not pay well. I tried a series of a half a dozen of them, and about the best results I got out of it was the fact that the men doing the job lost weight doing it, because they had to work harder than on business and commercial jobs. It required a lot of drilling of holes threw 2 X 4's, and through lumber and so on, and it took energy to do it, and was not very profitable, because many people were in that field, so I stuck basically to alteration jobs and to new jobs. The largest job I did was one for the South San Francisco High School District, which ran into about $400,000. When it was announced that I was bidding on it, many other electrical contractors stepped aside because they knew I was quite competitive. I sensed that, and as a result was able to do very well at this job. One of the instances on this job was the superintendent of schools coming up to me after I was there awhile, and saying that he needed a new electric stove, could I get one for him? It was obvious he wanted me to give it to him. His name should not be mentioned in this interview. I wasn't in the mood, not satisfied that that was the right thing to do. So I said "sure, I'll get you one." Then I told him how much it would cost, and I would have it installed by my other electricians off the job. He didn't know what to do, but he accepted that kind of deal. The other one was the state inspector, who inspected electrical work, inspected all other work on the job, who came out to me after I was on the job about a week, and flatly told me that he expected a gratuity in the form of cash. I was quite upset by it and yet I was not in a position to make an issue out of it. He was a nice guy otherwise, and that was the way he said it operates, so I gave him $100 in cash, and that satisfied him. And of course from then on, nearly anything I did was okay, there was no question about it. I earned quite a bit of money on this job by using the electrical wires which were completely safe, but not coated on the outside, that was used by the military forces. At this time it was being sold as surplus, and I bought it on as much as 10 or 15 cents on the dollar, which was a big savings. I used lots of it on this high school construction, all of it very safe. There was an electrical engineer involved in this thing. Our relationship was very good, and things went very smoothly. About other instances that may be of interest to us, one day one of the bars in the neighborhood called me, and said "look, we just got some of your wire in our bar." I said "what do you mean?" He said "well, one of your workers came in with two boxes of copper wire, and he said all he wants is a couple of drinks for it, and he's got your name, Bay Electric Company, all over the thing. I thought you should know." I came over there and picked up the rolls of wire. Then I had to think of what to do. If I called the union, he was a union man, he would probably be thrown out of the union. I decided not to do it, because nothing much was accomplished by it. He was probably an alcoholic, and had to have his drinks. So I let this go. This is the instance that impressed me on it. In general, the policy in the union was to allow alcoholics to get a day's work a week from some shop. So when my turn came they sent me a man who was an alcoholic, although I didn't know it at the time. I sent him out on the job, and soon discovered that he was drunk, and I sent him back to the shop. He got his day's pay. He just wasn't able to do very much, and when I talked to the business manager, Charlie Fone, he said this was the expense that the industry had to carry. He said "we have about 20 of them like that. Sometimes they do well, sometimes

they do not, but we're not ready to throw them out, because they're ill." And I thought that was quite a liberal approach that he was taking, and I accepted that. The situation was such that you had to give a man almost an hour's notice to lay him off or to fire him when the job was completed, then they go back to the union hall, put in their card or their form that they're available, and then they're sent out. They in turn can do the same thing to you. They can quit you on an hour's notice if they want to, and so it worked out okay. No one really felt anything very bad about it. Of course, quite often I'd get a very good man, and try to get him to stay with me, and make him a foreman. They would not accept, they'd say "I want to be free, I don't want to be under any obligation. I'll work for journeyman's pay, and when I'm ready to quit I'll quit," and they did. There was nothing much you could do.

Q: How many employees did you have on that job?

A: On that job, I probably had 10-12 employees, which was quite a big payroll. And money came from the job as approved by the inspector on the job. This job has been completed 50%, 60%, each time they would send you a check. That way you had no trouble. I also established credit in the bank, so that if I needed an extra $10,000 or $20,000, that I could get it practically on a phone call, and they would put it on my account. It's interesting to see how a person who's raised in an extremely poverty-stricken family, and who up to that time, in being in business, felt that $500 was a lot of money, her suddenly finds himself handling thousands of dollars in an everyday matter, and thinking not much about it. Quite a bit of it stuck to me. The IRS got a very good share of it. As much as 25% of the earnings would go to them, even more.

Q: Did you have other jobs while you were caring on your job for the school?

A: Oh yes, there were other jobs going on. I had one man who specialized in doing small jobs, who was given a truck of his own, a panel truck, which was filled with materials, and he'd go and take it, and about 20 percent of my work was that kind. But this 20 percent was as profitable as the 80 percent in new construction, because there was no competition involved in those jobs, and I charged so much per hour and so much for the material, and it worked out quite well. And when I needed more people I would shift them around. One of my advantages possibly with other contractors was that I saw to it that I got a day's work from a man. In other cases, man would be through with a job at 3 or 3:30, [a contractor] would send him home and pay him for the full day and think nothing of it, whereas the foreman in charge would do it. I tended to see to it that they would be picked up and placed on another job so that in the morning they would get started and already know what to do. Some felt that it was being too tight about things, but this is the way I felt about it, and I carried it through. I had very little difficulties with my customers. They repeated me, constantly called me back, even though they complained about the high prices we were charging. We were charging as much as $5 an hour for electrical work, where at this present time you have to pay $50 an hour, $45 an hour, so it gives you an idea of how different the conditions were at that time. The feelings about being an employer concerned me constantly. Recognizing that I was doing something that I really didn't particularly appreciate, but basically I rationalized it on the basis that if I don't do this, who will look after me after I'm not able to work anymore? And I wasn't satisfied that the unemployment insurance would amount to anything that I would get, so on that basis ....., and I think I mentioned once before some Communist party functionary, she came asking for a job as a

dishwasher and so on, we were not able to do to it. The Communist party person telling him we were not in charge of the agency for the welfare. And I did not want that to happen to me. And that was in the back of my mind in doing it, and I guess like anything else, after a while you get used to it and think nothing of it. When I think about it now I still feel fairly good about it, because I'm free, I've been able to travel, we're able to live comfortably, and not to look to someone else to look after us, and that seems to be an important part in our life. The idea of what the Communist party stood for me, and the philosophy behind it, remains deeply rooted in me. I find that almost invariably in most cases where difficulties [come up], it falls back on the economic problem of the people, whether it's in the Third World cases or whether it's even in our country, when there is the problem of welfare and struggle of the unemployed, the homeless, all I blame on the system, not on the individual person. The system tries to teach that the individual person is lazy, he didn't try, didn't do this, didn't do that, and I say "no, it reflects only the system." And of course at this present time, when corruption is so much evident in high places like HUD, and in the IRS, and many other things, it confirms my belief that the system corrupts more than anything else, that to lie, to steal, to cheat, is almost an accepted thing. That's why Nixon is still a hero, even though he openly said that he was breaking the law, and had to resign, and he's still accepted, acting as an advisor, and so on. Because he is a product of the system.

Q: During the time you were in business, did you continue your Communist party associations?

A: Not much. I maintained my membership maybe for a year, and then realized that it was a contradiction. Here I was employing people, and the Party itself was not in favor of such members. So, as I recall, I went to some of the Party people, one or two, and talked to them about it, and they said "it's okay, you're not the only one, there are others who are in the Party, and we accept your position on it." But it did not satisfy me, and as a result I dropped out about 1948 or so. I resigned, I did not have to do anything, did not have to write a statement or anything like that.

Q: This was an oral....

A: Oral understanding. In my unit, in the group that I belonged to, that no longer am I a member, and no longer am I paying dues in that respect. I did meet, after the word was out that I was out of the Party, I did meet individual party members who were shy of me. Some of them were fearful that maybe I'd become a member, been recruited by the FBI. Attitude like that, because ..... "here he is, a non-citizen, on deportation, and yet he's able to carry on in this manner." They weren't sure whether they got to me. Fortunately this was not prevalent in the Party. Only certain individuals who were die-hard or very strong. For instance, in the case of Bill Schneiderman, I maintained a friendship from 1925 on, we continued, and he seemed to accept my position quite readily without questioning or in any way digging at me, or saying "why did you do that, you know that this is wrong," and so on. And so I don't recall even ever giving any explanation why. And [the] same thing with Minnie Carson, also known as Minnie Boch. We were very good friends at that time.

Q: So you did continue your social relationship with party members or former party members.

A: Yes, I continued [them]. I continued to go to affairs. I took some of the workers who worked for me; Bob Hupp went with me to the New Year's Eve party at labor school. I did work for them. I knew that they weren't going to pay me fully, and I accepted that. That was my indirect contribution. And I was sympathetic. I in no way rejected the Party position. I followed it closely. I don't recall, but I believe that I did subscribe to the People's World, later they changed it to another name. So in that respect, I was still to a degree surrounded in an atmosphere that was left-wing, ... There were very few people that I became friends with that were not sympathetic to the Party, or anti-party, that remained that way.

Q: Heretofore, Meyer, you have mentioned, casually, that you had problems with the Immigration Service, and that you were being held for deportation by them in Los Angeles. Now you had subsequent problems with them here in San Francisco. Could you relate your problems with the Immigration Service?

A: I will. Just to refresh people's minds. There was an attempt, when I was first arrested, to let me out on bail of $5,000, which was purchased by the ILD as a bond, to let me out. When the bond expired after a year, we decided I should go to the Immigration and surrender myself, let them decide what to do with me. Well, we did just that, and they said "no, we're not going to hold you, we're going to let you out, but you are being held for deportation."

Q: Is this Los Angeles?

A: This is Los Angeles. And then nothing much came of the case, because they could not get me deported to the Soviet Union, because they would not accept me. I left the Soviet Union when it still was Russia under the Czar, and therefore they had no responsibility. Later they had me apply to England, and I tried that, and Her Majesty the Queen wrote that she didn't need anymore Communists, she had enough of them. I myself did not want to be deported. You could not be deported to either Mexico or Canada because that was the law. I don't know if that has been mentioned before. So the case was fairly dead. I had hopes that when war broke out in 1939, in '41, when we came into the war, that being eligible for the draft, that after [I had] served in the army, [I] would receive citizenship as part of the law, but that fell apart under a freakish condition where I was two weeks overage to be drafted any longer. I may have dealt with this before. So here I am in San Francisco, and I'm required to report once every six months, I believe, to the immigration people, which I did. And then a law was changed in congress, called the McCarren Act, which states that anyone under my circumstances has a right to re-appeal [his] case before the Immigration. So my attorney, George Anderson, recommended that I do that. I wasn't anxious about it, but I went. Vera encouraged me also to go do it. In other words, I had given up hope that I would get citizenship, with my record. So I again appeared in Immigration. They brought in some stool pigeons from Los Angeles to testify against me. I on the witness stand, questioned by my attorney, who asked me if I was a member of the Communist party, and I said no, but I had been a member of the Communist party, I admitted that fully. And then the case was closed. The referee, or judge for the Immigration, indicated that he appreciated my admitting that I was a member of the Party, but still felt that he had to hold me for deportation, the law required him to hold anyone who had been a member of the Party within 10 years was subject to deportation. But he said "I will help you as much as I can to get citizenship." And he said "I want you to apply

for citizenship, and then try to get it passed through congress, through a committee. Let ..... do that." Eastland came into this case too. He was a real reactionary from the South. So we accepted that, and I started working toward applying for it, and discovered that Harry Bridges was able to have some influence on people on the congressional committee who were very friendly to labor. So he said okay, he will write to them, and let them know who I am, and so he carried this thing through. We had no one on the senate committee that we could approach. We carried this thing through, and within a year or two, time seems not to mean too much, it seemed that the congressional committee did not act on it in the time when they could act, it passed and therefore they were out. The Eastland committee recommended that my case should be shown before the senate, but because the congressional committee did not act, the thing failed. So I was back on my own. And then George Anderson, my attorney, died, and Norman Leonard took over the case, and we discussed the possibility of going to court, to have the court rule on this thing. So we brought this before the immigration people. They said "well, you don't need to do it, we'll have some hearings, maybe we'll make a decision." They stretched it out for over a year, continual hearing, and nothing came of it. The attorney went with me heard the question they asked me, and so on, and didn't seem to get anyplace, but we did decide to go to court. That means a federal court, at its lowest level. We appeared in court, [an] immigration date was set, we became before a judge who was appointed by Nixon, very conservative type of judge....

Q: Now what you're saying is that your attorney applied to the court for your citizenship. This had nothing to do with deportation. But this time now we're concerned solely with citizenship.

A: Right, now they had given up the hope of being able to deport me. They offered me to go to Israel. Since I was a Jew, Israel would accept me. — I Refused

Q: You were still under a deportation order.

A: Still under a deportation order, and of course to me this was a form of discrimination in a way. Why should I be deported because I'm a Jew. And so I rejected that idea. So at this time we made the application to court, and Immigration was informed that we were going to appear in court demanding the right for citizenship. This was after year, year and a half, of hearings and nothing happening. The Immigration people reached me and said "look, why don't you leave it alone, don't go to court. In time we'll work it out," but I didn't accept that, and my attorney didn't accept that. We took it as a form of stalling. They didn't have to do anything about it. We appeared in court, and the case was opened with a federal judge appointed by Nixon. Unfortunately at this moment I can't remember his name. [He] was considered a hang- judge, because certain Vietnam people appeared with him, and others, and he had given them the maximum that he could each time. The Immigration attorney gets up and says he needs more time, and asks for an adjournment, and to appear later on. Our attorney said "look, you've been working on this case for twenty years or so," that he had indicated a thousand pages of transcribed notes on this thing, and that he didn't see any need for it. And so finally the Immigration people wanted only one more year, and the judge said "I'll give you 90 days." And so nothing happened there. Once you appear, and the case is delayed, it goes back to a pool, and 90 days later another judge is appointed to replace him. It happened to be Judge Lloyd Burke, who at one time was the prosecuting attorney for the federal government in the deportation and citizenship case

for Harry Bridges. That lasted for months, as far as I can remember. And he got quite an education in listening to the various philosophies expounded at this hearing. So we appeared before him, and right off the bat, we sensed a different atmosphere. The Immigration attorney presented his position, that I did not believe in the Constitution, that I was against capitalism, and that I was not qualified, capable of being a citizen. My attorney, Norman Leonard, got up to speak and the judge said, "you don't need to, I think I can handle this situation without you having to explain." Because the judge also had a number of documents ahead of time, indicating who I was, what I was, and what was going on. So Norman had very little to do on it. I also had about half a dozen people, outstanding in the community, to testify for me as witnesses, but they were not allowed to. The judge then mulled this around, and then spoke about the case, then ruled that I'd be granted citizenship, and Norman said "right now?" and the judge said "right now. Come forward Mr. Baylin, I'll swear you in." It was quite a ..... Surprise!

XII. More about experience as businessman; activity in Youth for Service after retirement.

More info. about experience as a businessman, 1947-56. Major items:

Moving from O'Keefe the Fan Man, eventually going into business with Bob Cooper.

Problems with Bob Cooper, ending partnership.

How the electrical contracting business operated in San Francisco, including corruption.

Working with Bob Hupp.

Sale of Business.

Working with Morrie Stoll.

CIA job.

Roll of city inspector.

Start of discussion of activities after retiring: working with Youth for Service.

A: I want to record my experience as a businessman, from the period of 1946 to 1957. It all occurred while working on the job for O'Keefe the Fan Man, which started during the war period, and which ended up with me being the foreman of the shop. While the war was going on, activity there was basically limited to motors and controls that I worked on. After the war was over, I was demoted to a journeyman in the shop, and proceeded to do the work of a journeyman. He had been soliciting jobs for large motors, 25 horsepower, 50 horsepower, and even more, recognizing that the major money was made in large equipment rather than in small equipment, which he had developed during the war. As a result I found myself having to lift 100- 150-pound motors to the bench to work on, and I found that was very bad on my back, so I stopped doing that and asked one of the journeymen, or whoever was around, to help me lift the motors to the bench. I know that O'Keefe was unhappy about it, that I stopped the other man from working to do that, and soon he told me that that would not do, he could not have me working and having another man help me in doing my work. And so I realized that my time may be limited with him, as far as working, and so I started looking around for another job, and meanwhile I made acquaintance with a man by the name of Abe Stolidge (?), who was the owner of a sewing machine exchange, and this meant selling sewing machines, also renting them and repairing them. I told him of my problem, the fact that my back was bothering me, and about the attitude of my boss, and he said "why don't you tell your boss to go to hell, come in here, I'll give you a place to work in my shop. You'll repair motors for me and for anyone else you want to, and they're small motors, and I'll pay you accordingly. You'll make your salary

quite easily here, and not to be dependent upon anyone else." I thought it made a lot of sense. Abe did not ask for any rent, and under the arrangement it was easy, not difficult, so I took him up. I quite O'Keefe, and started with the ..... shop and Abe Stolidge, with his place on Mission St. in San Francisco, and soon began to do quite well, and within a month or so I began to equal the wages I was making for O'Keefe, and not working nearly as hard, mostly on 1/4-, 1/2-horsepower motors, small equipment, and that pleased me quite a bit, and there were no difficulties involved. Abe was not quite satisfied with that, he wanted me to get even more work. He said "why don't you get a helper, or a partner in this business?" And so I thought of a friend of mine in New York, who I love very much, and I wrote to him. His name is Larry Minnison (?), we were both very active in the teamsters activities in New York, and he came out here and tried to work with me, but he was not successful, he did not have enough initiative, and again Abe's suggestion that he would not do influenced me so that I told him "Larry, since you're major trade is in sign painting, why don't you get a job as a sign painter, rather than try to continue with this?" And so on that basis Larry went to work as a sign painter in a trucking company. He started painting the trucks that they required .... Larry didn't have a sense of artistic achievement, and in fact toward the end of his life he did a lot of painting. So I continued on my own, and meanwhile met a young man by the name of Bob Cooper, who said he had similar political ideas to mine, and at one time was a member of the Young Communist League back in Minnesota I believe, I'm not quite sure of the city. We became friendly, and the next thing I know I took the initiative.... He was an electrical worker, a journeyman electrician, in construction, so I said "why don't we work together, and you do the construction work, and I'll do the work inside the shop and repair the motors, and between the two of us I think we could do quite well." Although he too was a union man, we decided to rent a storefront and start working in that manner. We followed through, although neither one of us had any money. I wrote to my rich brother in Texas, my brother Sam, and said we needed a loan of a couple of thousand dollars, which he in turn sent us, and so we had $2000 to go on. We rented the store, we signed the lease, and we started to proceed in getting work. I worked inside on the motors, tried to get more business, and he did the construction, alteration jobs, or any other kind of work that was required in the wiring industry. This went on for awhile, we were doing quite well. We were able even to draw about $50 a week, which was quite a good sum of money for us, although the journeyman's pay would have been more closer to $100 a week, as far as I can remember. One morning I woke up to the fact that what cash we had in our cashbox wasn't there, and Bob came in about 10 o'clock and told me that over the weekend he'd been gambling, he ran out of money, so he came and took the cash, and that he will return it, and that I should take it out of his $40 a week allowance until it was cleared. Well, I was quite a bit concerned about that, but I took it in stride, since he did not try to deny it, and in general I liked Bob, he did a good job. Along the way we started to take larger jobs, and to the extent that some of the contractors were complaining, must have made a complaint, we do not know for sure, next thing I do know is that the business manager of local 6 of the IBEW, of which I was a member at the time, worked throughout the period I was here in California. He called me in, and he said "look, you can't be both a businessman and a journeyman, you'll have to choose [between] them, and I recommend that you stay as a businessman, and take a withdrawal card from the union. I will send you a good man to help you to do the work, and in that way you will be able to really get ahead." Well, I was skeptical about that, but on the other hand I was anxious to have his good intentions, and so I did take a withdrawal card from the union, and then a man was sent over to work for us, but Bob continued for awhile doing the installation work and not withdrawing from the union. I don't recall whether he ever withdrew or not,

but the business continued to grow and before we knew it I found myself with two or three men working for us, me doing nothing at all anymore with the tools, very little at least. And this continued until another episode occurred, [where] Bob left to deliver some material to one of the men working on the job on Thursday afternoon, and did not show up until the next Monday afternoon. Again he told me he was out gambling. I said "what about the jobs?" He said "I forgot all about the jobs." He said "It was my way of getting relief from any feeling of responsibility and so on, and I had to do it." Meanwhile Bob had gotten married to Brenna (?), and they set up a house, and it seemed that Brenna also knew about the condition that Bob was in, that he was basically a habitual gambler, he could not control these feelings. So our next job was to suggest to him that he get a psychiatrist to help him overcome it. She agreed to it, and he started going to Dr. Reich. He required him to pay in advance before he would have a session with him. Dr. Reich tried to be helpful, and one of Dr. Reich's suggestion was that since Brenna could not conceive of a child, and they were trying to (by now they'd been married a few years), "why don't you adopt a child," he told Bob. So they proceeded to do [that]; both Brenna and Bob wanted children very badly. And so they adopted a little girl, about a year old if I recall, and three months later Brenna was pregnant on their own ....., it was very soon after that. But that did not quite cure Bob's situation. They thought it would help a lot, he'd have something to do at home ....., and have other interests, and so the psychiatrist suggested "why don't you buy a house and remodel it, something to keep you occupied so you wouldn't have the urge to gamble." So Bob and Brenna proceeded to buy a house, and that required a lot of remodeling in which Bob seemed to be willing to participate. This went on for about six months or so, but the condition of his gambling did not stop, and it became quite a problem, because about every other month or so he would disappear for a few days. This did cause me concern, so we started to negotiate about separating the partnership, and we had an attorney. We were going to do it in as friendly a manner as we could, and he would agree to certain things that he wanted, and that I agreed to go along with him. But when it came to actually doing it, why he wouldn't do it until I told the attorney that we had to take some more ....., so he called in Bob and said "look, you can't continue to prolong this thing; it's either one way or another. What are your conditions, and let's write it down, and you sign it." So Bob wrote out the conditions and signed it, and it was presented it to me, and I accepted that. Basically he wanted $12,000 in cash, he wanted one of the panel trucks, and he wanted tools, to work on his own, by himself, with his own time. He sounded very reasonable to me, and I proceeded to raise the $12,000 to give him, with the panel truck, and so on. He was out of my life, and I was continuing on my own. Brenna showed up a few weeks later and said "why did you give that money to Bob?" And so I said "it was his", and she said "no, it was not his, it was also mine. He has gone out and gambled away $12,000." I was very sorry, but there was nothing much I could do about it. She meanwhile had sworn out ....., on desertion, on him, and had him brought in to court, and the judge gave him a year's probation, with the requirement that he bring his check home to her, and not cash it wherever he worked. So he went to work for a contractor on his own, and they followed this thing through. From then on Bob played much less of a role in my life, although we saw each other, and we respected each other, and recognized that this is the way conditions are. This is the story of Bob, who ended up as an electrical inspector for the city of San Francisco, and somehow or other they managed to raise a family with, I believe, four children in all. I may be wrong, it may be only three. Going back to the period when we first got together with Bob, I also made an attempt to bring in another friend of mine from New York who was active in the teamsters, Milt Kalina, and in this case he was a very capable man, but was very emotionally upset by being away from his family, and just could

was, and I found this out by the way they responded to me later when I worked with them, but no action was taken against me. At one stage in the business, if they were going to my postal suppliers, and told them who I am and not to supply me with material, it's very possible that they would have cooperated with the FBI. That did not go that far, especially since I relatively "behaved" myself, attended no radical meetings. I think that they just kept an eye on the situation, although the association was indicted under the anti-trust law, the federal anti-trust law, about 1935. A number of their outstanding contractors were either fined or were very shaken. This practice of arranging this bidding continued just the same. In relation to the industry, the association of business ....., one of the major stabilizers for the industry was the labor union, the AFL-CIO, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers union. It would be interesting to record that the largest job was the wiring of the South San Francisco High School, which ran into about $320,000. There too I learned quickly, whereas previously I understood in theory how corrupt the system would be, I actually, in practice, I saw it. As soon as I won this job, as soon as I came on the job to do some work in installing underground electrical conduits, the superintendent of schools approached me, saying that he needed a new electric oven in his house. Would I supply him with one? Obviously he was asking for one for free. I said "sure, you go and pick one out, and I'll get it for you at wholesale, and one of my men will install it." He was taken aback by it, but was so embarrassed that he said "fine, where do I go?" And so he went down to California Electric, I believe, and picked out an electric stove, and I sent a man there to install it, and he paid me the bill. It was a good saving all around, and yet I did not feel that he's taking advantage of it. The state building inspector on the job, on the other hand, minced no words in approaching me alone and saying that he would expect to get $100 a month in cash from me while I was on the job, and therefore there would be very little problems for me as a result.

One of the people that played an important role in our life, this includes Vera, is Bob Hupp, who is a World War veteran, who came to work for me, being sent by the union when I called for a man. About 1950 he came and went to work, and I sent him to hang some fluorescent fixtures. I visited the job the next day and found out that he didn't know quite what he was doing, so I showed him how to do it, and he proceeded to work very diligently and very well. I gave him other jobs to do, together with other men, and he turned out to be very good in it, and we became involved in a personal matter. Vera and I liked Bob and his wife Verla (?). They had just gotten married and came from the state of Washington, from Seattle, where their home was, and he was on the way to Los Angeles to go to work there, and stopped over and put in his card for a job. They expected to work about a week in San Francisco, and then go on to Los Angeles, but instead of that he ended up spending about 7-8 years with me. The instant that impressed both me and Vera after we became friendly [is that] Verla became pregnant, and told us about it, and Vera asked her who her doctor was going to be, and she said "well, I saw an ad in the paper for a doctor who takes cases like this, so I went to see him, and he asked me if I really wanted to have a baby or not? And I said 'of course I want to have a baby,' and he said 'okay, come in a month from now and I'll examine you and see that everything's okay.'" So Vera had to explain to her the facts of life, that this was probably an abortionist that she went to, that he really was not the kind of a doctor that one should have. So Verla said "could Vera suggest someone?" In fact, she would rather have a woman doctor, rather than a man doctor, because she felt more comfortable. So we recommended our friend Frances Foster, who was an obstetrician, and has delivered hundreds of babies in San Francisco, and her main specialty was babies in Chinatown, among the Chinese women who gave birth, and so Verla went to Frances, and

retained Frances as her doctor. Came time for her to deliver, Verla had a very bad time. For some reason, the baby was not in the proper [position] to be delivered, and for awhile there was a matter of choosing between the baby and Verla, but Frances worked very hard, stayed with her for 30 hours, and managed to save both of them. And now the young man, Craig, who is about 30 years of age, has children of his own, and we feel that Vera's recommendation for Frances as a doctor may have had a lot to do with him being around at this time. Bob continued working for me, and then left awhile to take on a job of superintendent for a very large firm, and he learned a great deal there, and found out how to do the business end of it as well. Then when I decided to sell, I tried hard for about a year and was not successful in getting anyone to take it over, so I asked Bob whether he would want to buy the business. Well, he said he had no money, and so I said "well, we can make an arrangement whereas .... buy you and pay out what you owe me over a period of three years, and I'll have an interest in the business during that period." And so he accepted that, and immediately, as soon as he took my business over, his business began to grow, and he was able to pay me off sooner because his father died and left some money for him. All along there developed some suspicions on his part that I may go back into the business, and [this] worried him, and I assured him that I wouldn't, and that I had no intention. But it seemed that there was some individuals whom I knew in the business, especially some wholesalers, who had feelings of anti-semitism that I sensed before, and they were trying to tell him that "you can't trust a Jew, that a Jew will go in and take your business away, and therefore protect yourself in any way you can." This was the story. Unfortunately, because in many ways Bob was immature and naive, he may have listened to that, and was concerned, was under great tension. In general he was a person of a great amount of tension and difficulty, and drank a little bit while he was working for me, because we also socialized. He was one of the few that I socialized ..... with. After he bought the business he really went to work and started drinking, and by the end he was in the business about five years, he had partners, and he had to get out because he was drinking. They got a job at a very large electrical concern, that had headquarters in Hawaii, which was working out of San Francisco, and lasted there another three years. [He] ended up a confirmed alcoholic, and had to quit there too, and bought a ranch out in Oregon, on the Rogue River, and I visited him there, and he's trying to get along the best he can. The last I heard of him he was doing quite well, and Verla was trying to be as helpful as possible. So that's the story about .....

One of the electricians that I had been friends with was Morrie Stoll, who I first about 1945. At that time he was not an electrician, but since that time he had become an electrician, and was working for his brother Lew, who was head of an empire, Empire Electrical Contractor Construction Company, something like that. Morrie was also the brother of Abe Stolowitz (?), who got me started in his place, in the business of electrical wiring and construction. Morrie was working on the job, and we saw each other from time to time, and at the time that I decided to sell the business, I did approach Morrie and asked him to take over the business in any form that he wanted to do it, but Morrie was not ready to do that. As a result, I sold it to Bob Hupp, as I mentioned previously.

One of the jobs that I did of special interest to me was a job for the CIA. The law requires that the CIA relocate its headquarters every five years, and therefore this appeared to be the condition on this particular job. One day I was called by the Bank of America, which has a very large real estate department, and they gave me a set of plans without any particular name on it, and said "give us an estimate on which this job would be to install the

electrical work shown on this set of plans." They didn't show me the location or anything like that. I asked them questions but could not get any answers. And they also said that [there was the] possibility that the job would not go ahead, but "we do need to have an estimate to give them." So I took a step back, and had my estimator, a man by the name of Grey who worked for me, to look this over, and told him that this was under peculiar circumstances, and that he should give me a rough figure of what it was worth. And so he gave me a rough figure, and I added some more rough figures to it, and gave it to the Bank of America with an outrageous price to do this job. And then the amount, which they in turn incorporate into a price they give to their customer, either as a rental or in selling property, government (?) property. Nothing had happened, and I remained with the plans, and about six months later I got a call from the Bank of America real estate department [to] "go ahead with this job that you gave us a bid [for]." And so I went into the job. At that time it was located on Market and Van Ness, the corner building there, and again no name was given then but it was obvious that I was on the job, that we were installing this for the CIA. It was a fairly large job, maybe around as much as $75,000. The thing that I was most impressed with is the installation of conduit to bring in possibly at least 10,000 different telephone lines into that building. It seemed that that was a requirement. We did not put in the wires themselves, but the size of the conduit allowed that many. They were at that time operating out of the Hotel Whitman, [before] moving into this new place, spending a fabulous amount of money in remodeling the building, and in turn they would stay there only five years, and [then] go to the next one. So this is one of the jobs. Another job that I [worked] on was 630 Sansome St., that a large electrical lighting job to install. This is the Federal Building, and they don't forget at this time that I'm still not a citizen, depending on deportation as an undesirable alien, and yet I'm fooling around with this job, because one hand does not know what the other one is doing. I bid on this job, and came very close in the bid, and then thought to myself, "did I really want this job or not?" Well, it turned out that one of my comparative friends said they would like to have the job, and that he would like [me] to step aside, and I said "fine." and I did. And there again I was given help when I was first starting in the business. It was ..... that came to me and asked me for this job. I gave it to them. As a result I got out of this. I was also called to estimate a job for the installation of a model Bay Area system of underground conditions, that is, a model build to show all the bottom of the Bay Area. By pressing buttons [they] were able to determine various channels going through there. It's in a large room in the Presidio. I bid on that job, and there again you had to have clearance and all of that, but I did not try to come out very well.

It may be interesting to get an idea of the size of an operation. Toward the end I was doing about a million and a half of work per year, about 85 percent of it was new construction, and the 15 percent of it was alteration jobs. And I was earning as much on the alteration jobs, on the small amount of work, as I was on the new construction. And the new construction, quite often if I was able to net five or six percent, it was considered to be fairly good. I hope I didn't leave the impression that all jobs were arranged for workers. Many jobs that I did bid that didn't require it, and I was able to get the job. In relation to those who worked for me, I was still fairly gung-ho, and tried to radicalize them, tried to explain to them what I meant by socialism, tried to talk to them about discrimination against minorities and blacks, and I didn't very much hit fertile soil. They new where I stood, I'd told them, but their response was not particularly interesting. In the main, with the salaries even then they were getting, according to other salaries, were fairly high. They were getting $3-4 an hour, whereas regular labor was getting about $1 - $1.50 an hour. They lived a

middle-class life, and spent their money as fast as they earned it. In fact, they bought various equipment, special electrical equipment, on monthly payments, and that shocked me. I tried to convince them that they could buy it through me for about half the price, and could pay me without any interest charges for a period of three months or six months, but no, they'd rather buy it and pay it over a period of a year or two years, where they didn't feel the weekly or monthly take so very much.

The roll of the city inspector played an important part in my life at first, because they tended to find fault with my work or the work that my men did in the first few years. As soon as I learned to conform and do the jobs as properly as possible, and do my own inspection to see that it was done, so that towards the later years the inspector no longer bothered to even look at my work, and approved it quite readily, knowing that they could depend upon me to do the job right. The inspectors, fortunately in San Francisco none of them were on the take in any way, so that made it much easier, as compared to what I saw happening in New York City when I worked there. The only thing that [they could be bribed with] was a bottle of whiskey for every one of them as a Christmas present. They came down to the shop and received their bottle of whiskey.

I would add that it took about a couple of years after Bob Cooper separated from me that I was really starting to make some real money. At that I'm talking in terms of $35,000-$50,000 a year. Of course, a good hunk of that went to the IRS for income tax purposes, both state and federal, [and] a good hunk of it went for living expenses. We had built a house in Mill Valley, and we did some traveling, even though I [was] in business. But in the main at the time, I had decided to retire, after a lot of discussion with Vera. We thought that I had enough money to have an income of about $6,000 a year, and that to us would be sufficient to live comfortably on from then on. Of course as inflation developed, I had to do some other things to increase that income, such as buying some land, etc., but we did quite well. After I sold the business within a short time I got involved with Youth for Service, a social agency in San Francisco, that worked with underprivileged kids, or hard-to-reach kids, from the age of about 15-20, who did not participate in sports, and dropped out of school. This agency was first funded by the Ford Foundation, which gave the agency a quarter million dollars to be directed by the Friends organization, the Quakers, and I worked with them. My main resource was to get jobs for a number of the kids, and I stayed with Youth for Service for nearly 10 years, and gained a lot of experience in the work I was doing, how to work with young people, and I took a real serious interest in the work there. Maybe at another time I'll record some of the activity there.

XIII. Citizenship record: 1930-1971

Citizenship record, 1930-1971:

Arrest in 1930, held for deportation, defense by Leo Gallagher.

Tijuana experience.

Attempt to volunteer in Spanish civil war, rejected because of non-citizenship.

Attempt to be drafted into army, and thereby gain citizenship.

Laid off from Westinghouse job because of non-citizenship.

In next job, problems with going onto ships because of non-citizenship.

Miscellaneous citizenship problems during time as a businessman.

1965: appealing deportation case, hearing with Sipkin.

Bills introduced into congress; passed by Senate committee, rejected by House of Representatives committee.

1969: Applying for citizenship.

1971: habeas corpus, appearance before Judge Samuel Conti.

Appearance before Judge Lloyd Burke, and finally getting citizenship.

A: My life as a noncitizen, as a deportee for some 41 years, may be interesting to record. I came over to this country as a child at the age of eight, about 1913. My father was over 50 years At this stage the family had been completed by then. I was one of the youngest of nine children, and my father was not able to learn the English language, and as a result did not obtain any citizenship although he tried to get citizenship. By the time I was eighteen I was required to get my first papers, as it was called, the first application for citizenship. Meanwhile I got involved in the anti-war movement in Los Angeles, at the UC campus on Vermont. In 1928 we distributed leaflets against impending war, and against militarism in general, and I was arrested and held for 24 hours on bail, which was my first experience, and a very bad one, and then fined about $25 for distributing leaflets against the law which of course wasn't true. This started my record with my arrests, in 1928. In 1930 I was deeply involved in demonstrations and hunger marches and whatnot. The depression was on by then, and again I was arrested at a demonstration. But this time I was held for deportation, and a fabulous amount of $10,000 bail was required. This had me locked up in the county jail, which was quite different from the city jail, and there I spent about 30

days, not knowing from day to day when I would be let out of jail, until finally the bail was raised, and I was able to go out on bail. This bail was to be good for one year, and I carried on my work the same as ever, and my activity and ..... My attorney became Leo Gallagher, who was very well-known for his civil rights activities in Los Angeles during that period. I will not go into this, maybe some other time I'll make a tape about him. When the year was up he said "we're not going to put up anybody else, because they cannot deport you to the Soviet Union. You left there before the revolution of 1917, and the Soviet Union will probably not accept you under these circumstances. So I went down with him to surrender myself, saying that I'm not going to put up bail any longer. To get the bail we had to buy it. To buy it of course you had to have money to do that, and the International Labor Defense that was defending me was very short of money. Most of the organizations were at that time. So he was there, they became very upset with him because they assumed that I would be able to get bail, [that] I wouldn't want to stay in jail. But no, I was ready to go to jail. Then they dropped the bail. .... said "okay, you go ahead." But we were very unhappy about it as far as the Immigration people were concerned. I remained in a suspended situation, held for deportation with no bail on me, and I was allowed to carry on with my work. Nothing much happened, except for one instance where a group of us went to Tijuana, it was during Prohibition, and we crossed over the border, there were five of us in the car. Coming back, sure enough, the Immigration people stopped us, but they picked out the one, asked each one of us if we were citizens, all of us said yes, and one of them by the name of Saul Amberg (?) said yes, but it was very much with a weak voice, and in very much of a Yiddish accent. Sure enough, they pulled him out of the car, and brought him to ..... to the office and questioned him further. He was able to show his citizenship because he had his union card with him, he didn't have his citizenship. And he was his citizen. So sure enough, Saul was released. At that time we thought it was very funny, and so on, but I realize now how stupid it was of me to go across the border for a drink, and endangering my ability to remain here, because all they would have to do is prove that I'd cross the border once, and they could send me back to Mexico. But nothing more came of it, although the so-called police, the Red Squad in Los Angeles claimed that they knew that I had crossed, and they tried to cause trouble, but nothing much came of that instant. In 1935 we migrated, Vera and I, to New York, Vera to go to school to get her Masters in social work, and myself to be there as her husband, and of course there to I became very active. At the same time I thought I should apply for citizenship there, maybe the case would be handled differently in New York than it was handled in Los Angeles, because Los Angeles was a hotbed of radicalism and anti-union activity and whatnot, and New York was a more liberal city. So I started procedures there in New York. Meanwhile the war broke out in Spain, the civil war against Franco, and I volunteered to go, because I had some ROTC training at UC, where I attended, taking my electrical engineering course, from 1926 to 1928. So I volunteered, seemed to pass everything, they interviewed Vera and Vera agreed I should go, but sure enough they asked me about citizenship. Somehow or other the Party knew in New York that I was not a citizen, and as a result they refused to allow me to go to Spain. I remained to be active in the Spanish civil war activities in New York, especially among the Irish Catholics that I had contacts [with] through my teamsters work. But nothing much came out of it. Then Pearl Harbor occurred, and in 1941 I registered for the draft and was very quickly classified as 1-A, which meant that there was no dependents, Vera was working and we had no children at the time. So I was waiting to be called to the draft, and that would be, again, a way of receiving citizenship. If you serve in the American army that was an important consideration for me. Vera and I talked it over, "why wait for the draft, why not go and volunteer for service," and get some kind of a technical rank such

as a sergeant or something in my field, in electrical work? I was very knowledgeable about it, so we went down, I remember, on 1942, on Yom Kippur day, to the recruiting agency in New York. He interviewed me, and said "yes, you are eligible for a technical job. We'd be very glad to have you, and so you go to your draft board and get their permission to be released. They should give you a release so that you can come in with that." We agreed to do that. A few days later Vera and I went to the draft board, and they indicated that I would be called in about two weeks. ..... changes now. So we agreed not to do that, and I would go in the regular way. I did not want to take any kind of chance that something would be spoiled. So I quit my job, we had a farewell party in the shop. I was working at that time in the war industry, in making tools for producing ammunition. I had other gatherings, and I was all prepared to go into the service. My birthday was August 17, and I expected to go in about September 3 of 1942. On September 1, president Franklin Delano Roosevelt came on radio to announce that all those who were over 38 years of age would not be accepted into the service. So here, within two weeks' time, I was over 38, [and] was knocked out of the draft, out of the service. And because I had quit my job and in general, I was dissatisfied with remaining in New York. We decided to move to California. And so we came to California in April 1943. Vera had already obtained a job right through a letter that she wrote to the head of the Social Service at UC Medical Center, and immediately she was grabbed up, and when I came back from New York there would be no trouble. So when I came back I applied for a job as an engineer for Westinghouse in Emeryville, in their transformer and in their instrument and control division. I was accepted very gladly there, and found myself in a good atmosphere, very happy to be working there, especially since they were preparing transformers to send to the Soviet Union, and I was interested in the type of work ..... I was there no longer than about three months, and I'm called into their office and he said I'd have to leave the job for a few days, they hadn't been able to get clearance for me, and then I knew the sign I was under, I was not going to be allowed to remain there when they talked about clearance. They had the record that I was a deportee, and that they didn't want it. Well, the union shop steward, the union which I was a member of, of course, suggested that I put up a fight, I said "no, let's not rock the boat, I'll be able to get a job someplace else." Of course, they didn't call me back, and that was the end of that. After that I took a job at Donald Beck (?) on the waterfront in San Francisco on Main St. It consisted in reconstructing or overhauling ship's motors of all kinds. I had the special skill in DC, direct-current motors that were used on the older ships in numbers. So I was especially useful for that. There again, I worked in the shop on land, and then others would take the motors out and reinstall them in the ships where they came out of, and hook them up again to operate. Well, once or twice, sure enough, they found themselves in trouble, not knowing how to hook them up. So they asked that I should go out and show them and hook it up for them, and show them how. I knew that I wasn't supposed to leave the shore because of my citizenship problem. So I told them it was not advisable for me to go. At first they thought that I probably had a record as an ex-convict, but they didn't push me hard. But they still got tougher, they said "hell, we have a good relationship with the guards. You go there, and we'll send two of the men ..... You go in between them, they will not ask you anything." And sure enough, I went, and between the three of us we walked right through the gates and on board the ship, and we made the necessary hook-ups, and I felt a little bit better about it because nothing happened. And so there again, my citizenship was in my way, but I managed to evade that. After the war I went into the electrical contracting business, and there [my citizenship problem] appears in the form of the FBI hounding me, to become a stool pigeon, to get information that could harm the Party. By that time I was pretty much not active in the Communist party any longer,

because of a conflict of feeling, that I couldn't be an employer of labor, and at the same time be in the Communist party. It was the Communist party or not. We employed a couple of people at the time. So it was concerning for me in that respect, but nothing much came of it. About the only other thing involved was that I had to report for ..... every month to the Immigration authority, which was very hard on me. My parole ..... indicated that I was not to associate with anyone known to be a Communist, and here I was doing the electrical work for the People's World, for the labor school, for anybody else who was that kind. So we thought in terms of the possibility of a frame-up of some kind, so we made an issue out of it with my attorney, and they did not respond, but at least it was on my record that I would be working in all kinds of jobs, and therefore that does not necessarily mean that I'm associated with Communism, but that's how tough it was. This went on during the McCarren, and during the McCarthy period especially, and it was very strenuous for me, because I was under threat all the time. It was very possible that if they went to General Electric Supply, to the rest of the .... supply, and told him not to sell me electrical material and equipment because of my record, it's possible that they would have responded. Whether they did or not I don't know, but at least I was under that concern. I do know, by the way, the business manager of the Electrical Contractors' Association of San Francisco talked to me, that he had some inkling of what was going on in that situation. But I played down and did not want to get any discussion. He was curious as to why he was visited, and so on. And in general I was not involved too much, so it was fairly good. I went to meetings once in a while, to parties or dances or whatnot. This continued until I retired in 1957, and went out on my own. Then it became easier, and the reporting [was] required only once a year after that, in the '60s. Also, if I left the area over 25 miles from San Francisco, I was to get permission from them to do it, so I would send in a letter, stating that I was going. They never gave me permission, but I was on record, so I didn't feel to badly about it. We went to New York. During this period Vera made a few trips to Europe on her own without me, but that's about as far as it went. In 1965 changes were made in the immigration law, I think it was under the McCarren act, which stated that people in my status had a right to appeal their deportation case, and get a new hearing, and so my friend George Anderson, my attorney at this time, suggested that I should undertake this task, and so we appealed the case. So a hearing was held, and the immigration people decided to drop the initial (?) charges, and brought new charges in. Then it was brought up to date on my membership, and so on. A hearing was held, it was under Mr. Sipkin, who was employed by the Immigration authority, but he was supposed to be the judge and referee. So the worked together very closely, and George defended me. I was put on the witness stand, did the hearing, and the judge asked me, Mr. Sipkin asked me, "have you ever been a member of the Communist party?" and I said "yes." And he said "you're the first one that has admitted it, all the rest of them didn't have the guts to admit." Then he proceeded to ask me other questions, and then he was not so happy with some of my answers, but I did say by this time I'd been out of the Party for many years. I took an attitude that the Communist party was pretty much immaterial to the American scene. This is the way I put it. That it didn't much matter whether they existed or not. But I had not been a member now for 10 years. But in spite of all of that, this Sipkin ruled that I was to be deported. But because I was honest and above-board about my membership and so on, he would do what he could to have me removed legally in case ..... changed, so that I would become able to become a resident in this country, fully, and also become a citizen. And his recommendation [was] that I should have a bill introduced into congress, which would allow me the residency, and then from there I should apply for citizenship and try to obtain it in that way. So we followed his instruction, and a bill was presented in congress, and we asked

the help of Harry Bridges to bring it before the Immigration Committee of the House of Representatives, in which a [congressman] friendly to labor was the chairman of the subcommittee, and in the senate it was under Eastland's committee. Now Senator Eastland was a Southern, Tennessee I believe. He was one of the outstanding redbaiters. So we were waiting for these two committees to act in my case, and these bills are introduced and passed unanimously without ..... Well, soon after a year I received a letter from Eastland saying that their committee had passed their bill, ..., now it was up to the House of Representatives' committee to do it. Well that sounded very good. About six months later I received notice that I did not receive approval in the House of Representatives, where the congressman friendly to labor couldn't do it. They did not ....., so that went that. So that failed. So we went back again to Mr. Sipkin, of the ..... for the Immigration authorities, and he said that he didn't know what to do in this case fully, but he'll do this; he will suspend my deportation, to allow me to apply for citizenship, and if I get the citizenship then everything is forgotten, is okay. If I don't get the citizenship, then we'll see what we'll do after that if I'm turned down. So then I make the application for citizenship. This is already about 1969, by that time. And so here ..... held on my application. That stretches out for months and months. I was asked more questions, seeing if they could find a loophole. They didn't directly ask me whether I was active or not, but they dealt a great deal with my past, which had been ..... In general I took an attitude that the chances of getting through were very slim, although Vera didn't feel that way about it, she felt it was necessary to carry on the struggle. We ran on till about 1970 or so, and then by this time George Anderson had died, and Norman Leonard took over the case. When we tried further to get some results, they said "you'll have to wait awhile, we're acting but we're not quite ready." So then Leonard said "okay, we'll wait two or three months," which we did, and then he said "I'm going to take a habeas corpus, and bring this thing into the federal courts for a hearing on why I'm being denied." "Oh, don't do that," they told me and him. "This is for the chances. We feel that when the right time comes we'll be able to act." Well, we were pretty much convinced that they did not intend to give me citizenship. We did have hearings once in a while, and that's about all. So we went into court under habeas corpus, and who should be the federal judge but judge Samuel Conti (?), appointed by Nixon, a real reactionary, who was sentencing all so-called Vietnam draft evaders to the maximum, and in general fought anything that was progressive. So we appeared in court, and our hearts sank ..... I knew I had no chance with the guy. We came before him, and the Immigration attorney comes in to court, and he gets up and asks that the application be postponed, that they're not ready, they don't have enough information. So Norman, my attorney, gets up and says "my god, this thing has been going on for years, it doesn't make any sense that they need more information." And the judge said "when did you start looking .....?" and he told him about 1969, and here it was already '71. So Conti said "I'll give you 90 days more. Come back at that time, and we'll see where we stand." The thing was adjourned for 90 days. We felt pretty bad, because we didn't feel there was much chance to get around Judge Samuel Conti, because he had shown himself to be so reactionary. Came the time in April of 1971, we appear in court, and sure enough the judge is no longer Judge Samuel Conti, a new judge has been appointed, because we went back to a pool that they had, then they'd assign a different one. This time it was before Judge Lloyd Burke, and we felt much better. It so happened that my attorney knew about it, but decided not to tell me about it, not to cause to much expectation, and so on. Judge Burke was a judge who originally was the U.S. prosecutor in the Harry Bridges case 20 years before, and got quite an education when he did that. But part of his reward in his good action was to get him an appointment as a federal judge. So we came before him. When we decided definitely that

we were going into court, I raised the question that I [had gotten] letters of recommendations from all the various kind of people that I knew. Leonard didn't think very much of it, he thought more that the law would bring results. He was ready to appeal the case if he lost it. But he said "go ahead and do it." So I got about 20-25 letters of recommendation of all kinds, especially attorneys who I worked with and used to serve with some others, that indicated that I'm very much eligible for citizenship. In fact, one of the person that I had worked for when I took a ..... for a little while after the war was over was Abe Stolidge (?). Abe wrote a letter saying that although when I worked for him I was a Communist, I was still a pretty good guy, and that he still thought I should get citizenship, and we put that letter in. We got a letter from one of the ministers in Mill Valley, whom I'd been working with, who said that if anyone was eligible, who should have citizenship, a person like that, who's given so much social service in the community..... Altogether there were some very interesting letters; a number of the congressmen recommended me, the Bergmans (?), even congressman Meyer....., Senator Marks, and a number of others. Burke came into the court about a half an hour late, about 10:30. We were pretty sure that he was reading some of these letters. That's the way they do it, at the last minute. So he came in, and we started proceeding. A letter ..... presented some information, the judge said "now wait a minute, I want to question the attorney for the Immigration: do you favor [the defendant] getting citizenship?" And the attorney, of course, said "no, we do not." So then the conversation went on between the judge and the immigration attorney, with Leonard having very little to say on it. And the judge was doing Leonard's work, knocking down all the arguments, that I didn't believe in the capitalist system. And the judge said "you don't have to believe in the capitalist system to be a citizen, you can be anything you want to. This is a free country." "Then he's against the free enterprise [system]." "There's many people against it, we've even passed legislation against monopoly capitalists, the Sherman Anti-trust Act." It carried on in this manner, we went along with him. The attorney for the Immigration people was kind of puzzled as to how to deal with it, and Leonard didn't need to add anything ..... Sure enough, that's ..... The judge said "Mr. Baylin, I hereby grant you citizenship. Come up before me and I'll swear you in." And that was really an exciting moment in my life. I came up before him and was sworn in, and the Immigration attorney said "you want to get the certificate from me upstairs ..... We'll get your certificate now." ..... he seemed so excited. I said "sure I do," so I went up with him, and he showed me his list of names that he was defending, that he had already put down there that had their citizenship denied, and mine was going to have to change that. To show me how sure he was that the judge would go along. And so we got a big kick out of that, and we assumed, at least ....., that Burke had written letters, felt that there was some protection for him, and therefore granted me my citizenship. I later presented this information to the attorney for the committee for the protection of foreign-born, who deals with it in New York, and he said "we can't use that, this is a fluke. It wouldn't go over here in New York. No judge would rule this way. This judge was friendly to you, so he got your citizenship, but it's not based too much on law." So they did not use it. I spent some time in Los Angeles also, and there they did not proceed in the same manner, but here in San Francisco, others, like ..... Yannis (?) and Jean Kramer especially the two I know, and Jack Turner of Sebastopal, they all got their citizenship pretty much the same way as I did. Of course that opened up a lot of avenues for me. I did not get down on the ground and kiss the earth like one of the other old-timers did when he was told he got his citizenship, but I did start to travel, both Vera and I. A lot of traveling since then.

XIV. More on citizenship; international travel; meeting Isabel; relationship with Hanson family

More on citizenship: how the judge felt that it was a proof of American democracy.

International travel after gaining citizenship.

Meeting Isabel.

Isabel's trip to Europe; meeting her after she got back.

Meeting Lew Hanson, wedding at house.

Grandsons.

Isabel's arthritis.

Again: meeting Lew Hanson, wedding at house.

Meeting Ruth, Irv, Ern Hanson; learning about Medimont, Kellogg communities, labor activities there, etc.

Ruth's and Irv's family background.

A: The judge wanted to make a statement about granting me citizenship, and his major feeling was that here is really democracy at work, that Even though I had believed in many things that are opposed to the system, yet I came to him for justice and I received justice, and that was an interesting comment. It's recorded in the transcribe that I have of this case. The Immigration attorney, to show his good will, turned to the judge and said that "if you will sign the document now, I'll take Mr. Baylin upstairs, and he will get his citizenship papers right now." And the judge did that. We went upstairs, and I got my citizenship papers. We were very elated [about] it. We were one of the first cases of this kind that had appeared, and were successful in it. I sent this information on to New York, to the Committee for the Protection of the Foreign-Born, a man by the name of Abrams, I think. It was an attorney who headed the Committee, and there were many cases all over the country, and he in turn answered that this was a fluke, this wasn't the usual thing that may happen. But he was wrong, a number of other people went through the same process and got the same results after this case, but I was the first one. I'm particularly impressed with Jean Kramer, who was held on deportation. She lives in Berkeley, a friend of mine, and when I told her about it she said "Oh no, it's not going to work in my case. I don't think I should try." But she did try, soon after that, and got her citizenship. What does citizenship mean to me? Basically, the number one thing that it meant to me was the ability to travel. We could afford it, and we wanted very much to see other places. And the other thing, there was a feeling that I would like to be a part of the political scene, to participate in elections and voting, and the other things that other people around me were doing. And I have since then, fully, taken advantage of it, including ending up at this time being an

active member of the Democratic party in Marin County, and being selected as the precinct captain for my area, and in the 1988 election, with Dukakis and Bush, we all did a very good job there in bringing out about 15-18 percent more voters than usual elections, by actually visiting people and seeing them. I find that to be most effective. And as a result, Marin County went for Dukakis pretty strongly, even though Marin County is considered a more wealthy liberal area, but still they did carry on. My first trip abroad after that, believe it or not, was to go to Alaska, where I really don't need citizenship to go, because it's part of the United States. But on the other hand, my attorney said that if a plane, by some chance, has to land someplace else in an emergency, and it's not in the United States, I'm subject to being held there and deported ..... if they land in some other country, in South America or something like that. So they did not recommend [that I go] to Hawaii or Alaska because of the possibility of doing that.

Q: Even though you had citizenship, he recommended this?

A: No, no, before citizenship. The citizenship part became an important part because we have traveled extensively now, all over the world, and we've enjoyed it, and it's been helpful to enjoying life in the main, and in that respect I appreciated it. We've been to the Soviet Union twice, we've been to Africa, we've been to China, we've been to Southeast China, through Malaysia and those countries, and we've of course been in South America, to Peru and to other countries. We've been to Panama, we've been to Nicaragua. Of course, we've been many times to Mexico. So that has given some satisfaction.
One of the situations that developed in Los Angeles, that I had not recorded up to now, was the need to have an agreement with other people involved on this issue. After I married Vera in 1928, in 1929 she became pregnant without our wanting to have a baby. At that time we were not in a condition [to raise a child]. I was very active, I was in and out of jail, and there was not much future for us at that time, and the depression was coming on. So, we had agreed that she would carry this baby and that we would give it away to be adopted in a legal manner. Vera already was knowledgeable as a social worker that it was very important to do it properly, so that there were no problems later on. So when the baby was born, in September of 1929, an agency came and took the baby, and that was that. The impression was left that the baby did not survive, and so there was no further discussion about it in the family. Vera's mother and father knew about it, but my family did not know. As years went by, when we moved to San Francisco, with kind of a new start in life, I suggested we have a child and Vera said "no, emotionally I'm not prepared to have one," and I let it go at that. I did not pressure, I cared that much about her. But ..... in 1954, in the summer, I received a letter from my brother in Los Angeles, from a woman, asking whether he could tell her where I lived, and to get in contact with her. My instructions to my brother were that, whenever there's any inquiry, to refer it to me, because it may be some FBI problem or whatnot. So he sent the letter to me, and in this letter this woman said that she would like to contact me, and gave a phone number as to where she could be reached. I called that phone number, she was working for a large concern in San Francisco in publicity, about a block from where I worked, and she said "would you like to meet me in the lobby" of where she worked. She gave me the address, on Mission St. I went down there, leisurely, after lunch, and she was there, a beautiful young blond woman, who came up to me and [asked] me, "Did you have a child in this-and-this year?" I said "Yes." Then she [asked], "Did you give that child away for adoption?" I said "Yes." She said "well, I am that person." I was stunned. At the moment I had nothing to say. I just took her hand, and I started walking with her. She's trying to see what my reaction was, but I was very

emotionally affected by it at the time. And then, finally, I cooled down and told her "I guess I'll have to tell Vera about it, and you'll have to get together with her, and we'll have to find our way as to where we're going." At this time, Isabel was doing this publicity work, and I didn't much remember her telling me much more about herself, except that she was living in San Francisco with her adoptive parents. So I arranged to meet her the next day at 11 o'clock. We were already living in Mill Valley. So I went home after work. A relation of Vera's came in and stayed for dinner, and I had to wait until they left. And they stayed, and they stayed, and they stayed. I felt that it would never end. Finally they left at 11 o'clock. At that stage I set Vera down on the couch, and I told her that I had some information about the letter that I had got, and I told her who it was, and she was stunned. She had no particular answers for me. and she accepted the idea that I would bring her over the next morning at 11 o'clock. And that's what I did. I brought her over to us, and we sat for awhile and then started talking. Then she gave us some idea of her life. The number one problem was that she was planning to leave for Europe, to Spain in particular, with two other friends of hers, two other young women. [They would] be leaving in about a month, so that we ..... idea what it was. She indicated the conditions under which she lived. Her adoptive mother had died, and she had helped encourage this woman who later married her stepfather, and the three of them were living in San Francisco. Isabel was a graduate of UC Berkeley, and she was an English major, had quite a bit of school activity, had social activity as well, and in general was very much alive and very much getting along, and frankly part of the travel was hoping that she would meet some young man who was eligible to get married, and the same for her two friends who were going with her. So we left it at that. We saw each other a few more times. Meanwhile, she went back to her stepparents, her adoptive parents, and told them about the fact that she had discovered us, and she was with us, and they were very upset, and told her that if she wasn't satisfied with one set of parents, she had to have two sets of parents, and in general were not friendly towards her, so that within a few days later she called and said "please come and get me, I cannot continue to stay here." So we came and got her, and she stayed with us, and a few weeks later she left for Spain. We had nothing planned, we did not know what it was. She was coming back by boat to New York, and then from New York she was to fly back to San Francisco, so we said "we will meet you in New York at the boat when you come in, and we'll be together." During this period that she stayed with us, before leaving for Spain, I felt as if I went through fatherhood with her, a very close relationship, looking after her, concerned about everything I could [be concerned about], and got a good emotional response within myself in having her there. Vera took longer to do that, Vera was more involved, more introspective about it, and so, as to what the future would be. She corresponded with us almost every week while she was in Spain, telling about her different boyfriends that she met, and one of them in particular she was impressed with. And she had hoped for a closer relationship, but his mother came along and stopped it. So she was disappointed. Her two other friends were doing quite well. In fact, out of the three, the two other girlfriends came back with husbands, and she did [not], she was not successful in getting married. We went to New York, we had friends in New York who we stayed with, and we told them that we were going to meet a young lady. They didn't understand it, yet we were not able to tell them fully what was going on. Finally we met the boat with Isabel, and our friends were not yet told who she was fully. Not at that time, and I don't recall the reason for it. Meanwhile, I had bought a car in New York, cars were scarce at that time, and so the three of us started back in the Buick to San Francisco. And we spent about two weeks on the road. We let her drive the car, she was excited about driving a car, and we nearly got killed. We ended up in a cornfield off the highway. A very close shave at that

time. Then we brought her back to her house (she wasn't staying with us yet). We brought her back to the house in San Francisco. We dropped her off there, and then two days later she called and asked us to come and take her to our home, and we did that. And so our life began with her, and she became an important part of our life very quickly. She was quite excited about the fact that we were Communists, and she wanted to be more political. She was very political at that time, although she was not a member of any kind. We in turn saw her meet a young man whom she brought over to our house to meet. She met others before, but this one impressed us. He was a farm boy, from Idaho, raised in very poor circumstances, very simple very direct. At that time he was a schoolteacher. This is the man that you represented, Lew Hanson, and when we asked him what he would like to drink, he said "yes, I'd like some milk." That impressed us quite a bit. Isabel showed interest, but not in the same manner as previously, soon that something would come of it. Sure enough, within about a month or so, they began to live together. Then after about a year they decided they ought to get married, and [asked us if we would] arrange a wedding at our house in Mill Valley, and which we did. The minister was an ex-Communist party member, who forgot to mention that he was marrying them, and talked about peace on earth and philosophy of being, which was quite impressive. We had good turnout. The minister was about 30-35 years of age, and he found that after a few drinks that he loved all the girls that were around, and said that it was a lot of fun. We enjoyed the wedding, and within a year or so Isabel became pregnant, and had her first son, Paul. We participated fully with it, all the way through. Describing our lives together, since she came into our life, has been at time hectic, there's no question about it, and we don't fully understand her at times. She's quite dissatisfied with us at times, which we don't pick up. She's become a very strong feminist at this time, and so about every other word I say she indicates that it's anti-feminist. But we're managing on it. There are three grandsons now, all of them are grown. Paul is a very fine musician, he's the oldest of them. He's part of the Klezmorim group now that plays, [that's] going to Europe again this summer. Chris, the middle one, is a graduate of UC Santa Cruz, he's working ~~there on a project.~~ The youngest one, Jon, as yet not found himself, it looks like he hasn't found himself for a long time, because he did not even at first graduate high school. He found it too boring, too uninteresting, but finally went back and got his diploma, and since then has tried to go college a few times, but doesn't make it. He stays a month or two and then drops out, and as yet has not been able to develop any kind of profession or trade. He's extremely good with children, and he's done some baby-sitting, and working in nurseries, and so on. We're urging him to follow that up, because I think it's a lovely profession, it can be very helpful to people. This is about all I can tell you about Isabel except, unfortunately, for as far as we're concerned, she separated with Lew, and in turn another man has been with her now for at least eight years. A very sad part about it is that Isabel has contracted rheumatoid arthritis, and has suffered badly from it, with many operations and replacements, and is in a relatively mild condition now. She's [working (?)] on it, but it's a tough one. Her ability to play the piano has been lost completely. She had become a very fine concert pianist before contracting this illness, and now she cannot do very much. She is doing some singing in the La Pena Chorus. It's a Latin group that sings for various benefits, and so on, and keeps up activity, working about 30 hours a week on a project. This all may be censored by her, but I'll put it in and see how she responds to what I have to say about it. I'm anxious not in any way to offend her or to cause her concern. Isabel has written a book on her illness, called "[Outwitting] Arthritis", and in it she indicates the lack of understanding among the doctors as to how to deal with patients of that kind, to such an extent that the book was reviewed by the New England

School of Medicine, and she feels that it made a contribution in the medical profession, to learn that there is this problem, because she's probably good at it.

Q: How many years has she had arthritis?

A: Oh, I would say at this time about 10 or 12 years. She's had both hips replaced, she's had both feet operated on, she's had both hands operated on. These are all things to indicate how serious this thing is. We think it's in remission at this time, that it's not getting worse, but still she is able to get around. She is still able to drive a car, even though I'd be happy if she didn't, but she is driving. She's had the car rearranged in such a manner so that it's most easy for her to control it. I followed her after she had the car redone, and I'm hoping for the best, but it is a dangerous thing with the present-day highways, and the speed around them. She recently went to Greece for a four-month period with her friend Bill, who is half-Greek and half-Jewish, and they studied the Greek culture and seemed to make out well, but I think she paid a price for it, because when she came back the arthritis flared up. Now she's doing some trips. She went down with some girlfriends to Los Angeles, and in general getting quite a bit out of life so that she's not in any condition like she had been a year or so ago, where she was bedridden, had to be helped to be dressed, and had to be helped to get out of bed. She's not in that condition at this time.

Q: We were discussing Isabel. Now at this point you want to continue with some other matters.

A: Related to Isabel. Isabel lived with us till about 1955, and then moved to San Francisco with some girlfriends, and was looking around for a husband, to be very frank. Finally she brought one over to us, a young man, very nice, very interesting, but for some reason she did not care for him. Finally she came over with a young man by the name of Lew Hanson, who had just gotten out of the service recently, and who was refused an honorable discharge because his parents were Communists or had been Communists. He in turn went to the American Civil Liberties Union, and Ernie Beeschek (?), head of the Civil Liberties Union, took his case to court....? Where did he go with him?

Q: It was an administrative hearing.

A: It was an administrative hearing, in which Ernie ably defended Lew, and he got a full honorable discharge as a result, which is quite important in the American setup when you've been in the service. She brought him over, and when I met him and offered him a drink, he said "yes, I'll have a glass of milk," which impressed me quite a bit. We visited together, and she had had a number of boyfriends, and after she left to go back to San Francisco with Lew, Vera said "I think this is the one she's going to go for, because he's not aggressive, he's not pushy in any way." And sure enough, she came back a few weeks later with him, and at that time he asked us permission to marry Isabel. Of course, we did not hesitate too much about it, and in turn we offered our place as a wedding. And we did have a beautiful outdoor affair for her, with a minister who was an ex-Communist party member, and who forgot about the fact that he was administering wedding vows, and talked about the peace movement and the struggle that was going on. All in all it was a very lovely affair. They set up house in San Francisco, and soon thereafter there came our first grandson, Paul, who at this time is about 27 years of age. A good relationship was established between Lew and Lew's parents. First we met Ruth, his mother, who came to the wedding. Irv had to stay

on the farm to look after the farm there. We were very impressed with Ruth, who is a beautiful person, a high school graduate, but very knowledgeable of many things and very lovely to be with. Ruth in turn invited us to come to the farm in Idaho, near Courde'alein (sp?), near a village called Medimont, right on Cave Lake, where they were living. So soon after that we went to the farm and met the rest of the family, and that became an experience that continued for about 20 years. Every year they would come down and visit with us in the wintertime; then we'd go there in the summertime. And of course it meant a lot of outdoor activity, a lot of hiking, a lot of berry- picking, a lot of fishing. The fishing was especially good for me. I learned how to fly-cast for trout, and that was very exciting work for me. This continued for many years in my life. One of the features of going up there [is that] Medimont, Idaho, is closely situated to Kellogg, Idaho, which has one of the largest lead mines in the world, and in turn was organized by the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Worker's Union. [Irv] and Ruth supported it, and had friends who were working in the mines. We got to meet their friends from time to time, and found out a community of very beautiful people, who were very knowledgeable of what was going on in the world, and many of them were left-wingers in various forms, some of them members of the Socialist party, some of them members of the Communist party. Many of them were ex-IWW members, and of course the stories they told of their activity, and working in the woods and organizing the lumber workers were extremely interesting. Irv himself was an extremely good shot, with either a rifle or a pistol, and in one of the experiences in a lumber camp, he was of course agitating to organize the workers, the owners of the lumber camp decided that they wouldn't have any part of him, and fired him. And so he had to walk to the railroad station, to take a train to go back to Spokane I believe, and when he got closer to the railroad station he saw two men following him, and he realized that they were gunmen. They were there to scare him off so that he wouldn't continue [his organizing work]. When he reached the station he pulled out his pistol and he shot a can about 30 feet from him, and hit it right in the center. And he told these guys "you keep an eye on that, this may happen to you if you fool around with [me]," and both of them immediately disappeared. This was kind of an interesting experience, what you're up to. We also met his brother, Ern Hanson, who needs a book to be written about; in fact, a book has been written about him. He was a fifth-grade graduate of grammar school, very limited education; also a woodsman who worked there, and joined the IWW. They needed an editor for the newspaper. Who became the editor? Ernie Hanson became it. A terrific character in many ways. He was living in a little shack away from the farm, by himself, and the county discovered that he was not being assessed for taxes. So they assessed him one dollar a year for taxes, but he insisted he would pay it in parts. He would not pay the one dollar at one time, fifty cents each half year. And of course romantic as hell. Youngsters would come to him, and he'd tell them where he buried dynamite in one place and guns in another place, and they just ate all of that up. I became very good friends with him as well. I believe he like me because he went out of his way to do things for me. Very anti-woman, never got married.

Q: The family, I take it, sprang from Oregon.

A: The mother came from Sweden, came to Los Angeles, and then moved from Los Angeles to Idaho. The father, I don't remember what trade he was, but had become an alcoholic in Los Angeles, and so Ruth helped to migrate him, with I think two of the boys already born, there were four sons, no daughters. The father died soon after they had bought this farm, for very little, in Medimont. About 20 acres in all. On 20 acres they raised four children,

and all four of them went to college and graduated. A terrific job. Ruth comes from a religious family. Her father was a minister. She was required to pray every day, for every meal, and so on. And when she married this atheist, Irv. that was stopped.

XV. More on Hanson side of family; courses at SF State; trip to Africa

Discussion of Hanson side of family; farm, Medimont area, various experiences with them, Lew's brothers and their children, etc.

Isabel's family; including Lew and kids.

Brief mention of Vera's work in Richmond and Marin County.

After retirement: taking courses from San Francisco State.

Trip to Africa.

A: The Kellog area is famous worldwide as being one of the largest lead mines in the world, with probably 200 miles of underground tunnels, with which to bring out the lead. A very difficult form of work, but still it was carried on. Many of the miners were part-time farmers as well, and also many of them supplied their meat through hunting in the area. Although Ernie and Irv were lumbermen, woodsmen, they still had many friends among [the miners]. Through our association with the Hansons, we met them and found a lot of enjoyment and satisfaction in being with them. While we were there, I do not recall what year, a strike broke out, and the mines were out for quite a long time. One of our friends was a shoe repair man, and most of his customers were miners. He could tell when they were going to go back to work without winning a strike by the way they presented their shoes to be repaired. It was kind of interesting that he knew it, and sure enough they went back to work. They did not win the strike, but they gained certain concessions in regard to health measures, dust and pollution, that was going on in the area, because besides mining for the lead there was also a smelter there, a huge smelter, which spewed fumes, and destroyed all the forests around for 20-30 miles, its brown ..... whole thing. And their slogan in town was "keep the mountains green." Here this thing was happening.

Q: What did it do to the individuals?

A: I do not recall them indicating that they had lung cancer or lung trouble and so on. I wouldn't be able to tell you very much. One of the interesting instances there was Irv's mother. At the age of 95 she had become blind, but she also believed very much in exercise, so he would arrange to have a bucket of water and a brush for her to wash the kitchen floor. That was one of the exercises. The other exercise was to saw wood. [He would] set up a jack for her and put a log on it, and then [she] saw it, and she could hear it drop, and she would carry it away. A very lovely person all the way through, and fairly clear most of the time. Of course, like everything ....., there came a time for her to die. We were up there, and one of our friends, Esther Kalina, went into her room and found her coughing, struggling, and she died in her arms. Of course a funeral had to be arranged, and although the family, her sons and daughters, were all atheists and nonbelievers, they still carried out her wish of having a religious funeral. We participated in the funeral, and one of our friends was one of the pallbearers. We went to the graveyard, which was on the side of a mountain overlooking the whole valley, very beautiful thing, and as the minister was saying

his eulogy and his statements of prayers, the two sons were murmuring under their breath "goddamn it, do we have to stand for that?" Especially Ern, he made sure that I heard that he didn't like it a bit. The other thing that they objected to is that they had to dress in suits. So it was an experience that I don't think would have happened ordinarily, except for being up there. I must mention my catching my first trout on a fly, about a 12-incher, which is a pretty good-sized [trout]. Father and son, Bob and Irv, were standing by walking me struggling in doing that, and when I landed the fish I just sat down in great ecstasy, and they looked at each other and said "well, it's worth everything to have seen that kind of a scene." So, that carried on. In one of the years, I brought a beautiful fly rod as a gift for Irv's birthday, and he said "c'mon, let's get in the boat and try it out on the lake." So we got into the boat, we got out on the lake, and the first cast, the rod and all, slipped out of his hand, and ended up in the lake.

Q: Oh no!

A: Oh yeah, it went right down. He was so disappointed. He said "yes, it had a lot of meaning for me." I said "we'll get it back." So we came back later on, with a small anchor. We hoped we would grab it. We casted around for hours, but the lake was extremely deep, a hundred feet deep or so, and for some reason we could not do that. Another instance was the fact that someone gave Ruth a lure to catch some large bass that were in the lake, but would not bite on ordinary bait of any kind.

Q: Was she a fisherman too?

A: Oh yes, oh yes, the whole family was. So she went out with this lure. It was a floating frog, little green frog, made out of rubber or something, and she comes back with a ten-pound bass, a beautiful fish. We were all very jealous of her, and anxious. So when the fish was caught the lure disappeared. I don't recall how. But she knew where to get them, so she sent away for a half-dozen of them. Both Irv and I and Ern all tried to catch a bass, none of us succeeded. She went out again and boom! She came back with another six-pounder. Extremely delicious fish, too, besides everything else. So we had our little joke about that. One of my experience is getting up at six in the morning, early, and taking Irv's canoe, which he himself made out of aluminum, and paddling out away from the shore, and starting to catch very lovely fish, eight or ten of then in my creel, and soon I needed to urinate. So I stood up, and as I stood up the canoe just fell right over, and I'm in the water, in full clothes.

Q: Are you a swimmer?

A: Yes, I'm a swimmer, but all my clothes were on, it was very cold at this time in the morning. Luckily, Ruth told me to tie a rubber tube on the seat, to sit on, it would be soft. So I tied that on. That helped to keep the canoe from sinking, but as I turned over I grabbed ahold of the canoe edge, and by golly it stood up. I dragged it over to a floating island, it's an island made up of grasses of all kinds. It's about 50 feet in diameter. I was able to get up on that island, paddle over slowly with it, and empty the canoe. But I could not locate the oars. They had swung away. And I also lost my fish. It was quite a sad thing, but I crawled into the canoe, paddled back with my hands to the shore, and as I came up to the house I passed out. They saw me coming, they assumed something was wrong. So both Vera and Ruth grabbed me, put me into a hot tub of water to warm me up, and

Ruth dug out a bottle of whiskey. [None of them] were drinkers of any kind, they did not like the idea of it, but they did have it for emergencies of this kind, and others that came to visit with them, I found out later, they had to have a drink, and they would serve it. So they're open-minded about it.

Q: This was medicine....

A: Good medicine, that's what it was. For me it was. It brought me back together. This was one of the experiences. The other experience was going hunting with Irv for bear, which was very interesting. He was ready to shoot a bear, and discovered that it was a tamed bear, belonged to a restaurant in the neighborhood. So he was very glad that me missed, but that was an experience. He did get a bear, and we ate some bear meat. Not when I went with him, but at another occasion, we tasted bear meat for the first time. It was fairly good, something like chicken, a light-colored thing. He always got his deer, the limit on it. One of the things that Ruth was very strict about was to obey the laws, the fish and game laws. When I came there I soon found out that she didn't appreciate fishing without a license. I went out and bought a temporary license every time we came. The same thing was true about hunting. I did not hunt because I did not want to get a license. I have hunted when I lived in Texas, but I did not want to go hunting there. The main event, on one occasion, was the opening of the duck season. It almost sounded like war was going on, the shooting was all over the place. The idea was, who could get their limit the earliest, and Irv went out at 6 o'clock, and by 7 o'clock he was back with a full limit. I think it was 15 ducks, I do not recall. But that was part of the lifestyle for them. They were also involved in the grange, and of course every radical that came through, every wobbly that came through who knew about Irv, would come and stay there. Didn't have to be invited, that was the accepted practice. One of the big features of the event was the fact that Ruth played the piano, mostly rag jazz, and Irv played the fiddle, and Lew, their son, is a clarinetist, and Isabel was there, and the others played, so that we had a band their going from time to time. It was a wonderful experience, the music that we had, about being on the farm.

Q: You've just referred to Isabel. I take it then that she must have accompanied you up there on many a occasion, not [necessarily] on every occasion.

A: That's right, she accompanied me on many an occasion. Or else they came at another time, and we came at a different time. At one time we went up there with our grandsons, and she remained. She was working and he was working, it was ..... possible, but in the twenty years I cannot recall how many times they were there the same time. Also, there were other members of the family that came there. There are three other sons, and two of them had their children, so their
grandchildren would come there, and sometimes some of the grandchildren would spend the whole summer there, after school was out. So there was continual activity going on in there.

Q: What sort of farming did he do?

A: What's called "truck farming", small, a variety of vegetables, and corn was his main item. He became famous for Medimont corn. He sold it to the markets. He also had an orchard, where people would come and pick fruit. It was called "U-pick", so much a gallon, and she always knew that the family would come with some children, and they would eat all they

could, but she knew there was a limit even to that. She didn't charge for whatever they ate while they were there. And everything was done on a really friendly, nice basis, so that she knew everyone that came around, and appreciated her very much. She is a very lovely woman. I was going to go up there this summer, but Vera said "I'll make a deal with you. If you go with me to Europe this summer, next summer I'll go with you to Medimont," so that's the situation that is at this present time. About the last thing that happened that was sad was that Irv, because of his hunting and trapping experience, froze his legs a great deal during the wintertime, trapping through creeks to pick up beaver, on which he was an expert in trapping and getting them, and various other things. He would go on a trap line of as much as 50 miles, with little places to stay overnight, in cabins in the woods, and would pick up his trapping events. He told us interesting experiences of that kind. But meanwhile ..... his legs were in such condition that he developed gangrene. They had to operate.

Q: Both of them?

A: Both of them, as far as I can remember. Both of them had to go, because of what had happened no blood was getting to the area. And so his last years were not good for him, [and] he passed away. The other brother, Ern, was in such condition that he couldn't live alone, so he went into an apartment in St. Mary's, which was about 15 miles from Medimont. He went in there, and I visited him there and we had a good relationship. He was fired by the Forestry Department for being a Communist, and showed me the letter with great pride. He said although he never joined the Party, it doesn't matter. He said "this is my reward." He continued to smoke. After a while, the owners of the apartment said "either you stop smoking or you have to leave." And it may be that he wasn't able to take care of himself, so he went into a nursing home. There they would allow him to smoke only outside in the garden. And meanwhile we developed a correspondence. In the last letter, he said "they are making it very difficult for me, because I don't always obey the rules about smoking." And he said "you know, I think I'm going to pack it in." And that was the last letter I got, and two weeks later he was dead. It's interesting [how] this man carried through.

Q: He forecast his death.

A: Just to conclude on Medimont. Medimont was a town of about 1,000 people at one time, but when we were there it had gone down to about 200, and the main thing that was missing there were the saloons and bars that used to be in that town. It had about five or six saloons, according to what Ern told me. Now there's only one, the Blue Heron saloon, and that became the center, where we would go in. But Irv and Ruth would not participate in that, Ern didn't mind going there for a beer with me, and it was enjoyable. He also took me to the cemetery, which had been kind of neglected, but he knew practically everyone that was buried. He had a comment to make about whether they were good people or bad people, etc. It was kind of interesting. There was also a large farm with about 100 acres that was shut down, with a beautiful stone house on it. The people who lived there had died, and no one was using it anymore. This was a farm that Irv and his sons had admired very much, but could never expect to buy, because it took some money. Meanwhile, time goes on, and the youngest son, Bob, would graduate as a civil engineer, took a job in Sacramento, California, working there, saving his money. He also met a young lady working for the government, and the two of them were married. At the age of about 35, both of them decided to retire. They had saved up enough money to buy this farm in Medimont,

and they are living up there now, and really enjoying their life. We correspond and keep track of each other. So here's the son of the poorest farmer in the area, ending up with the largest, best farm in Medimont. There are other interesting people there that we met, who were writers, and knowledgeable people about their society, and I really enjoyed our stay there. I described the concerts that we had, the music that we had. We had a lot of things to do there. We didn't seem to have any dull time, no time at all. Of course, besides Lew's and Isabel's children, there were other grandchildren from David, who has a doctorate in parasitology (?), and yet because of his shyness, he was not successful in getting a teaching job. He knows about it. Very lovely man, very capable man, very good teacher. But he married a woman who's an MD, a doctor, who makes a very good living. So David has become kind of the houseman, raising three children, doing a very good job at it. He also teaches in evening courses, but never succeeded in following through in his native profession. Lew, Bob, David and [Ed]; [Ed] turned out to be a very fine artist, and made a move to New York state, and is there now with his family, and working in the art field for a living. Again, a very lovely man. I enjoyed all four of them.

Q: Does [Ed] make a living at his art work?

A: As far as I can tell. His wife is also working. She's also involved in art. They make certain kind of items that the stores can sell, in ceramics and whatnot, and in that way they have raised [two] children. So this is the Hanson family, and now we go back to Isabel and Lew, who had moved to Berkeley, and both have been able to establish themselves in working, Lew teaching music, Isabel in the field of writing. At this time doing a news bulletin for a crippled children's organization called Community Resources for Independent Living in Hayward, Ca. I have been a part of their life all along, but for reasons that we can't really appreciate, she decided that she wanted to separate with Lew, and so they split up, and soon she found another man that she's living with, and he found another woman. We have kept contact with him. The three boys, Paul, Chris and Jon, have all moved away from their home, have their own places now, and Chris has graduated from UC Santa Cruz in computer science, Paul is a graduate of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and Jon is still unable to establish himself as to where he will go. We are a fairly close family, we see each other quite a bit, and enjoy being together a great deal. The unfortunate thing, and the sad thing, is that Isabel is quite a sick person with her rheumatoid arthritis. She's able to get around, she's working about 20 hours a week on this job in Hayward that she enjoys, but it's a tough one. The main loss, and one of the main losses to her and to us, is the fact that she was a very fine concert pianist, and has lost that ability to carry on.

After my retirement, Vera retired about three days later. She wasn't going to work if I'm not working, so we were two free citizens.

Q: By the way what was Vera doing?

A: Vera was a medical social worker, a very capable one, and worked in New York and worked for Kaiser in a children's program in Richmond, where she dealt with children that developed a heart condition. Along came a new drug in the form of a penicillin that cured them all, and the hospital was practically empty because of this wonder drug that came in, that was helping the children. She was quite a capable social worker, and nearly always had a student to train in her work. When she quit Kaiser, and we had moved to Mill Valley, she accepted a job in the county to start the social agencies in Marin County, one of the first

ones. And she took it on, and established it, at that time, with two other workers, with her in charge, as far as I can remember. It has grown now to an agency of about 15 people, that takes care of various needs of the people. She cut the job down two three days a week, and soon, when I retired, she also retired in her work. So we found ourselves with things to do. We both decided we wanted to go back to school, and take courses in anthropology and in archaeology. So we both enrolled in daytime classes at San Francisco State in San Francisco, California, and proceeded to begin with the first course, anthropology, which was usually geographic information. We'd [learn about] various groups of people and how they developed. It turned out that we remained there for some nine years, taking two courses, one course in anthropology, and another course outside of that. We started out by taking it for credit. I soon learned quickly that that would not do, because Vera was getting all A's in her courses and I was getting all D's. So we decided that's not so good, so we continued our courses without credit. It made it much easier for me, and I did study hard. I got to know the people in the anthropology department. At that time the anthropology department consisted of five people. At this time, in 1989, there's about 25. They had become that popular in this period of time. The anthropology department also established a museum, an archaeological type of museum, with artifacts from different parts of the world, and we helped to contribute, after we began traveling around. It was one head of the department who arranged a trip for us to East Africa. He arranged a trip for about 15 or 16 of us students. And we were the two elders in that group, the rest were young people, and we went to Nairobi in Kenya, and traveled around through the game preserves, and through the Oldouvi Gorge, where the first skeleton of man was supposed to have been discovered. We also went to Tanzania. We stayed with people quite often instead of hotels, and we got good instruction in the culture of the people, in the method. In Tanzania we stayed in a little hotel, and we walked around in the area. The hotel was on top of this famous mountain, Mt. Kilimanjaro, in Tanzania that Hemingway made famous. It is very well-known, not extremely high, but he had written about it quite a bit. So we were staying in that area, and a couple of youngsters approached us, speaking English, saying "give us some money, because we need to go to school, and we need to have some money to go, and if you do give us some money we will go and introduce you to our grandmother." So we gave them some money, and they took us through the woods and through the places, to their grandmother. It turned out she was not their grandmother at all. They were using her as a way to panhandle for money. When we came near by there she began to scold me, and tell them "what the hell are you doing?", etc. Meanwhile we saw the lifestyle of the grandmother. They had a cow, but it was kept inside of a barn, not outside. The reason for it is that one of the tribes in that area would come and raid it, would take away the cows, believing that all cows belonged to them. So this was the owner's way of stopping it. They still carry on that custom, in spite of that practice being stopped. The cows also were fed banana leaves and banana stalks, as one of their major food supplies. There was no wheat, no hay as such, no wheat or grain crops, but all vegetation in the jungle was fed to the animals. The people made very good use of their land. It was in the form of trees, tall trees, that bore certain kinds of fruits, either mangoes or other things, walnuts, and whatnot and then root crop. Under the tree there would be another small tree that bore fruit, like banana trees and whatnot, then underneath that there would be a third crop of beans, peas and whatnot. And all in this small area. This is their way of working, and we learned about these things. At the time we were there, came the holiday celebration of the liberation of Tanzania from the German, who were the colonists there (we met some Germans there). It seemed the Germans were more liberal toward the native people, toward the African people, than the English were. The English were much more difficult. This holiday is the

7-7 holiday. It's July the 7th, 1927 or so. So we participated in that, starting about 6 or 7 o'clock in the morning, with a form of dancing. They started in with small children doing dances, grade-school children, then high-school children, then older people, all the way up to the old people. It was carried on for about six or eight hours. The food was supplied and prepared there on the grounds. It was a very beautiful event, as far as we were concerned. We spent all this time in the side of the mountains, and it seemed that there were no specific roads in the mountain, no specific villages. The homes were just scattered all over an area of hundreds of miles, but they knew the pass, and knew ways to get around it. And as far as I could see, I don't remember any animals that carried people or pulled any carts. That was important to me. And the women did all the work. They did all the fieldwork, the housework, raising the children, and so on.

Q: What would the men do?

A: That was a good question. We found that they mostly were in coffee shops, drinking coffee, or doing a minimum amount of work. The theory being that they ....

Q: I'm surprised you didn't remain there!

A: Vera wouldn't let me! They were supposed to be the hunters, but at this stage, in their condition, there was no hunting going on. They were also the defenders of the home.

XVI. People who had an effect on Meyer's life; who influenced him

Vera
Mother
Hannah -- my sister
Hortense Allison
Grandchildren of Hortense Allison: David Wellman, Woodrow Wilson Donahue
Ben and Elizabeth Silver
Malvina Reynolds
Irv Hanson
Mr. Graham (?), professor in engineering at Cal
Emmanuel Levin
Max Mipos - cousin
William Foster
Louis Todd -- L.A.

A: I'm going to mention and discuss the people who had an affect on my life in various forms, including emotional, political, culturally, monetarily, etc. And I could frankly start with Vera, who happens to be my wife. We've been together now about 65 years, married about 62 years at this time. Her ability to affect me in some ways came about suddenly, much [of] the way it affected me [was] by [my] wanting to please her, including going to events that she particularly enjoyed. Although I met her in what is called the "movement", as a Young Communist League member in Los Angeles, in about 1926 or so, we found ..... we had much in common even at that early time in our life. We proceeded to develop it. I tried to encourage her to be more active in the movement, as we called it at that time, and she took some interest in it, she took some classes, and I devoted much of my time at that time. She in turn was interested in the opera, the ballet, and music of all kinds, and encouraged me along that line. I was not completely ignorant of that area of culture, but not particularly involved, but over the years she has helped me to develop a real enjoyment and liking for this form of involvement, and now I find myself going by myself to organ concerts and various other events, where Vera does not particularly want to go. Probably the greatest cultural development is in the case of the ballet, which we have now gone to.... I've had season tickets for a number of years, and though we've seen a variety of changes in the form, we still both enjoy it very much. Other ways that Vera has affected me is that she's morally much stricter than I am, and practically does not know how to tell a lie, as far as I can tell, and that's very important. It has an effect on me. At times I feel she's not political about such things, and not able to tell people what she really feels, but in general it has been a plus for me to be with someone like that. I guess from there I will go to discuss my mother, who had an unusual effect on me, as mothers do on their children in general, with nothing unusual, but she did have a lot of.... nine of us, five of us were boys, always growing up to be unhappy to go into the army to serve in wars and whatnot, and that was very concerning to her. But that was not the main feature of her. Here was a woman, illiterate practically, had no ability to read very much, and very occupied with raising a family, and yet found it necessary to go out of her way to talk to us about moral values, about sexual problems, not to have us get diseases of various kinds. And she did it in such a gentle manner, and in such a correct manner that we never found ourselves rejecting

anything that she was saying. She also was very loving, and she knew the importance of love. She always developed a relationship between the child above me and the child below me, so that besides her, who always seemed to be working to maintain us, besides having her, we had either a sister or a brother that we could fall back to as a companion in our life. In my case it was my sister Hannah who was just a couple of years older than me, [and] went out of her way to look after me, and that remained throughout my life. I have other sisters who I see as persons (?) not so much as a close relation, but in the case of Hannah, it's important to note. I have to bring in the latest is my sister, who lived in Texas, just died a few months ago. That was the last of my sisters, I have no more, and I received the obituary about her and the letters from her children, and that she too seemed to have been an extremely loving person. I now have just one brother who's two years younger than I am, who lives in Los Angeles, and I keep in contact with him to the best of my ability. He was the one that I was supposed to look after, through my young days. When Mother was busy I would be the babysitter for him, and developed a kinship, a connection, that remained throughout our lives. Going from my mother, I might as well mention that I had another mother, that is kind of unusual. I thought it up that way, but this is a woman by the name of Hortense Allison, whom I met around 1928. She was a woman who was a member of the Communist party, who had separated with her husband, who was a national committee member of the Communist party, Alfred ..... She was a very strong feminist, and would not accept his ways of approaching women. As a result, she left even though she had at that time four daughters, and moved from Chicago to Los Angeles. Her influence basically is, again, in the attitude toward women, in the attitude toward sex, which she was able to talk to me [about], her feeling that I was worthwhile talking to, and to deal with me, and as a result I spent quite a bit of time in my formative years at that time. I kept up contact with her through 40 or 50 years, ending up in Olympia, where she died a few years ago. Now I am in contact with a couple of men who are her grandchildren, and I keep close contact with them, in the form of David Wellman and Woodrow Wilson Donahue, who lives in Mill Valley, who we see quite often, and we find we have much in common in talking about Hortense, because she raised both of them. Their fathers were away, busy with party activity, and in the case of Donavan (?), his father was killed in a naval battle. Hortense, in many ways, plays almost as important a role to me as did my mother, but their relationship was quite different, and the involvement was quite different, insofar as Hortense was able to point out some of the shortcomings that took place in the movement itself, which was in my attitude a holier-than-thou kind of a deal, and yet she was able to speak up and ..... in her. The others that I will just mention, that I had important contact with, one of them is Ben Silver, who died just a few months ago, living with his son and daughter-in-law in Santa Cruz. He died at the age of 97. He was about [13] years older than I was, and we had struck up a relationship in Los Angeles, and maintained close friendship, with both Ben and Elizabeth. Both of them were Socialists, and Elizabeth, his wife, was active in the Party, but was not permitted to join the Party. I don't quite understand why, but she had even became unofficially the treasurer of the Los Angeles party, and gave parties and raised funds. What reason there was for keeping her out, I do not know, but she was a bit concerned about that. I saw a lot of Ben when I was stationed in San Pedro, California, as a party organizer, and I had to deal with a large number of longshoremen and seamen, who were working in that area. Ben, who was a salesman for a large wholesale concern that sold notions, he would come once a week to San Pedro to visit certain stores, and he made it his business to take me out to lunch. That was one of my major meals of the week, because we lived on very little at that time. Not that I was complaining about going hungry, but it was a hit-and-miss proposition, being alone, and so on. And in this luncheon period, we would

discuss the problems that we dealt with, and found that he was able to give me a lot of very good advice. I particularly was involved with the IWW members, who were working as longshoremen and seamen in that area, and he convinced me that it would be a good idea to work with them closely, because they really were trying to do the same thing that the Communist party is. It helped me a lot, because I tended to be concerned and dogmatic about these things. Here's a group of people that were not going along [with] our position, and yet thought they were trying to do the same thing. We ended up in San Pedro in publishing a joint monthly bulletin that we mimeographed, to work together. I was permitted to do that, I had to have the approval of the district committee in Los Angeles. In general, we worked in such a manner that we were allowed it. Ben also contributed in the form of supplying us with paper, and stencils and whatnot, and took great interest in the contents of our bulletin. Unfortunately, I did not save any of them. I think they would be interesting to see what we dealt with. It dealt with conditions on the job, and the discrimination that was taking place. Going from Ben, I would like to mention Malvina Reynolds, who at that time was a member of the Young Communist League, and whose parents and she lived in Long Beach, California. That became part of my connections too. At that time things were tough, and she was very helpful in encouraging me in my work. I had met her in Los Angeles in 1925, and later when I started going to school at Cal in Berkeley, she was working for a doctorate in English, and again we had very close contact with her. She was very helpful in being a steadying force. She was quite intellectual, I wasn't, and she assured me that it was not a handicap, to lack intellect, that if you have good intentions you can manage it. [She] tried to minimize the role that intellectuals carried in ..... I had some taste of intellectual activity in Los Angeles before I came up to Berkeley, in the form of the John Reed club, with my being presented there as a party person. There were other party members, and some of the Hollywood Five that later were blacklisted were members of it. My closest contact was with Harry Carlyle, who was the son of a Scottish coal miner, who was very active at that time in Hollywood, and was doing quite a bit of writing and educating. So we worked together in the John Reed Club, and I at that time was getting some taste of what cultural activity, literature consisted of, and so on. But it was later on that I really developed a greater feeling for it.

Q: Now didn't you have some additional contact with Malvina Reynolds?

A: All the way through her life, I was in contact with her. She later moved on to Berkeley.

Q: Wasn't she the woman who was engaged in some musical work?

A: She was a composer of American folk songs. Some of them are still very popular, little ..... that she wrote, and a number of other anti-war songs. My experience with her is that she would come in to Los Angeles as the educational director of the branch of the Party in Long Beach, and we would have monthly meetings to discuss a programs that we would take up in the clubs in various parts of Southern California. One day she came in to me and said "Meyer, I can't come to the next meeting, will you please excuse me, will you allow me to miss the next meeting, I have an important engagement." So I laughed about it, and said "What's the important engagement?" She said "I'm going out with Bud Reynolds. This is the night he's free, and I would like to go." And I graciously consented, that was very important. Well, they were married a month later, but Reynolds was a national member of the Party,

who came from the ranks of the AFL of that period, of Bill Greene's organization. A very high [member], and when he became a member of the Communist party he was expelled from the AFL. He was a carpenter by trade, and he was on a tour to explain how terrible the AFL treated him and such, etc., and was pushing for the Trade Union Unity League, set up by Bill Foster at that time. So here she is, getting married to him, which was a minor incident, no big deal, and within three months he was assigned to become the state organizer in Illinois, I believe, not in Chicago but away from Chicago. And within five months, she was marching with him in a May Day parade, but she was already four months pregnant, which was kind of interesting. She had a good reaction to it. She continued carrying on work until she received a teaching assignment at Cal in Berkeley, and that's when I met her again. She had gotten a Ph.D. in English literature, and had done some very beautiful writing. She gave me some of [it] to read. Later on she developed a career of writing music and songs, that went over so very well. Again, a very beautiful person. Meanwhile, of course, Bud developed a heart condition, and soon passed away at a relatively young age. The contact with her was very helpful to me as a stabilizing effect. At that time, I may have mentioned it before, I was in the ROTC, and at the same time organizing to do away with the ROTC, and seemed to be doing fairly well in organizing a large council, a large group of people, including church people and whatnot, to do away with ROTC, and I got called into the district office, the state office in San Francisco, and presented with some documents, and I said "yes, I had a hand in publishing them." What [happened was that] the documents had been discussed at a Communist International in Moscow, and they found that they were pacifist documents, and that this was not what they wanted to educate the young people about. They wanted to be militant as revolutionaries, not pacifists, and it would be my job to disband this organization. On that basis I discontinued the activity, but the idea came to me that this was true, and I was expressing in the literature I was putting out with others, the feelings of myself and others, that we did not want to be out to kill, ... other people, we didn't see any sense in it. So that was that. I had difficulties dealing with that, and Malvina was very helpful in discussing this thing, and she too did not accept the Party position. I didn't accept it, but there was nothing I was going to do about it. The only interesting feature, or pleasant feature, is the fact that many years later, during the '60s, ROTC was discontinued on the Berkeley campus. It has now again been brought back as a voluntary subject. If you want to take it you can, but not compulsory, like it was [before].

Q: When did your association with Malvina end?

A: In the last 10 years, I saw less of her, because I had no occasion to be together. There was never a close friendship, more of a friendship of a political kind. I never went out with her or her family, and so on, ... But she was the one that predicted that her kind of music that is popular, folk music and rock music, would take ahold in this country, and by golly it did. She told me that 20 years ago, when she started writing some, that this is the kind of thing that the American public would go for, and she was very right. She also helped other young musicians get started, getting there music published, setting up an organization that would help them, to push them along, very gently....

Q: Did she make any recommendations with respect to your association with the Party?

A: No, there was no recommendation. She dropped out of the Party much sooner than I did, much earlier in her time. Both she and Bud and I really didn't know any particular reasons, except maybe they did not
see belonging to the Party as an important function, that they had other functions that were more important. I'll go in a little bit on Irv Hanson. That was an unusual connection.

Q: That's the gentleman in Idaho?

A: Very good, you can remember names. That is the brother of the gentleman I discussed. I discussed Ern Hanson, who was the editor of a IWW newspaper, [even though he didn't get past fifth] grade in school. Irv Hanson was [somebody] else. Irv Hanson was the father of Lew Hanson, who in turn married my daughter, and who could not come to my daughter's wedding, which was held in Mill Valley in about 1959. But Ruth, his wife, Lew's mother, came to the wedding, and we got to know her. She invited us to come and visit them on their farm, and that started a long association, and a very pleasant association. We would go up there around June, July, August, during the summer months usually. Usually in time to get some of the good corn that they raised on their place. And we spent a month at a time there. For me it consisted of a lot of fishing, not so much hunting but fishing, and going out into the wilderness in that area. I did that with Vera for some twenty years. The last time I went up there I found it difficult to get around, the creeks and the river beds were too unsafe to do it, and so we haven't gone lately. It also may be that since Lew and Isabel have separated, that may have slowed that down, but we are going again this next summer. We've already made some arrangements for that. Irv's contribution stems back to my early childhood spent in Texas, where I spent a lot of time in the outdoors, hunting and fishing, at times under difficult conditions, because my mother was very much opposed to killing animals, or any kind of killing, and as a result I could not tell her what I was doing. It concerned me, but yet the desire to go with my friends out.... I made practically no contact among the Jewish youngsters of my age in San Antonio, even though I went to a parochial school after school for a couple of hours every day or every other day, I don't recall, and met them there. But mostly they were the sons of businessmen and manufacturers. There was a lot of manufacturing industry, and garments, in San Antonio. And I did enjoy them. They looked down upon me because my father was a junk peddler, and in a minimum financial condition, could not contribute to the synagogue very much, so that I felt it. I never thought it through, but I found that [the] neighborhood kids, who were non-Jews in the main, and who knew of course that I was Jew, I enjoyed being with them. And they developed in me the ability to enjoy outdoor life a great deal. It wasn't just hunting and fishing, but being away in it. So when Irv came into my life, it again reawakened much of that desire, so that we made trips into the wilderness together, up the St. Joe River, and stayed overnight. We went to areas where we were able to see large herds of elk that came to an area that was called a salt lick. They would come there seeking salt, and we would study them from our tent or our cabin, wherever we were, and in the main he took me out and showed me how the cranberries grew there in the area, and how they were picked, and whatnot. There was a lot of wild rice growing there. It's an area around Courde'alene (?), that is very heavy with lakes and rivers of all kinds, and so I spent some twenty years every summer going up there, and I found that he too was a member of the Communist party, up to a very recent time, and he too had developed a following among the people there, basically among the lead miners in the area, Kellogg and Courde'alene and other places that were known world-wide for the lead mines. And I in turn met their friends, and found them to be interesting and enjoyable people. So I thought I would

mention them. At Berkeley, I made friends with one of the professors in the electrical engineering department, a man not very much older than me, maybe twenty years or so, but who saw in me so much interest, so that even though I had a hard time with the dean of the college, Dean Cory, because of my agitation, ... They were unhappy about it, but he was able to understand that. He never urged me to lay low, or something like that. He carried on. I had appreciated him because he seemed to be such a straightforward, honest person, helped me in my studies a great deal. His part was more in the mechanical field than in the electrical field, and that was part of the studies, and he helped me as much as he could. I had a situation where I had to work to make a living, and had to study, and had to be political, so you can visualize me preparing for exams at 2 o'clock in the morning, and that happened quite often. Preparing my own food at times. So it was kind of an interesting period in my life. Very aggressive, very active, and involved. That was Mr. Graham (?). Emmanuel Levin was the Party organizer for California. He was a college graduate, a man of around the age of about 45 or 50 when I met him, and who associated me on the campus in activity for the young people. My job was working with the young people in the Young Communist League. And he knew was I was doing in the peace movement that I set up against ROTC, but he did not object to it. And that was no-no against him, as far as the CI was concerned. How he allowed these things to spring up without .... doing it, ... And so there was an understanding, even though he himself did not ....., he said "this is the way it is," and he did not apologize for it too much, although he was not a very strong person. He started out, after graduating, working as head of a YMCA, and developed organizing skills, and became a dedicated Communist, and worked in California under very difficult circumstances. He in turn hitched up with Hannah Anne Cornblot (?), a woman much younger than he, but very dedicated too, and they in turn, when I would come over to San Francisco, would feed me and have a place for me to stay, and whatnot. And that's quite a good feeling.

XVII. 1932 Olympics -- Tom Mooney Event

Q: Give us some background to the incident that had taken place at the Olympics, back in 1932. We hear all kinds of stories, and it's become, sort of, folklore among those of us who weren't there. It's been embellished and it's been changed in many ways. I was wondering if you could tell us, in your own words, what preceded the demonstration, right up into the story of the demonstration, and the consequences.

A: Okay. This is a good time to tell you about it, because there's a lot of talk, in California especially, about the Olympic games that are going to be held in Los Angeles in 1984, in the same stadium in which this event that I will describe took place. Therefore we have even talked about the possibility of some kind of a present-day demonstration, that in some way relates to what we were thinking about in 1932 when we staged this demonstration in support of Tom Mooney.

The instant I want to tell you about is called the "Tom Mooney Event", which occurred in August, 1932 at the world Olympic games, [which were] being held in Los Angeles, in the Coliseum. Briefly, six persons, four of them male, two of them female, appeared in the Coliseum in track suits, on which their T-shirts said "Free Tom Mooney", and they began running toward the grandstand, shouting "Free Tom Mooney", and managed to run all the way around the track to where their clothes were, at their seats.

In 1931, a man called Tom Mooney was sitting in prison in San Quentin, doing a life sentence for the explosion of a bomb in San Francisco that killed a number of people. We were convinced, all of us in my circle of friends, that he was innocent, and that he should be freed. The background for him was extremely dramatic. A bomb exploded in a ..... parade, on Market Street in San Francisco, in which, I believe, four to six people were killed. Tom Mooney and others were picked up as possible suspects in the case, and the result was that a trial was held in which Tom Mooney and Warren K. Billings were convicted of this explosion. Warren K. Billings received a life sentence, and Tom Mooney was sentenced to be executed. A worldwide demonstration and protest occurred, all over the world, and as a result President Wilson ordered the governor of California to commute the sentence to life imprisonment. But the case did not stop there. The activity went on, because everyone was certain that he was innocent. There was very good evidence to that effect. The reason he was selected, not others of us but he, was that he was in the midst of an organizing drive in San Francisco to organize the streetcar workers and motormen, and this was something that the owners of the company were very anxious to break. This was the consequence for him. The movement took on great proportions, with even a general strike in Seattle, WA, a strike of the Russian longshoremen in Sebastopol. ..... the sense of ..... that he should be freed. And so here he is, in prison in 1931, and I go with others to visit him. And while I'm there, to talk about his case and what can be done to keep it alive, to keep it going, and he said to me, "Would you participate in an event that I have in mind if it would help my case?" I said that I certainly would. He said to me then that someone would contact me on the outside in Los Angeles, and that person he has confidence in, "he will tell you what I have in mind", because the guards are standing by, and as far as we're concerned, the visiting room could very well be taped. So I accepted that. About a month later, a man approached me and told me who he was, and I accepted the fact that he was the one that Tom Mooney designated. And he told me about the idea of

a demonstration at the Olympic games in August, 1932, protesting the imprisonment of Tom Mooney. He outlined the proposal, he worked it out with other people, especially the International Labor Defense. The heads of that were involved, and they had kept it pretty secret, limited to about 10-12 people, because they were afraid it would leak. The idea was to come to the stadium and wait until all the events were over for the day. At the final day of the Olympic games, not to interfere with any event, because that would cause difficulties. At the proper moment, when the march of all nations, the final ceremony, starts, we should jump into the arena, and run towards the stand, where all the dignitaries were sitting, about 400-500 people, and be shouting out "Free Tom Mooney", and include a banner saying "Free Tom Mooney". Also, there would be young people in the stands who would throw up leaflets to tell the people what we're about, because we expected a hundred thousand people were going to remember that name. So we went through this, we even rehearsed how quickly we could take our clothes off, and what we would do. We proceeded to raise funds, although I had no part in it, to buy tickets in the proper places, early as possible, to sit near the edge of the stadium, so it would be easier to jump over and get on the grounds. And that was successful. People contributed to it, but were not told why they were contributing. When they heard about it, they were very pleased to be a part of it. The Hollywood people, the actors and directors, a number of them helped to support this event. Came the day of the event, and my wife Vera was involved in it too. We also wanted to take a movie of this event, so that we could use it later on to spread the word about Tom Mooney. And so [Vera] came there with a camera man, to take film. They were waiting for us to start the action so they could film it. Meanwhile we came there, sat down right near the edge of the stadium, that is, near the tracks, and there were about 200 policemen in uniform sitting in back of us. They were off duty, they had come in there to see the events, but they made us very jittery. As we slowly realized what was going on in the stadium, as soon as the events were over (which were somewhat boring), a large number of policemen appeared in the stadium, stationed around the rim of it, about every 15 feet. In uniform, they were standing there, waiting for the announcer to announce the final ceremony, the march of all nations around the stadium. I was extremely tense, because the sun was dropping very fast over the rim, and I was very anxious that we get in on the movies, because I knew they would be useful. I was the leader of it, I was the one who gave the signal, and when the announcer announced that the march of the nations would start, I gave the signal for all of us to strip our clothes (we came there in civilian clothes), and leave our clothes there. We were in track suits that said "Free Tom Mooney" on both the front and the back. We jumped over the wall, onto the track, expecting the police to practically grab us right away. We didn't know what would happen. But the announcer saw that there was a commotion, and he ordered the band to start playing The Star Spangled Banner, and when they started playing The Star Spangled Banner, all the police stood at attention, and let us alone. So we ran toward the grandstand, expecting to get at least as far as that, and we did. Also with us were two young men in civilian clothes who carried a 20 ft. banner saying "Free Tom Mooney", which they were able to spread out. And then some of the security people grabbed them and took it away from them. But we ran away from the security people. I don't recall that they particularly tried to catch us, because The Star Spangled Banner was still going, so we kept on running. We ran all the way around the track. The women walked in about half way, they didn't have the ability to run the quarter mile, but the four of us young men were able to run all the way [back] to where our clothes were. Of course, when we came there the police were waiting. We made no attempt to resist them, to get away from them, because we were in track suits, it was obvious who we were. In the crowd there were many people who supported us, but there were also many more that did not. They

thought it was a bad event, as far as good will was concerned. But at the time, we were not too concerned about that, because we were anxious to bring across the message to free Tom Mooney. We were arrested, and taken to the substation, the police station, in the Coliseum. We were held there for a few hours, until we were transferred downtown. The police, especially the plainclothesmen, the Red Squad, came in. I had the opportunity to tell them that this is one time, they weren't in on what was going on, that they really didn't know what the hell they were doing, and they claimed it was a holiday, and they were off. That's why they didn't know about it. That's nonsense. The local newspapers carried practically nothing on it. I've researched this since then, and I found a small article on the second section of the Los Angeles Times, saying that a disturbance occurred at the event, but very little else about it. But the foreign press made a heyday out of it, because this was a big political event, that had its effect with the governor there, with the state department being represented, with the President's people being there. And they had used it quite effectively over in Europe. So we were held in jail, until we were bailed out. I don't recall how long we stayed in jail, but we were bailed out within a few days. And then a date for a trial was set.

We were bailed out fairly soon, after we were arrested. Maybe we were in jail overnight, and were bailed out the next day by the International Labor Defense. And then a trial date was set about two or three weeks later. We were held on the following charges: we were held on the charge of disturbing the peace and the charge of disturbing a public meeting. Of course, it was the same event for which they charged us with the two charges, and our attorney was a wonderful man by the name of Leo Gallagher, who had been a fighter in Los Angeles for a number of years for civil rights. At the trial, I also defended myself; I had the right to question, and so on. Ordinarily, for your information, a trial like that for disturbing the peace and disturbing the public takes about a half an hour to an hour. This trial took two weeks to finish. There was an audience every day, the courtroom being just jam-packed with people coming in. We started the trial, and conducted it in the most ..... manner we can ..... And before long, we became a little bit daring, and I told the judge this was one instance where I didn't expect justice from a judge who had been appointed by a governor who keeps Tom Mooney in prison, when everyone knows that he's innocent and he should be released. The judge was very unhappy about my remarks, and immediately I was in contempt of court, and he did not wait long to give me 100 days in jail for that. That was quite a shock to us, but being young, we took it in stride. The trial went on for about three days, and suddenly I had become sick. And so I couldn't come to the trial. The case started without me, the judge couldn't stop the trial, and put out a subpoena to bring me in, to arrest me, and canceled my bail. Meanwhile, I had a doctor, and he came and took my temperature, and I had the flu. I was running a temperature. But that didn't stop the police from coming in, and taking me in to the jail. They took me to the county hospital, where they fed me a lot of aspirin or other medicine to bring my temperature down. And it seemed that in the morning they took my temperature, and that I'd be ókay. They brought me to court, to see if I could stand trial. And the county doctor testified that I could stand trial. My doctor said, "let's take that man's temperature again". He took my temperature, and here I was, sick. So again I went back to the jail, because my bail was canceled, and our attorneys immediately went to a higher court on a habeas [corpus?], got a higher court to set bail, and I was released to go home. A few days later the trial started again, and after the trial was on for about half an hour, my attorney had to call for a recess, because I had to go to the bathroom. That stopped everything; I found I had a lot of power. I came back, the trial went for about 15 minutes, I called for a recess, I had to go to the bathroom. After

about the third time I called it, the judge suggested that he stop the trial, he said "we'll wait until Mr. Baylin is in condition to do it." Meanwhile, the afternoon newspapers came out, with the headlines: "Baylin Runs Again". They got a story out of it. As I said, the courtroom was packed with people. We recruited a lot of people into the international labor ....., and probably into the Communist party and the Young Communists League. It was a real festive occasion for us. We of course called all the high Olympic officials to testify how this has affected them, that Tom Mooney was in prison, how other people look upon our country, that he was an innocent man. Bunridge appeared, he was very indignant that we had called him, but he had to testify just the same, and he made a statement about how we had hurt the good will of our country. It made a lot of headlines in this trial ..... very successful. Of course, it was a fore-gone conclusion that we'd be found guilty, and we were found guilty on both counts. We all received six months in prison for disturbing a public meeting, and nine days in prison for disturbing the peace. After we were in for awhile, bail was set, because the case was appealed. But I had to remain, because I was under a sentence that could not be appealed. Also Ethel Dell, one of our runners, she also told the judge a few things that were on her mind, and he gave her 50 days for contempt of court. And that helped to stimulate a lot of interest in what we were doing. The film that we made, of the runners, turned out to be exceptionally good. Although it lasted only about five minutes, they combined it with other events, demonstrations, and so on, to make it a 20-minute film that was used by the Mooney defense committee to relish support for his case. In the appeal that we made, one of the two sentences was overturned. The court ruled, it was obvious, that you cannot be sentenced on the same charge twice. But they gave us the six months to do, and reversed the 90 days. So we had to do the six months besides. Altogether, I probably did about eight months or so. I got a month off for good behavior on the six-month charge. The experience of being in jail a long time was a good one for me. It tended to quiet me down, and to give me a little more time to think things through. Before I was so busy, in activity, that I had no time or inclination to stop and figure out what I was doing then. But in the prison, which is not the major subject of this event, I found that I could contemplate and try to figure out what I was about, and I think it did a lot of good for me. The negative part of it was that I lost 18 pounds while I was in prison. I was not well most of the time. Others were not well. The food was extremely bad. We were not allowed to work, so we that we sat in the cell, in a large cell, day in and day out, until we were released. The wonderful thing about it, and I do not attribute it to just this run, but much other activity, and half the time it would be all over the world, Tom Mooney was pardoned by Governor Culbert Olson in 1938, after he'd just been elected. Up to that time, no governor was elected for more than one term, as long as he kept Tom Mooney imprisoned. Then of course, even Olson, who was elected on the Democratic party [ticket], began to hedge a little bit, because the pressure was on him. He had to pardon him. And the major big event that helped to bring this about was the organization of the CIO unions at that time. They had become very strong in California, and had helped to elect Olson. That's the story. Tom Mooney died a year after he was released from prison, and unfortunately after he came out of prison, he continued being very sick. He had a very bad condition of ulcers while he was in prison.

Q: I would like to know, had you ever seen or spoken to Tom Mooney after the demonstration? Did he ever discuss with you the effects? It was his brainchild, evidently, from what you tell us. How did he feel about the way it was carried out?

A: Yes, I saw him after that. He went on a speaking tour, and I was in New York at the time that he came, and he was speaking in Madison Square Garden, if I'm not mistaken.

He mostly thanked me for it, he did not go into any details. For one thing, I don't know whether he had seen the film. He didn't seem to go into anything, except [for wanting me] to know that he thought it was a great help. Now there were many other events that happened in Tom Mooney's life, but this was one of the things that did it. I later saw him in the hospital in San Francisco just before he died. It was a close feeling that we had about this matter, but no details. I cannot recall that he even saw the movie.

Q: I seem to remember many years ago, that it seemed to be almost necessary, on the part of any individual, to declare themselves [as a form of] homage to Tom Mooney, if they were going to California. And this would get quite a bit of publicity. Anybody who was running for office, if they happened to be into movie stars. I was wondering if you would comment on that. Is it my imagination that I remember this?

A: Yes you are right. In fact, it seemed that Tom Mooney was spending all of his visiting hours in the visitors' room. It became an accepted thing in the prison. It would be that they wouldn't even take him back and lock him up. After visitors were through visiting with him for half an hour, they would put him in another holding room, [until] the next [visitor] was ready. Mooney had people who were sympathetic to him; not just anybody, I don't think, came to him off the street. But people who were involved in this case, all over the country, all over the world, politicians and so on, came to him. Tom Mooney worked with all shades of political thought; Socialist, Communist, anarchist, all of them, would support him. They all felt the same way. He was able to work with them, in this case in the cell. He has become very famous, and [the case] has just come out in the form of a book, written by the man who was the clerk of the court while he was being tried. Estelle Ward was his name. But it was the result of his being in this trial, he ended up becoming a union organizer for the CIO, and he became one of the outstanding people. And his book has just come out..... The organization built around Tom Mooney's [case] became so big in San Francisco that they bought their own building, and had contacts all over the world. They raised millions of dollars for the case, and finally were successful, in 1968 {?}, to release him.

1948

I would rather be ashes than dust!
I would rather
that my spark should burn out in a brilliant blaze
than it should be stifled by dryrot.
I would rather be a superb meteor,
every atom of me in magnificent glow,
than a sleepy and permanent planet.
The proper function of man is to live, not to exist.
I shall not waste my days in trying to prolong them.
I shall use my time.

JACK LONDON 1876-1916
"My Love"

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