

Sara Diamond and Pearl Wong Moreau Side A

SD: [00:00:17] Can you begin by telling me your name and where you were born?

PM: [00:00:17] Uh, Pearl Wong and Greenwood, B. C.

SD: [00:00:22] And when did your family come to Vancouver or the Vancouver area?

PM: [00:00:23] Mm, well I said about 1931.

SD: [00:00:29] And for what reason did you come down to the city?

PM: [00:00:32] Well my father came down for work.

SD: [00:00:36] And did you work at all during the Depression?

PM: [00:00:37] Nope, just shortly after 1944 I started working.

SD: [00:00:45] And what was your first job like?

PM: [00:00:46] Nothing really, you know didn't go nowhere with a job, you just learned how to be a waitress.

SD: [00:00:48] What kind of conditions were there? What kind of work did you do?

PM: [00:00:53] Ah, everything it was horrible, really deplorable. I think we didn't get but \$5 a week and the one job I worked at ten dollars a month. They were really awful. I sure had to eat a lot of hot cakes. My first job was cooking.

SD: [00:01:11] So, did you work, like, ten hour days?

PM: [00:01:11] Yes, yup, 40- no coffee breaks. Definitely no coffee break--a half hour. But you had a chance to learn. It was hard but you learned something.

SD: [00:01:30] And where did you go from there, in terms of work? What was your next job?

PM: [00:01:30] Well, I stayed mostly, when I went to work I stayed long periods of time, the place I learned was five years at the King Ed Cafe at New Westminster and then I went from there into Vancouver but I stayed just short period because I got married and I was pregnant and then I came back and I worked at the Fraser and I've been there since 1955.

SD: [00:01:50] When you had been trained, did your conditions and wages get better?

PM: [00:01:55] Ah, conditions a little, like, only give you authority but it didn't give you any more money with it. Actually they got extra work out of ya, if they had only a free title, so...

SD: [00:02:05] And when did you get involved in the union?

PM: [00:02:06] When they negotiated a contract for two cents, and I said it was the last contract we'd ever get for two cents and it was, then it went up to a nickel.

SD: [00:02:17] So are you working in a union place?

PM: [00:02:18] Yes, 100 percent union and you had to join the union. It was a closed shop.

SD: [00:02:24] Where was that?

PM: [00:02:24] At the Fraser Cafe.

SD: [00:02:27] When did they get organized?

PM: [00:02:27] Ah, I think several years before the girl-a Kitty-she worked at the PV after which unfortunately she lost her job for organizing it, they found ways to get rid of her, but that happened I think to everybody in the early, you know, in the early times of restaurants. They just didn't keep you around.

SD: [00:02:45] And so she had organized that place?

PM: [00:02:46] Yes.

SD: [00:02:48] And the union stayed in?

PM: [00:02:48] Oh yes, it still is. As of today it's the only really complete organized house on Columbia street, New Westminster, the rest still have their charters up but I don't think they pay dues or anything, it's really a sticky situation.

SD: [00:03:08] And, for what reasons did you get involved in the union?

PM: [00:03:08] Well for me it was that we had to--I had to join, and if I had to join I might just well get something out of it because I wasn't going to settle for two cents the next year and we had a lot of things that had to be worked out such as regard to women, you know, and their fringe benefits and coffee breaks and you know ah, sickness, getting a little relaxed time. You know every month a girl had a problem. more or less, and there was a lot of conditions with sleeping with the boss, mostly you know.

PM: [00:03:34] Oh yeah, was there sort of sexual pressure?

PM: [00:03:36] Yeah, there really was, not so much in my place, but then I wasn't just representing my place I was representing, you know, trying to represent a lot of the girls who, because I was in it came to me with their problems and we felt that if this was a condition, we really didn't need it, but if the girl wanted to go to the bed that was her privilege. But she didn't want to be bugged about eight hours a day over it, you know, and they really had to strike for that pitch.

SD: [00:04:01] Did they have to strike against that?

PM: [00:04:01] No, they never really struck against it, and I think in time it worked out as things got better the girls got wiser and stronger and they dodged the issue a lot more intelligently and the management finally woke up and said, well you know we're not going to be able to use this for our leverage.

SD: [00:04:25] How did people deal with it as an issue because I know this is something the BC Fed is trying to deal with now? Sexual harassment?

PM: [00:04:25] Ah, well my point is that if a girl makes it very plain and very clear...it's up to the individual and I mean a boss isn't going to harass somebody unless she wants to be harassed. First

of all, women think that, you know, they like to be fed their ego trips too and, but if you say well look at this I'm here for a job if you want me and that's it, that's all you're going to get, they'll leave you alone. There's no, no problem. You may get one boss that's a little kooky but really no problem, you can handle it. And if you can't well you just tell your fellow workers and they will help you out too, you know. It all depends on how serious and how strong you are. I mean to say one thing and do another, it's another thing, but if you really mean it there's no problem in solving that problem.

SD: [00:05:09] So the union was able to (help??) people out?

PM: [00:05:10] Yeah yeah they were. But that's if they knew about the issue eh? And if you had one woman in there, well, they were the feet to the union and I mean, if the union didn't know what to do for anybody if they didn't tell me. The only thing I regret they ever had was the coffee break because they take advantage of it even to this day. It has got to the point where people used to appreciate the coffee break as a rest but now it's a way of life. They can't work two hours without a break. That's the only thing I feel sorry for that helped negotiate was a coffee break because of people nowadays they just don't appreciate-- they join a union nowadays because they have to join, it's a closed house. They don't care what--they don't go out to put themselves out to find out what they can do, they expect you to do everything for them.

SD: [00:05:52] What other issues concerning women came up in the union?

PM: [00:05:52] Well, we had to, we finally got our holidays, you know, like statutory holidays, which was a good thing, and then we've got to recognize whenever we had to work on a stat holiday through the governments and the two unions fighting, you know, and we got paid extra, and I feel like it is a very big issue right now because you know two and a half times your wages is quite a bit of money but then if you have to work like in our industry, all the time, you certainly deserve it. But it means that practically if any any hotel or anybody says that they make money on that day they don't. That's why most of them close up and rather pay a straight 8 hours pay because they're losing so much but it is a good thing for the staff to have and they should have it, you know, they've worked for it all year, like at Christmas time in our place, at Christmas time there's no other cafe really open and we have to help the senior citizens so much, you know, but they deserve every bit they get, really.

SD: [00:06:51] Was there mostly women who worked in the restaurant?

PM: [00:06:52] Yes, at that time, now, and in time, there was man, but maybe just one man a waiter or always male cooks, where now in the restaurant that I manage now is all women and my--my chef is only 27 years old.

SD: [00:07:09] And it's a woman?

PM: [00:07:09] And a woman and the second one in command is a woman too.

PM: [00:07:15] Did the issue of equal pay for equal work come up?

PM: [00:07:16] No, but my boss does discriminate. Myself, even against myself, like I'm a management as of five years ago. Now if I went in and said to him something that should be done. He listens to me and tolerates, it's like, oh, she's gone away again, you know, we bury her for awhile. But, if a man went in and said to him now this is the way it should be run, he do it without any hesitation. He feels that a woman who goes out to work is working for second paycheck and it really, she doesn't need that, she isn't qualified that much as a man is, a man should get more.

SD: [00:07:50] Did you run into that a lot in the industry and organizing?

PM: [00:07:52] No, ah, for me, I've only been up because I've been in this one place 24 years, you know, it will be 25 years next year. So when I was just working as a waitress and I was the shop steward for about 15 years I had no problem because I got to rest but as a management, yes I've run into this problem and I still am.

SD: [00:08:18] Did the union try and do anything about the question of equal pay in terms of dealing with that kind of discrimination?

PM: [00:08:18] Well of course they can't do nothing for me unless we form a union for managements, you know, because there's just nothing that they can do you. You're more or less guaranteed to work it out yourself.

SD: [00:08:28] But when you--

PM: [00:08:29] Oh definitely. Oh yes. I remember one time I worked, you know, we had a oh it was a centennial jubilee thing here, my boss isn't here now but-who did it to me but, I worked eight hours at whatever the time and a half or whatever it was that time was and then I had to go back and work another eight hours. Now that should have been what I call quite double time when he said he couldn't pay me double time because the union was going to get mad at him and it had turned out that I had worked 16 hours. So that was one of the incidents that I have run into but I did eventually get my money.

SD: [00:09:05] What kind of grievances would come up?

PM: [00:09:05] Well, strangely enough, I only had one grievance against management and the reason I only had one was that it has to be put in writing. And nobody, they'll grieve but they won't sign a statement, so therefore you have very little to act on. But I only had one, and it was, it was over the girls and their hours, and we settled. I had two, actually, but we settled that one and the girl won but the next time I got fired. The boss and I got into such a fight and the owner, my boss as of now, he says well stay away from him, meaning my boss, and it ended up I tried strangling him. And of course he's no longer there, the girls were going to walk out. We give him a week and he, he left and that's when I went back. I was running for head office against Ed Carlson at the time and I lost the election, had no job, and then they came and they told me to come back to work and I went back with full seniority.

SD: [00:10:06] And this, this fight was over a union issue?

PM: [00:10:06] Over a union issue, yes.

SD: [00:10:06] What was it?

PM: [00:10:06] Well at that time the boss used to drink quite a bit and he used to get on the girls, he used to pick on me, he'd come in and be drinking, you know and he really didn't know what he was talking about. That's how him and I got in a fight. If he stayed away from me and left me alone..but he kept--I guess after so long a period of time I just blew, and I did, I really went...<break>...get the job done for him, not his men.

SD: [00:10:33] How did the closed shop help to resolve..?

PM: [00:10:37] Well, with a closed shop it resolved all problems of joining a union, and you must

join a union, you have 30 days to do it and then you don't have no, not the friction, I mean with everybody, some would that never want to join a union, especially Europeans that came to this country. They'd had unions over there years before we ever did here and some of them lost their jobs through fighting for it so they really didn't want to have nothing to do with it ever again and of course they realized that, well, if they wanted the job there they must rejoin a union, but they never really became too active, not in the women's part. They'd sit back and watch a lot but not say too much.

SD: [00:11:12] When you became active in the union, how many restaurants or cafes were organized?

PM: [00:11:18] In Westminister? I would say no more than six and that would be totally Columbia Street because it was just the Pacific and the King Ed and they R&R, Royal city and the Fraser Cafe and of that six today I think just our place. Maybe part of the cafe, uh, the Pacific, I'm not I'm not sure anymore about even, the rest more or less worked themselves out or changed companies, gone family units...

SD: [00:11:49] Yeah, what's happened? Why have the certifications--

PM: [00:11:49] Dropped? Well, because of the contracts that are so large now, they have to pay so much, a girl at my place--just a waitress gets \$5 an hour and with her hidden cost it would be about \$5.40. That's just the waitress, and the dishwasher gets more, and in fact it's so so bad, I can't hire a busboy anymore because the busboy gets more than the waitress does. That's how bad--you know, when you look--\$5 doesn't sound like much but it is in our industry when it's coming off at Columbia Street that Westminister is dead right now and all the business has gone up to town, up 6th street and stuff like that, and you're just getting working people that's coming in and that is, until they either get rapid transit or something to change that area, which they're planning to do, you know, it takes, and they're very slow-- like there supposed to build that Douglas college and stuff like that that but you may you may get a bit of business, you know, from the construction people but it's slow. You're relying on what comes through your door and your trade and your business and your, what you've done to build up your business, that's what you're relying on.

SD: [00:12:50] So it's hard then to make a ?

PM: [00:12:51] That's right. It's, it's a competitive business to keep you very well and, uh, we're lucky because we're the oldest one there we've been there about 68 years and we're going on a name, eh, and we have good food and that and we're like a fam- we're the last of the family restaurant if you know what I mean. Everybody comes there is a customer for years and years and years and they don't leave us until they die and you know their pain is our pain sort of thing, you know, and it's a good reputation to have.

SD: [00:13:20] Was that, is that a part of the industry? What kind of worker do you need to be to really be a good waitress?

PM: [00:13:21] Somebody that cares and more than for the paycheck. I mean a paycheck, yeah, sure that's nice but if you're going to get somebody watch, like I said for the coffee break you have a half hour and then two hours later, may I go for my coffee break? That's not a person who cares. Because eventually you're going to get that coffee break. You don't get today. You'll get it tomorrow but you're going to make sure you get double, you know. And management feels better but when you have somebody writing you all the time says well can I go can I go and you know that they're not going to make it to the next plateau until they have that 10 minutes which they stretch to 20. That's not a person that really cares. They really, really don't.

SD: [00:13:59] And is a question of rapport with the customers?

PM: [00:13:59] Yes, you must have it. They must be-- a restaurant and a good restaurant girl, she must make that person feel like he's in her own home, in her own living room, that is the name of it. If you can put yourself across and project yourself that your entertaining somebody in your own home, you're going to make a top waitress because you're going to care, I mean you care about how your guests feel in your house. So therefore you'll care when he comes in your place of business.

SD: [00:14:27] Did the union provide any training for waitresses?

PM: [00:14:27] Ah, no, at the at the time they didn't but later on in years, yes they had seminars for them to go to and I believe there's training schools they set up-- I know there is for camp workers and stuff like that but I don't know if it ever went as far as for waitresses, I imagine, you could go to a waitress school in Vancouver Vocational, I think, in the uhm, I don't know about that one in Vancouver, you know, the BCIT is it? I think maybe they even have a training program. I often thought of opening up one, you know, just to teach them, like to come to work with their shoelaces--I don't think they--they'll coming in and their shoes may be white but they never put new fresh shoelaces in and I have to go and and say, you know, buy six pairs of shoes laces or five pair and keep them out, I say this is what I did when I wore whites and of course for me, secretly I always wanted to be a nurse see, so naturally if you wore white uniform you came with that thought, well I want to be as clean and as neat as possible because it paid off in a pocketbook, tips were good.

PM: [00:15:28] How did the union deal with the question of tipping, was that, uh, when you were trying to figure out wage levels did you take tips into--

PM: [00:15:32] Oh, management and I, of course we never discuss the tip, it was never recognized and why should it be? Not in negotiations, I mean management was always there saying, well, they get this or they get this gratuity. That girl worked for that gratuity and it had nothing to do with us. Tips nowadays, people have recognized the tip and I find it uh a thing that's maybe not a very healthy thing because where I work they're all married women or either broken up with her home and they're, it's not a second paycheck, that actually, it's a necessity. For instance I have one girl right now. She lived three years with this man taking his name and everything but never married. Now he doesn't want her, she established no credit in her own name because she was using his name, she has no legal rights and she's just scratching for rent. Well naturally those tips, and there seems to be a lot of, everybody's out for the, you know, which customers gonna tip, eh, so they want that tip. It makes them miserable, really do, in fact I thought sometimes of destroying the tip and saying--putting up those signs of "no tipping please" ah but my dining room girls make sometimes fifty dollars a night in tips, so if they make \$5 a day, an hour, you know that they're taking home a pretty good paycheck.

SD: [00:16:55] Did you find generally that people who worked in the industry, worked in the restaurants got along with each other?

PM: [00:17:01] Yes. Now I wouldn't say maybe all places but in my place, yes we were like a family, we're committed to one another and if one was sick we all would be and we try to solve it, but not every restaurant is like that I'm afraid.

SD: [00:17:12] How did that kind of atmosphere get constructed..that kind of support?

PM: [00:17:12] I think with a lot of trust and respect. Like when the boss fired me for instance and it was my girls that gave the owner- one--that they were all going to walk out at noon on a said

Friday unless they brought me back, and he said, well give me one week and I'll have it settled, well, the manager was no longer there. Now they didn't bring me in as manager there they brought in another man and he lasted one year and then they asked me after that to take over and be management but I went back to my status as before as a head waitress, you know, and the masses if they decide to move, which is very seldom, they can get something done.

SD: [00:17:56] Were you working once you were married?

PM: [00:17:59] Oh yes, all through. I had six children, the last one was just a month old when I went back to work and I worked up until she was 7 months, I couldn't get behind the counter any more, all the way through, really.

SD: [00:18:12] What did you do for childcare? Because that's a real problem.

PM: [00:18:12] Well, it was, but I was fortunate enough to have my mother and she looked after her, so I was quite safe in being able to go out to work but there, again, it was a necessity I had to work too, it wasn't that I was doing it for pleasure or wanted to. I must, have to, work.

SD: [00:18:27] So how did you handle doing your housework and shifts, in terms of your kids?

PM: [00:18:32] That was easy. My mother and I lived together, in the neighborhood of 40 years, and two women can't run one home. I worked, she ran the home and on my days off, well, I would do some of the housework and stuff like that. If I wasn't at a union meeting.

SD: [00:18:50] And, do you remember, uhm, the other women you worked with, whether that was a problem that came up for them?

PM: [00:18:50] Oh yes, still is with some. And they either hire a babysitter, most of them, or sometimes if their still living with her husband the husband pitched in. Not so much now, they seem to be older women are coming in you know with older children so that they're in the 13s or 14s. Uhm, but before the husbands used to stay home and help. They'd work one shift at opposite to the husband and then he could babysit too.

SD: [00:19:22] Did the union ever talk about childcare as an issue?

PM: [00:19:23] Not really, no, not in our union, the other unions, you know, down at the level of, say, the Labor Council level, stuff like that, but not too much on us because it was a pretty big issue and it would only fall on deaf ears, anyway, you know.

SD: [00:19:38] Were you present for any of the Labour Council [position papers?]??

PM: [00:19:38] Oh yes, I was on the Vancouver Labor Council, I don't know how many years, they'd have to check my record, in the Westminister Labour Council for a couple years too.

SD: [00:19:48] What kind of debates went on in the Labour Council around--

PM: [00:19:49] Oh everything.

SD: [00:19:51] --women's issues? Like childcare, maternity leave, equal pay, that kind of thing?

PM: [00:19:53] Not-not so much that, I can truly say that in the Labor Council I sat and watched the communists take over, you know, in the Vancouver Labor Council.

SD: [00:20:05] Do you want to describe that process?

PM: [00:20:05] Well, I remember Sid Thompson spoke very, very dramatic and, uh, Bill Black wouldn't, well of course he wasn't a communist but Bill Stewart was and he never tried to hide it in his, you know, uh, but he was a well formed person and he, they'd never take an issue unless their best that's speaking on it, they don't need a microphone... and very dramatic, you know, and it's just that they seemed to win all the points and the rest of us just sat there like dummies, you know, really--we'd get a few points up but then the people that were of knowledge transferred to a higher position so they were no longer connected with the Labor Council. And therefore the people that came in, they didn't have no knowledge so they were like little lambs being led to slaughter you know, they just followed, then they'd say, well that must be agreeable until somebody said well look at his affiliation is to the left. Oh! But it was too late then because they had formed an opinion and he was the strongest speaker and this went on time after time after time.

SD: [00:21:06] Was that through the 1950s?

PM: [00:21:06] Ah, well, yes, sure because that's when I became active in '50--starting in 54 and all the way up into the 60s. We used to go there and sit there and just--it used to make me so mad, like--they threw me in to run one time, they plumbers did against the communists. Now they-- I went in--we, I think even met twice a month and I was at that time very interested so I had to come all the way from Westminster to Vancouver, which our local, uh, sometimes the [BA?] took us over otherwise I had to take a bus, eh? Well, they didn't even know my name, they knew I was the redhead that sat in that seat but they couldn't tell you my name. But anyway I lost it, it was for being a hospitality or hostess or something like that to work out of the Fed you know but they didn't, they wanted somebody else in there and so anyway they threw me in but the man won. I think, well, like I said the one who would have won anything would have been Josephine Hallock, out of nothing else because she was there and of course she was much older than I was and they respected her, you know? They knew her too.

SD: [00:22:08] Was it a problem for women to gain the respect or get the respect they deserved from male trade unionists?

PM: [00:22:09] Yes, yes it was.

SD: [00:22:16] How did.

PM: [00:22:16] Well maybe for me it was a little easier maybe it'd even be harder nowadays because nowadays you must be coming in with knowledge. Not like before. And they respected me because they were so few of us. I think one thing was, only three of us, women, sitting there and one, again was Josephine, the other lady was from, uh, the fruit growers up in the Okanagan, she was there, or a garment worker lady, because in garment workers it was always women, and there was very very few women and I came in with the hotel end.

SD: [00:22:47] Did the women who were on Labour Council or at Fed conventions get each other support?

PM: [00:22:52] Not really. They probably would, they would try to but it didn't go anywhere. If a man said well, look at it, they'd say how high, you know because there were, really, the women weren't interested and they really, I don't think they are today. They--like I said they only care for what you could do for them not what they could do for the union. They paid to join the union and that's as far as it went. The only time they ever come is for maybe negotiating of a contract and

wanting more money. In my own union right now,uh, where we used to meet once a month-- and there now meeting once every three months and we can't even get a quorum to hold a meeting so that goes to show you! And we have merged with, like, we were just local 8 3 5, it's now all of Vancouver, Westminister. And you mean to tell me out of all of that that they couldn't get more than 26 people? And with all your, that's not counting your all your executive board that has to attend! That's how bad it is.

SD: [00:23:51] Uhm, when you worked in the restaurant industry as a waitress, were there different racial groups or ethnic groups in the --

[00:23:58] Yes.

[00:23:59] How did that work out in terms of union involvement and also, was there ever tension around-

[00:24:04] No, none whatsoever. I mean you said the Chinese because the Chinese were always in the in the foreground of being cooks and that and then the Ukrainians came in, a lot of Ukrainian boss, so he brought his, his nationality with him and then the Chinese hung on just as well as anybody else. Now we, I can truly say I have worked in restaurants, yes, where that was, only with Greeks you know, Greeks stick together too. But, uh, no that issue is only brought up if somebody chooses to bring it up, maybe in, uh, longshoring maybe, or in any, in heavy industry where somebody didn't like or somebody had to pay the supervisor or the head foreman for a job, now, that you would run into that situation.

SD: [00:24:56] Contract labour?

PM: [00:24:56] Yeah. Though I must say right now if we were going to have a discussion on ethnic groups and the ones that are resented, yes there is, the East Indian, you know they call them Punjabs, I think. I have three dishwashers but people resent them terribly and the reason is that they can pull together and save the money like we used to and they get ahead.

SD: [00:25:17] Differences in values?

PM: [00:25:18] That's right. Exact--that's right.

SD: [00:25:23] Ok. The women that worked in the industry, were they mostly single or married or younger or older? Was there any kind of--

PM: [00:25:29] As years ago? They were either, some were married but prom- they were they were mostly single girls, older women, widowed or never have been married--a lot never used to get married-- but they, no, they were mostly married women, but even today, uh, it could be a prejudice, I don't know, but I don't hire young girls for the simple reason is, I'm tired of training them and then losing them. Or, too, if I have them and then I- they draw flies like the draw all the young boys and you got them sitting there for three hours for a cup of coffee so I thought even if I take one girl I really got a mother her to make sure that I don't get that element and especially if she's good looking. I used to help a lot of girls going to college, they just want the summer thing, you know, and then it got to the business where I used to have three girls for summer relief and now I'm down to one. That's how the business has shifted. You know that tells you something right there.

SD: [00:26:33] Uhm, did you tend to live in the same community where you were working?

PM: [00:26:33] Yes. Right in Westministers, just til last year when I bought this out here but then we're just on the neighbor--on the border of it.

SD: [00:26:52] Uhm when you became involved in the union, how did that effect your work and working conditions and they way your boss dealt with you?

PM: [00:26:53] Well, in a way he was glad I did it because see, he figured he owned me so much that I wouldn't be no hassle to him, you know. But it didn't work out that way but, like I said, I never had any problems because when the girls decided she's going to have a problem she came to me first. I either settled it --with him or if it had-- I only think once I had to bring the union down.

SD: [00:27:13] What was that over?

PM: [00:27:13] Oh, it was so long ago! It was about 15 years ago, I couldn't remember, but it was over a girl in a some situation I think, probably money because that's about the worst thing he ever did, he was always cheating on his money. You know, uhm, there again I didn't have the hassle because like I said when a girl had a complaint they must sign it, you don't act on it until its signed and nobody put it in writing because they threw you, you know the repercussion after it was settled no matter who won, she figured the boss would be after her anyway and at that time he quite possibly would have been.

SD: [00:27:46] Uhm, how did your union involvement affect the way other workers related to you? Were they really excited?

PM: [00:27:52] Oh yes, very happy for me and give me all the assistance I needed and so did the bartenders, you know.

SD: [00:27:58] What kind of things did they do to--

PM: [00:27:59] Well, they give you a lot of encouragement, especially if you got down but you see again I ran a very closed house and if there was any problem I got it, right to it fast, because I worked there eh? I didn't have to send out for somebody I was there when it was happening and just so you don't let it get that big in the first place. But because women weren't involved I got a lot of longshoremen, older man, would give me the encouragement of other locals, you know, because they think that's pretty wonderful that somebody cared now, you know. And they took it into education because I was never, I only went to grade four, so it was twice as hard for somebody to have to work you know, you had to be very sure what you were reading so there used to be that somebody would help me out or I'd have a friend you know that was interested and worked up in it. But my own union used me because I was the only woman they said well we'll send her as a delegate because she can't do no harm or if they tell us to vote, uh, if I tell it, like, say, where they say well you're going to vote this way. Well, that's where they were wrong. That's what--how I got the name the rebel because I never voted for a slate. I voted for the one I thought who's going to the part. You know, some good for somebody and I when they found out they weren't too happy but they got used to it.

SD: [00:29:10] What kind of issues was it that you would be rebellious about?

PM: [00:29:10] Well, yeah if I didn't particularly like the person, and I still believe this today too and if I didn't truthfully think the man could do the job he just didn't get my vote. Why should I vote because somebody else said well he's the one we want in, that didn't make any sense to me when I knew that he couldn't do it, the job, in the first place. It's like when I when I ran and they said, well of course not everybody knew my education background and they said well you're not qualified.

Sara Diamond and Pearl Wong Moreau Side B

PM: [00:00:13] And they said, well you're not qualified. I said I'm as qualified as the person that's in that job now because he didn't know nothing now, uh, then and he still doesn't. But they seem to forget there's people who do know. Those are the people you hire to back you up, you know, I'd get myself a good secretary and a good lawyer that's all I needed. If I wanted to try something that a contract that we wrote up they'd have to be. But then you just don't get any lawyer you get a labour lawyer, you know, and you get a good legal secretary that knows how to interpret for you and if you can talk to people that's the main thing it's not pulling yourself up pushing yourself you've got to sit down and if you see a man, another man, or an employer or whoever, you get down the nitty gritty with him and he'll respect you if you, if you've got something to say and he, let him listen and then he'll listen to you too. And when you go in there, you get a whole bunch and say well-- and they get the media behind 'em now which is a bad mistake because the media only says what they want to say, it's never half the truth anyway and then they get all this going before to sell papers and the animosity is already laid before you even get to the bargaining table. I did an awful lot of bargaining, I like that, that's the best part of the union, of any part of my union work was bargaining, for wages.

SD: [00:01:22] Oh yeah?

PM: [00:01:23] And working conditions. I found that the most stimulating because it was challenging. There you're dealing right with the right person, the employer, and naturally he's not going to give up everything easily -- it's going to cost him every time he gives you something but if you recognize them and you sit down with a little bit of respect for one another you can come up-- one one man that used to negotiate with us all time, a hotel man, he ended up with shingles every time he went into negotiations but then it came out that he was full of shingles.

SD: [00:01:51] The employer?

PM: [00:01:52] The employer. It was just as hard on him as it was on us. In fact, one time I went in there negotiating, I was pregnant when I came out-- I had the baby already, we were still negotiating! But it was a good--you know, the times have changed, there's not this trust, you know, it's big corporation nowadays, everybody for well, we're going, they've decided we're going in so much percentage and that's it, the owners don't have a feeling for their employees because they've either employed too many and they haven't got the time or they just don't give a damn but there fathers before, they knew everybody by their first name and they worked with them and they cared, you know, but that, that's the ways it's been in the past.

SD: [00:02:31] When you negotiated would you always go in as part of a team?

PM: [00:02:31] Oh yes oh yes. Hotel men on one side and union men on the other.

SD: [00:02:35] And what kind of role would you play in the negotiation?

PM: [00:02:35] Ah, well, you don't say too much, in fact, unless they ask you a direct question, which they very seldom did because of your president or the financial secretary was the one who was, but, if they had to be guided, which sometimes they did, they'd come ask you something but you sit there unless somebody asks you a direct question and unless they let you answer it too. They don't always let you answer but you were there to push, you were there to see how it was done. If

you only, if you had to go back with a nickel you knew why you went back with a nickel. It wasn't something they should say, here here's the contract now sign it, we want your vote for it. You were there to see well, this is, so you can go back and say to the people we couldn't get no more than a nickel we're lucky to get it and tell them why but if you don't participate or have somebody on your side you don't believe them anyway. You think, well, we've been sold down the river.

PM: [00:03:26] Were there any kinds of job actions that took place?

PM: [00:03:26] Oh, lots of threats. The King Neptune was a very hard, organized, place to organize, they went, they fought to, ah, hammer and tong not to join a union. Uhm, and that's about the biggest in Westminister I think, the rest. If you got in the hotel industry, it's a little different, you see, because you're automatically, your liquor end is union. From the day it opens, the day you decide to, you don't open without that being a union shop, eh. So, therefore they can get to you through that end of it and there wasn't too much hassle because they want their bar open so they'd sign a catering contract without too much difficulty. Well but with the King Neptune, what they did, I worked there when they they brought in a union man, and that union man, unfortunately taught women how to be bartenders. When they knew everything he did he got fired and they kept the girls and paid 'em maybe a nickel more if they got that and never had a union there until finally got to the point where they weren't giving them very good food or, you know, benefits and they decided well, now the union is going to help us because sure they were going to take \$6 a month off us for union dues but they had no coverage at all in that place and they could work himself to death. Nobody really cared, which they still do, but now they got a chance to have somebody work for them because they, they--that's one thing about there- those people made a lot of money and the staff made it for them.

SD: [00:04:55] So you would be in on negotiations. What other kinds of, what kind of elected or paid positions did you have in the union?

PM: [00:04:55] Me? I didn't have nothing. I only got, uhm, I was on the executive court and you get your union dues back at the end of the year or I was sent on conventions, which I had to run for and be voted for and I would get that, I went to two international conventions. And one I went, I paid my own way down because I was grievancing for another union sister of mine, a Mrs Penny Pounty she was the ex-business agent there which was fired and it was an awful mess. But we went down and took on our international.

SD: [00:05:31] Can you talk about that a bit? There's been a history of people going down from Canada and taking on the internationals.

PM: [00:05:33] Yeah, right. Well, with her, I knew for a fact that she had been sick one time eh and she sent, it all started with this ah registered letter to the union saying that she could not be there because as a business agent she must be there to attend these meetings and that and they said that they never got the registered letter. Well, that letter had to be signed for and it was gotten, it was buried and of course eventually she lost her job. And she was the only one that ever fought for the women because she was a woman business agent and they just didn't want her around and then it came to elections where she backed somebody else and not the financial secretary and the president, she was backing another slate and of course they brought into it-- her personal life was questionable and that I resented very much because what she did or who she did or, it wasn't really her it was her husband. It was none of the business, as, you know nobody went into it with their wives, did they, but they wanted her out and they got her out but it was the way they did it and we had, when I...then I decided to run against Ed Carlson at the time and it all started, we used to have free picnics for the children and we used to have Christmas with the kids to, eh, which I was on a standing social committee. Well, the decided to do away with all of that because it got too expensive for it. They

said that one up the coast couldn't come down to our picnic but they could have had one up there if they wanted to, you know sort of thing and they took everything away except a golf tournament. Now who, there is only a very limited people if you go to a golf tournament and it would be the top offices and the selected few and I got really mad so I said fine, I would hold a dance. And I would raise money for the picnic for the children. We put on our own, nothing to do with the union so I did and I called it the Waitresses, Bartenders Dance. I didn't say my local, didn't say anything about a union but so then the union came back and said that I must turn my money,, proceeds over to the union. Within 30 days because that's what the bylaws said and I said no. So then they decided they were going to take away my rights and they wanted me to fight through the International. Well, I didn't. I went through the Supreme Court of B.C. because I knew that if I went to the International I could be buried there too and like the judge said I had two judges. I won one Supreme Court to let me run, action, and if they didn't do the same thing to me within two days I was back in it, in it again and I won that one too. But in the meantime it cost me two hundred, two thousand dollars for a principle. But I did make money on the dance and we had the best time and you know I held two dances and of course it takes a lot of money to have a picnic, to rent a park and have all this stuff but mostly everybody donated and that's one time I found out that people really rallied around you and even the bartenders. Everybody donated prizes. The breweries donated prizes, free prizes, you know for the door prizes. Everybody did, but just because I never turned my money over and they didn't want the job anyway so I didn't see why should I turn my money over to them? So we set up and then I was, I wasn't just the one, there was three signing officers for that money at the bank. But in the end the money went to Mrs. Pounty's cause because she had to pay her lawyers because she was fighting 835 too, they were suing each other. It was an awful case really, it ended up in court and we, uh, they had bought a new building up here? They live in Vancouver there now, in Hastings, you know, way up in Hastings there they got that union office and we found out that, we traced that that union, that building was never even registered in the union's name, the members didn't even have nothing to do, it was registered in the offices of Monahan's name but nobody seemed to care, nobody cared about it. We went and they said we were just rebels trying to disturb everything, poor loser, but nobody cared. We spent an awful lot of time, their houses were broken into, they were harassed so I've had I've had a good side of a union and I've had, I've seen the bad side of what they can do, they can extort everything to their liking. People don't even know what's going on because they don't care, they just don't care.

SD: [00:09:27] So, this sort of fight went on in isolation and extends from the ranks?

PM: [00:09:29] Yeah, but I got a lot a, I got a lot of paper coverage, I've got some clippings upstairs from the Plumbing paper, you know, they, they watch to see and, there was a lot of people watching it too you know a lot of people and then you get the people who, well who says it was an honest vote, you know? You, sure you have your scrutineers there but how many people were eligible, how many people got a ballot, you know, that were in? And you were there but it's like everything else, it can't be fixed. But I was satisfied and I did the best I could with what I had and I felt, at least somebody tried. I don't know if I'd do it again. I guess I would. I felt good. I felt good. I felt good in myself.

SD: [00:10:11] So Penny Pounty and yourself were active and were there other women who were active in the union?

PM: [00:10:15] Not in our local. Penny Pounty now she still works with the Teamsters. She's under Mrs. Gornick. She's, I, actually I think she's the only women business agent for the teamsters and I think her heart, her jobs pretty hard too. Not an easy thing. I think if anybody could say there was discrimination in the woman's file it I would be her.

SD: [00:10:41] Uhm, we talked a little bit before about this sort of attitude that you ran into that

that because you are women or a woman that you would vote with the male leadership.

PM: [00:10:49] That's right.

SD: [00:10:49] What other kind of things would come up?

PM: [00:10:53] Well not too much, but they, they just expected it. It was taken for granted, you were never asked, you know, or say, well, they'd hand you a piece of paper and say well, you know, this is our slate. But you may not like what was on that slate, you know, and that's the way I felt. I felt like if the guy could do the job, that's the man I wanted.

SD: [00:11:12] And would this be for labour council or Fed?

PM: [00:11:13] For anything, yeah, for the Fed or Labor Councils. Now I'm not saying that like, even the communists, there was some people that could do the job. But, like, once they get the foot in the door you don't get rid of them and they train their people, they don't just send somebody there they spend years of training and studying. But like I said, they had the best speakers but nobody seemed to care. But I know that with the Vancouver Labor Council was all these top people, retired, so the the ones that came back up to replace some of the other delegates who weren't knowledgeable enough. They're just starting out, you know, but like the plumbers, they were very good for that. But then Russ [Sinerloy?] he went back East. At least I think he's up right now in Winnipeg now.

SD: [00:12:00] Did the communists or the NDP or the CCF have a presence in your union, did they operate in it?

PM: [00:12:01] No. No. Not in our local but we kind of fully believe that in our local we backed the NDP, you know, because that's the workers party sort of thing. There again I believe, and I really believe that people vote to who they want. You can sort of suggest--it's like taking somebody to a dentist, you can suggest it but they're not going to tell you who they're going to vote for and why should they? Whereas in Westminster it's, its own unbelievable just how the people say it's the workers party here, you know, it's always been NDP, old CCF-- Ray Eddy was here until oh I don't know how long. I remember him as a kid even being in there, you know, so it's really a very strong hold in Westminster but then you got IWA so strong in Westminster too.

SD: [00:12:52] Ok, that's another question. Do you find that, in terms of being a union worker, that people who come into your restaurant who would maybe be maybe the most sympathetic to the women who worked there were other union people?

SD: [00:13:05] No, not necessarily, it's like, once in a while, years ago they used to ask you for your union button, you know, and some people would even tip ya if you had a union button on, uhm, no not necessarily because most of the people don't know anything, you see, they--only your few people who were educated, of the few they picked to, for safety committees and stuff like that. But other people just paid because they had to be in a union and they paid that privilege. Uh, when you had a fight in the 30s for it, that was different. You were bettering yourself and they were you thinking of today when they have a thing they shut down the whole waterfront means nothing when they all sit home, don't they? That's it, the top offices do the work. But how many individuals get in a fight anymore where before in the 30s. Every [recorder muffled].

SD: [00:13:50] What kinds of things did you do in the union to try and get people to come to meetings, to get involved?

SD: [00:13:52] Oh, we did everything. We threatened a charge, an assessment of \$5 out of income. I think some even paid \$5. Uhm, we used to have parties afterwards. We'd go for a bowling tournament after a union meeting. Uh, we sat around and we went for a, sort of a picnic. Anything! One time there to get the women interested our local used to even have dinners, free dinners, when we were small. Anything to get them interested. Nobody was, hardly anybody showed up even for a free dinner. They just don't care. Like I said they only care when it comes to negotiation and what they're going to get for themselves.

SD: [00:14:31] Do you think that people didn't care in part because of the kind of pressures on them outside of the workplace, like-

PM: [00:14:39] -At home and it would probably stand back to if it was a husband and a wife who was trying to get interested, he'd say well, your place is at home, you're working isn't that enough? What are you going to get involved for? It's not going to do you anything anyway, right? Uhm, I think this was probably one of the biggest pressures or the woman wasn't educated enough, she didn't how to speak to the, most people are afraid to speak unless they think that they can speak properly. One time I used to have such an impediment I couldn't speak myself but if I got mad enough I could speak and I was mad quite frequently.

PM: [00:15:08] Right, so that makes the whole question of sort of training people....

SD: [00:15:12] That's right, you know. I mean I know a lot of people that you could feel their pain, you know, they wanted to say something but they couldn't. They were scared to say something. Yeah, but then I always give the poor guy the credit, we used to have one man and he used to get up to the mic. Well, nobody understood what he said if he was there 15 minutes but at least they used to respect him because the poor man tried, you know. But uh, no the women, and I figure, like, when they had the meetings on Sunday...uhm now I was lucky, I worked Sundays but my boss always gave me my Sunday off to go to the union meeting. My boss was really good that way. He says OK you represent this place, you go and I never had no reprisals because I had to attend a meeting or, I always had to go for a convention.

SD: [00:16:00] And was there a steward structure in the union that was pretty--

PM: [00:16:00] Well, there was in, in my place. Every place we tried to get a shop steward in. And we succeeded pretty well, I think, too, but then you had to give them a bit of training and.. but there again on Columbia Street they all came to me because they knew that I was I was strong because my boss, you know, he didn't harass me for any union activities I had where maybe in another place the boss would say well what's the matter with you? What you want? You think I'm going to give you my time? You know and if he knew he had any trouble he'd get scared because he didn't know how deep the trouble went and you mention union and they'd all run out the back door practically. So, I think that was one of the reasons, you know, why I did so well at it.

SD: [00:16:41] Was there, uhm, what kind of attitudes did the bosses and the restaurants have towards union? Was there the sense that, well, we're all working here together and being in a union is destructive to that kind of--

PM: [00:16:50] Well, of course because even at those times, I even cost them money. The union was, they were telling him how he could operate his business, and they resented it, they still do, but that's a way of life and they tolerate it. But ah no, it all depends who you have as shop steward, if they knew what they were doing, and how much pressure they were putting on management. But on the whole in the restaurants, like, now I don't know about Vancouver ah, but I know Westminster and I know Columbia Street. They're a pretty fair people but naturally they're out for themselves

and they had to fight for everything you got but if you wanted it bad enough you didn't mind fighting for it, you know? Ah, mostly it came -- they got their fringe benefits on the petticoat of somebody else who had worked very hard for it, you know. But I, like I said I had no trouble my boss respected, he knew he had to have a union there and he thought, well I might as well work with it as against it.

SD: [00:17:52] Were there women who were in the leadership of the union, both national and international?

PM: [00:17:52] In the States but not here. Women, it's just reversed itself down there. Here it was all men who were BA's and financial secretary and presidents, where down there it was all men, er, all women. Purdy Sweet, I think she's ah she's uhm, the first, vice president and I think she's probably, she must be 80 years old, I don't know if they retired her yet and in, all through California, this is my first big shock when I went to an international convention I expected to see nothing, surrounded with men, and it's just the opposite because Canada is so small, I mean, they can't even come across the border, really, you know, for a convention. But down there you see all these masses of women and they do the jobs that men do up here.

SD: [00:18:38] So, what kind of attitudes did they have towards other women unionists?

PM: [00:18:38] Well, the feeling I got, of course, you see, we're Canadian and we, we have different feelings, really. They were so used to having that job I don't think it meant anything to them, where we were stunned. Wow. somebody was getting ahead in this world, you know, and recognized, but then those women in those years, they must have been the ones who did all the fighting for people. I mean you can get people to follow you.. I could take up and find 50 people up to join my own union, I mean, you can get people to follow that's no problem. But you can't get people to work and they won't help you.

SD: [00:19:15] So was it hard for women to go and to try and take on National leadership positions here in the union?

PM: [00:19:20] No, not in Canada, no it wouldn't do any good because ours was international in the first place. You would have to take on your own local and win an election there and I can truthfully say I don't think that will ever come a time in in our, my time that I'll see it. It's too highly a paid job and it is more difficult now than it used to be.

SD: [00:19:41] So you mean that there is a real sense that women shouldn't be doing that kind of professional work?

SD: [00:19:43] Right. A woman right now, she'd have to, to get anywhere now I would say, she'd have to go to university and be something, you know, qualified for that line if you knew she was going to go take it up in school and uh, for, uh, and learn all she can there and then go in as a business agent if they'll let you in and hire ya. And then only one of those people may have a chance. And learn all she can and keep her mouth shut and then run for an office.

SD: [00:20:13] So was the business agent hired by the union?

PM: [00:20:17] By the union officers, yes.

SD: [00:20:18] They weren't elected representatives?

PM: [00:20:21] No.

SD: [00:20:21] Was there ever conflict between the elected representatives and the hired business agent?

PM: [00:20:22] I imagine so but that would be held in [?] be done in there. Of course your top office are all elected, you know, like your vice president, your president, and your vice president and a financial secretary, and the recording secretary, that's all elected offices. But then they also hold that double position where they are business agents too.

SD: [00:20:44] You were elected to the joint executive board.

PM: [00:20:47] That's right.

SD: [00:20:47] What was that and what role did you play?

[00:20:49] Well that's when all the unions, they talked-- all unions, all locals like we had three locals here, got together once a month to discuss the business. To involve all the unions.

SD: [00:21:03] So what kind of issues were you dealing with? Negotiations?

PM: [00:21:03] Negotiations, something, uh, negotiating a new hotel or wanting money from us, a different local wanting me, needed help, for organizing...anything, could be anything. Anything that came out of the BC Fed or the Vancouver Labor Councils.

SD: [00:21:22] Did you, uhm, work with any other unions in an especially close way?

PM: [00:21:24] No.

SD: [00:21:35] Uhm...oh right, ok, the union had master contracts, right?

PM: [00:21:35] Right.

SD: [00:21:36] How were they put together?

PM: [00:21:39] Well, ah, for thing usually that was done with a financial secretary, we'd have a committee, a standing negotiating committee and in the meetings prior to time to go for a new contract, the membership would tell us what they wanted at the Union meeting and we'd make a draft from their suggestions and then we'd get together and then we decide which stood a chance to get anything and we delete what wasn't, we knew we were never going get anywhere with it and then we'd work on what we had and that's how it was brought up together.

SD: [00:22:07] Were there any special kinds of issues around shift work or benefits?

PM: [00:22:12] Oh yes, like split shifts, you know, nobody ever wants to work a split shift but it's a very necessity in catering parts. And then there'd be like, now we have the four, six, and eight hour shifts recognized eh? Which is a necessity too, some people, but they don't like it they want to work for four and some want to work an eight. But with the wages being what they are today you just can't have a body standing around please them so about six hour, I may only need somebody for six.

SD: [00:22:43] And, uhm where there any problems with a master contract for the industry?

PM: [00:22:46] Oh yes, getting it together was a big problem, you know and everybody thought

that their idea was the best. But then you would have guidelines like from the first contract that was laid down. It was thought out and done and approved in our context must be approved by the international too, they they read them too so there was never, you didn't take that much out of every contract. It was just maybe a little wording change here or there or money figures were changed, it wasn't that difficult but you'd get some stupid jerk who thought he had the best idea of it all and you still had to write it down and take it to your meeting, committee, and see what they thought of it.

SD: [00:23:31] Uhm, did the union have a hiring hall system at all?

PM: [00:23:31] Yes.

SD: [00:23:35] Was that important in keeping closed shops in?

PM: [00:23:35] Yes, it was and that was the one place the employer, it worked just as well for the employer as it did the employee. Instead of dialing around having a book with people names in it, going through to get somebody they just phoned the one place and of course they should have had enough people to send to him and you knew that those people were union.

SD: [00:23:58] Was that important for women in the union?

PM: [00:23:58] Yes. Well, women didn't have too much of that, maybe a little at, there again in Vancouver, I wasn't familiar, because I was just dealt with Westminister here. We didn't have anything, only if it came to a banquet work because everybody was steadily employed in, in this. But then as women went in for mixerologists, then they'd have to go the same route too.

SD: [00:24:26] Were there any special contract demands in particular that women tended to focus in on?

PM: [00:24:28] Not, not so much, now all they cared about was there, uh, our wages, that was always most -- and of course the splitshift was always a big contention. Or, and holidays but then you see now holiday's worked out by seniority and, then, so, though I have a situation this year where a girl is pulled -- when I had a schedule slated for holidays, she says well, I'll hold off a bit because she didn't know when her husband was going to be working so a week ago she puts her time in, now three other girls have spoken for that same holiday but she's going to pull, well, I have seniority. Now what are those other two people supposed to do that's already put in, made plans for those days, you know? It's not fair.

SD: [00:25:20] Do you feel like there is any women that should be mentioned in terms of the contribution they made to the union?

PM: [00:25:20] Well, Josephine Hallock was one. And strangely enough I never bothered too much with women because I didn't, but I'm sure there must have been somebody in the garment workers that, they, those people really suffered and like I said as far as I'm concerned, with our local was Penny Pounty. She was the one, but she took a terrible beating.

PM: [00:25:41] When you look back on the whole process do you see it as having been something that helped to strengthen the position of working people and women, the kind of involvement that you had?

PM: [00:25:48] Oh yes.

SD: [00:25:49] So you feel positive about it?

PM: [00:25:50] Yes, yes, yes. I feel positive that you couldn't do without a union. I feel sad because the way it works today, it's big business. Like, I try to tell the people, I said you own that, that's your business, that's like if you're in a big corporation you go and say, but they're not interested. It's their money that's making this union but they don't care they don't understand, they just don't ? you know they just don't care. It's sad, really sad and in fact I'm really furious that they...

SD: [00:26:24] Is there anything else that you would like to .

PM: [00:26:25] No, no I just, well I think, you know I really do think it's going to get better. Well, for women they've come such a long, long way. Really I think the situation's now, I'm not speaking for industrial or anything like that but a woman is recognized. They know she's going to be here. It's not something you're gunna to sweep under the counter any more, you know? It's she's here and she's going to work, she's part of the working force. Yes they have special problems but not really that many that they should be classified any different from a man. And if they do, if they do the work they're qualified for, then they should get equal pay.