

SD: ...speak about your early life.

TG: OK. My name originally was Thelma Emblem and I'm now Thelma Godkin of course. And I was born right here in Nanaimo. My father also was born in Nanaimo and my grandfather jumped ship here many years ago and I lived right here in Saltair. Grew up right around here, and I have to just have to stop for a minute now and think.

I always had a desire that

I didn't want to do girls' work and my father said well we'll send you on to university, but I had no desire to do that, and he used to take me out. He'd crosscut-saw a log, block^{off} for wood and I would finish it up for him with my own crosscut saw, which I learned to use. And I hauled wood with a truck and learned to ^bback up before I learned to go ahead, almost. Well, then when I graduated from school, of course I had to go to work. So I started working in a little restaurant on the Malahat, which was alright but not very much pay, and finally my father said to me, "I'll get you a job in the mill," because at that time they were getting shorthanded in the mill, because of the war taking all the young fellows away. So sure enough he got me into the sawmill and I went into the planing mill where I was what they called a racker, where I sorted different size lumber up until

it got enough and then we'd drop it down and it would be tied ^{ready} to go out for shipment. Then I also worked in a big band saw. One day I just about cut my hand off, so I stopped that. And finally I didn't like the noise I didn't like the kind of men that worked in the saw mill and I decided, that was enough of that. So I quit. That was quite horrifying to my family because you just didn't quit jobs, you didn't at all. So I was swimming down at this lagoon right here down where I lived and they had a big log dump there at that time, which is all since gone, and the guy said to me, they knew me, 'hey Thelma, how'd you like to go working in the woods?' And I laughed and I said "oh, OK", because I liked that. And so I did. I went up as a whistlepunk and I worked for five years in the woods. Thoroughly enjoyed it and we would leave here about five o'clock, no, about 6:30, not 5, about 6:30 in the morning and we'd travel. Oh, it was a long, long way up into the mountains and there I would start being whistlepunk. The very first day that I worked up there, I was coming down, we used to leave our lunch down at the landing as we'd call it, foolishly, here I was coming down the mountainside and two feet jumping down steep down together and a stick went up my pant and leg and of course, I crash^{ed} into this great

hole. Well everybody come : : roaring over to see if I was hurt and I was really shook up and I couldn't let on. So I lied ^{"fine, I said"} and I come staggering down the mountain, really out of breath. And I saw ever so many things. One day we went up there and we saw, I didn't know what they were, I thought they were big police dogs but they were two big wolves and they were really large. And we used to go up above the clouds and we'd look over towards Vancouver and it would be just like you could get out and walk on the clouds. It was just beautiful early in the mornings. And I guess thats what I liked, because in my later life I'm now an artist and enjoy the scenery.

Eventually there were, I think it was, four of us altogether, ^{sp: Were there other women working in the mill?} three other women and myself. And one of them was a very, she was quite a bit older than we were and she was very attached to the man that graded lumber and if we dared talked to him she just got really hostile. It was quite funny actually. I didn't like the noise there, I didn't like the dirty air. You were cooped inside all the time and that wasn't my thing. I liked the outside. I'd rather battle with mosquitoes than with sawdust and the men, they would tell you very subtle nasty little jokes, which didn't turn me on very much, and then they'd go away and laugh like the dickens. Well I didn't like that, I didn't have to have that, and that was one of the reasons

that I quit. They were more suggestive, I guess, is the word, to a young girl. It wasn't very nice.

SD: Were they hostile to women coming into...

TG: No, no. They didn't seem to be hostile...I didn't feel that at all. In fact there were some of them were very, very nice and they knew my father very well because he was a well-known chap and . . . maybe they treated me better than they would have if I were just an unknown person. But having grown up in the area and had a lot to do with a lot of the chaps, I knew them before I went into the mill. And at that time there was a different attitude because of the lack of manpower there, and I think that that was OK. I never was, I never missed any work. I never was sick or anything on the job but I remember the first day I come home from the mill, we had been running yellow cedar, and if you've ever smelled yellow cedar, it's very very strong, and I come home and I was exhausted, because of the newness of the job and the noise really was destroying. I mean you didn't wear those big things like they wear nowadays, you know, they wear those... well I come home and I went to bed after a bath and I said to mum 'oh, I'm so tired I've got to go to bed' and I got into bed and my mother had taken the sheets out of this cedar chest and here all night long I slept in these cedar

...oh, it was quite funny really. But that was just...
So then I was...the pay was alright for a girl in the
mill I guess. It was the lowest paid job I suppose, but
I was happy to have it.

SD: Were many women separated by job categories in the mill?

TG: No. Don't remember that. No. Cause there was other
guys doing the same job as, you know, we were all just
doing the same...never even thought about things like
that.

SD: Did you get equal pay then?

TG: As far as I know, yea. Never thought about it you see.
I was just one of the guys and that's all I was. I
never, we had to wear things on our hair and I rebelled
about that. I wasn't going to wear things on my hair
because I always had my hair cut short. so they just gave
up telling me that I should have a hair net on, 'cause I'd
rather quit than wear that.

SD: The other women that worked in the mill, were they also
young women?

TG: No, just...the other, two of us were the same age, the
other one was a bit older and the other one was that woman
that was kind of envious. She was more, she was quite a
bit older than we were, at least, I would say twenty
years or more older than we were. She was of a foreign
nationality, I don't know what nationality, but she wasn't..

she was...she didn't like us.

SD: What were the working hours like and the conditions. Was it dangerous working in the mill?

TG: Yes. The place where I nearly cut my hand was a great big band saw and that was a dangerous place. Oh yea, they could be dangerous, but where I was mostly you had to watch out, because lumber could fly around and hit you in the face. You never wore any protection. Now they wear glasses and they wear hard toed shoes. We never wore anything like that. Nobody did. I guess some of the guys wore...I don't even think they wore hard hats then. Gee that's a long time ago isn't it, ^{and} you didn't have all the safety regulations. Nobody seemed to get very hurt though, in the mill.

SD: How did you feel like comparing that job to having been a waitress?

TG: I preferred working in the mill to being a waitress.

Mind, I always liked people but I was home and I liked to be home. When I was a waitress I was away from home and I like to be home. And the hours at the mill were better than waitress, because you had split shifts then, and you had to get up early and work for awhile, and then you had the afternoon off and then you'd have to go back at night. And I like the straight through and then

you had your...it seems to me, did we work Saturdays in those days too? I think we did too. It seems like a long time we were...

SD: Were you heavily supervised?

TG: No. You did your job. You had to do your job, well if you didn't the whole stuff piled, all this lumber would pile up in front of you and everybody'd stop and then of course, you'd be the one that caused this, so naturally your pride wasn't going to let you do that.

SD: Were the women able to keep up with...

SD:

TG: Oh, sure. No problem. Were there different races or ethnic groups and nationalities?

TG: Yea.

SD: Were there any conflicts around that? Other than the woman...

TG: No. In those days we were very crude and called them 'bohunks' and that isn't really very nice, but that is what everybody did, and of course I didn't do as much thinking as I have done since I got older. And we weren't...yea, I guess we didn't associate with some of them, yea.

SD: Was it unionized?

TG: Oh, yea.

SD: Had the union been in there for a long time?

TG: This I can't tell you. I really don't know. You'll have

to look up in the records I guess.

SD: And did you have responsibilities at home when you were living at home and working, like doing housework?

TG: Well sure. We had a little farm and cows and if something happened I'd have to pitch in and help at home too. But I didn't pay very much board, yea, because of that, you know. But you were a family member, you were expected to take part in your family's affairs too.

SD: Was that difficult to work and also...

TG: No. I was strong and young.

SD: Did most of the people in the mill work and live in the same community?

TG: Yea.

SD: So you all sort of associated outside of the mill as well.

TG: Yea, umhum. If we went to dances it would be the same, you know, some kids would come up from Duncan, but mostly you'd know them all.

SD: Did that create a sort of sense of community...

TG: I think so. Although there's always, I always lived half way between Chemainus and Ladysmith, so that my affiliations were more with Chemainus, but I guess I went to school in Ladysmith. But there was always a resentment between Chemainus and Ladysmith which strangely ^{to say} is true to this day. Still like that, yea. So it's kind of, it was kind of neat living half way between.

SD: In terms of the union, you became a shop steward. What made you decide to do that?

TG: Well I guess I thought at that time it was the thing to do. They asked me if I would and I accepted, because I was part of the gang.

SD: Did you come out of a trade union background?

TG: No. Because, no, I had uncles that were involved in it quite seriously in the mining part of the world, but we were never too aware of it here. Mind, there were strikes; the longshoremen were on strike and it was quite a terrible thing that happened, you know, it seemed to be terrible. But I guess I didn't think about it like, I never thought about it.

SD: Was your dad a logger, or...

TG: My father was a...he worked in the shop, in the machine shop.

SD: Around the union stuff, getting back to that, when you say it was sort of the thing to do and you were one of the gang, was that because most of the people you knew were involved or interested in the union?

TG: Yea, but you see at that time, we were more involved in thinking about the war and we were doing our job, so there was no really heavy union pressure put on. Cause everything was going along fine and we didn't, I never was involved in anything, other than collecting dues and paying my own dues. As far as I was concerned, it didn't seem to, you know,

it's not something that really stands out in my mind.

SD: How did the war affect people's attitudes toward work?

TG: I think we were all willing to really work, really put forth, because at that time it was propa...you know, there was a lot of...I shouldn't call it propaganda but a lot of, well I guess it was, put on us like that, the home front should keep up the war front, and I guess that was the feeling we had, cause so many of my friends went to war and never came back, and this is the only way we could do our bit.

SD: In the mill were there people who worked for the Labour progressive Party and the CCF?

TG: Well, I guess so, but politics, I never was interested in politics at that time. I'm sorry to say that but I wasn't. Mind you my family had discussions, but I never participated in that. Cause when you're young like that at that time, it didn't seem to be the thing to, I don't know. I didn't have any involvement in that.

SD: So when you began to work in the woods did it take you awhile to learn the kind of skills that were necessary to be a whistlepunk?
What is a whistlepunk...

TG: Whistlepunks are no longer, that job has gone by the boards long ago. In those days it was, you had a little thing like what you're holding in your hand almost and it was a

wire string right out and attached to the machine. And you were the signal man, and ^{you} signalled your logs to go into the landing, to be loaded on the trucks, and that's what your job was, and if they got a hang up you would blow one whistle and it would mean something to the engineer at the machine, and that's what it was. And they called it a bug, that thing you held in your hand. You just pressed it together and it made contact and it blew a whistle at the...and I guess because you were the low guy on the totem pole you were called punk, you see. So it got to be a whistlepunk.

where

SD: Was that people would start to work...

TG: Yes, a lot of people, yea, they'd start there, and then they'd gradually work up to be a chockerman, and then they'd go into rigging, slinging and, then they'd go on and on, and I have a son-in-law that's now just taken a falling... In those days you didn't learn to be a faller you just went in and worked, but now they teach you to be a faller. And in those days there were no power saws, we had a... I worked for what ^{you} called a gyppo outfit to start with, and a gyppo outfit is just a little small show, as they call it, and I can remember when we went up in the crummies in the morning, up the logging road right up here, there was a bunch of little Chinese people lived in a little joint up there, and they'd come out and they'd have two or three straw hats

on their heads, and these crosscut saws over their back and they'd walk down and these things would go up and down, they'd call them swedish banjos or something like that. And that's what it was like in those days. It was really old, old way and its changed so much now. We used to have a guy come up there, he was a policeman down here, and he'd go up there for his summer holidays to work in the woods. It was surprising really, yea. And we one time got an electrical ^{storm} up there and being, all the spar tree with all these lines coming down, it was quite dangerous we all, you know, left the place. But nothing happened. But I saw the tops of the trees coming down and I saw all kinds of things like that. I saw a guy get his ankle broken running down a great big pile of logs.

SD: *Can you describe the*
✓ kinds of attitudes you encountered in the woods towards you as a woman from the men you worked with.

TG: Yea, OK. When I worked in the little gyppo places I had, they just treated me like their sister. They were really really nice to me and that's where I met my husband who was extremely nice to me, and then after awhile I quit. I wonder why I quit. I can't remember why I quit. But anyway I quit, and this chap from the head man in Chemainus came down and he wanted me to work for Copper Canyon which was a big camp, still working as a matter of fact. So I went up there and I said 'oh,' after awhile I said 'oh, alright I'll go to work for you'. And I worked on a really

big machine up there and most of the men would treat me just fine but the odd guy would come along and he'd be quite shocked to see the only girl there, and I could sense that he was going to say something nasty, not nasty, but something out of line a bit, but he never did. I think the other guys, the attitude of the other men squelched him and he treated me just beautiful too, just like everybody else, and I never had any problem ever. Mind you I never put myself ^{into} a position either, I always was just one of the guys, just one of the guys. Somebody asked me about going to the bathroom here awhile ago and I would just say to one of the chaps, I'd say 'hey, will you take a turn for me for a minute I'm going over in the bush here'. That's all I'd say. They'd never say anything, they'd just take a turn and I'd go way over behind some trees, and that would be the end of that. But I never had any problem. There was one we had...they were twins, the Noomie twins, they're well known in the area, they were, I just didn't know one from the other. I never ever did. One worked on a machine and the other one was what we called a pushover, a push on our side and he would never look at me, never look at me. And he'd say 'punk, you make a fire', that's about all he'd ever say to me. And I'd go make a fire. Like sometimes we would be moving the machinery, and there was nothing for

me to do and that, so I'd have the fire for lunch. It was really, really nice.

SD: Were they protective of you?

TG: I think so. They looked after me. They always saw that I was OK, yea. And they never made me do any heavy work either. I was just a dumb old punk, that used to string out the whistle wire and just sit there, you know, and do the job. But I was alert. I never blew the wrong whistle, because sometimes you can blow the wrong whistle and you can really injure the men, if you blow at the wrong time.

SD: Yea, I was going to ask you a bit more about exactly where the whistlepunk's work fits into the whole cycle...

TG: At that time..we would go into a setting and you would be yarding, the logs into the machine, like ^{and} I would work to the side, but I would right along with the men on the side. And the rigging slinger would holler 'ho' and I would stop the rigging right at that place, and then he'd maybe tell me to move the rigging ahead slowly, and I would do that, or back slowly, there's signals for that. And I would do that and he'd just tell me to stop. But you see, if there was a chap under a log, and I did the wrong thing, the log could come down and crush him so you have to be really really aware of what you were doing and that's why I think

that I was to go to this big camp, because I had a reputation of being a faithful, alert person. Lots of the whistlepunks, they'd take a book along and read there, but then you can't do that if you're going to do your job properly.

SD: Someone told me, it was Mr. Whiskers told me, that you were the best, ^{and} fastest whistle punk around.

TG: I didn't know that, but I know that I was, I guess I was, cause I liked it. I like the men and I wouldn't want anything, I wouldn't want to be responsible. Mind, I know one time, we were pulling a turn as its called, the engineer was pulling and he...

SD: What is pulling a turn?

TG: That is bringing the logs into the landing. That's the big, main line with all your chokers and everything and the log got hung up. A hang up as ^{they} called it, behind a stump and the engineer give a good reef and just as, I blew stop and the rigging slinger hollered stop and the whole top of the tree came down. Now that was a fault of the man that went out to select the tree for the spar tree. See in those days you went out and took a standing tree as a spar tree. Now they have a steel spire that goes on the back of the truck. It's all completely different. But he got what was called a 'conkey' tree because the thing was rotten, and the whole thing came down. Well we just got into such a dither, and the all the crew and

the rigging crew and everybody ran into the machinery, and here these guys were coming out. Nobody was hurt. But then we had to shut down for a few days, until we found a new spar tree, and we had to raise it, raise a spar tree. It's really interesting and this is why I'd like to write the book because there's so many things happened up there. And its old time logging from a woman's point of view and it's so different you know.

SD: What are some of the differences of how you would see it and how some of the guys would see it? Would you be really concerned a lot with safety and...

TG: I think so. I think we were all aware of safety though. But I, why did I like it? Because when I started working in the woods, my friends at that time who'd graduated from school with me and had gone to business college and all the things that people do and they said to me 'what, you're going working in the sawmill'. You know, 'what a dumb job that is, and then when they heard I was going working in the woods, they were just horrified. But I'm sure I had a better working relationship than a lot of those people did. perhaps ^{with} their bosses. But I think I liked it because it was a challenge to me to show people I could do it, and safety wise, of course, I think we're all aware of that. I don't know what else. I just like the outdoors.

SD: When you moved on to the bigger places what were some of the differences with working in a big place and working with gyppo outfits. Were there differences in...

TG" Well, yea. In the gyppo outfits they had more breakdowns, like the lines would break down, you know. They were using not a, well they were cutting corners, you might say, and we've had the main line break and come snarling, and if you've ever seen a main line snarling, and just "a snaking in like you wouldn't believe it, just...

SD: It's very dangerous?

TG: Yea, umhum.

SD:

TG: Oh, it would cut your head right off. But it never happened. But in the bigger, they used heavier, stronger machinery. I think they were more highballers, as they call it, because they had more pressure put on them, to get the logs out you know. But I could handle that. I never had any trouble.

SD: Did you ever try to leave your job as a whistlepunk and get training or take on different areas?

TG: Oh, up there^{er} no, because I had no desire to do any of that. I didn't want to do that kind of work. It was hard work. I was getting just the same pay as those guys, and I wasn't going to go and work harder, you know, why should I? I'd had to work out in the rain and sometimes

you couldn't see hardly for mosquitoes and little noseelums. You'd have a branch : waving, and they tried to teach me to smoke, because they said if I smoked it would keep the mosquitoes away, and I tried that and that made me sick. And they said I should try chewing snoose, oh dear, so I tried that. (laughter.) I got drunk. laughter. Oh, it was awful. Oh, cause some of the guys could spit this stuff out the side of their mouth, ^{it was just} unreal. No. I never wanted to do anything different. I don't know why, when I think about it, I don't know why. Because it was too hard for me.

SD: Did the whistlepunk job require physical work at all?

TG: Why sure. You had to pack this, you had a big long, this kind of wire, it was old fashioned kind of wire, *the old fashioned kind of wire,* like this electric wire, you've got your tape recorder plugged in, and you had how many feet of that would you have?, 300, 400, 500 feet of that whistle wire? You had that draped around your neck, big strands of it and as you went along you'd unstring it and that was heavy around your neck, and you'd be scrambling up these steep side hills, and you know, over logs, under logs and everywhere, and you had to string out the wire as you say. And once in awhile, you'd have to jump in and pull straw line, haha, laughter, which is *the* line which you put that...oh, it's so complicated, I can't tell you.

TG: Well the strawline was what they used, to haul the main line out, and they start with a haul back as they called it, the haul back, and you string this wire all through this straw and through the blocks and all around and that's what, when you were making a new setting, that's what you had to do. And that's the straw line. You have to wear leather gloves, because that was all sharp little prickly wires on it that, would tear the skin right off your hands. That's about...we had to pack stuff around, too, but they didn't put too much work on me. They were really very good to me.

SD: Was it, were you used to the work?

TG: Oh, sure. I grew up here. We used to run the mountains all the time.

SD: You felt really comfortable...

TG: Oh sure, no trouble.

SD: ...the heights and...

TG: Oh no, that never, I loved it. I really liked it. No that never bothered me. One time, I had a nice new pair of corks put in my boots and the pack was slipping, and I was walking along this log and of course these sharp corks pick up the, the bark will stick to the bottom of your shoe you see, and I stepped on this slippery...oh man, I took a nasty fall. You can take

some bad falls. I had some doozies you know. But I never broke any bones or missed any days work through that. One time we were working away up there and there was a fire on the Comox side and, we knew that fire was getting pretty close and one of these fellows, three of them, came over the side where we were working and they said to us 'you better get out of here because that's fire's coming right over and gonna burn you out'. Oh gosh. We were all upset. So we had to leave everything, and we went out way over the far side of Mount Hall it was, and we went out, to where it had been logged previously, and sure enough the fire come over. It blew up our machines, blew up our diesels and it was what they call 'crown'. Have you ever heard of this...well when it's crowned, it hits the top of the trees and it just jumps and roars like a freight train, going through the forest. It's really awful. And of course everything blew up and we were just, we weren't hurt because we were out in the slashing and the fire passed on. Our crummie was out there too. So we had this great big coloured truck driver we called him 'Feet' because he had enormously large feet and he took us through the fire. It was burning on each side of us and we were going down our plank road, and I don't know how we ever got through,

because by the time, I couldn't breathe anymore, I was, tears were pouring all, I don't know how he drove us through there, but we finally got out.

SD: He drove through.

TG: Yep. Oh, I don't know why we didn't blow up, because we were all loaded in this silly thing, yea, and it was quite a few miles and there was no air you see because the forest was on fire. Like it had burned, but it was still burning here and there. It was...

SD: It was like a corridor of smoke you were going through, on either side of the road...

TG: Yea. Well it was a plank road too, can you imagine? You know, two planks. That was all you drove on in those days. The bridges were just two logs to cross over a ravine and you just went...oh my goodness, when I think about it was really quite funny. Anyway we got out of that, and then we didn't work for a few days, I guess it was a couple of weeks. We had to get new machinery and diesel up there, and everything, and when we went back to work, the whole works of us just got black, and it blew right into your eyes, under your eyes. It was awful. That black stuff comes off the logs you see. We had to log, still our logs were there, we had to log them off. And after that, there was a little deer used to come, and stay right beside

me, it was quite neat you know. Yea.

SD: A little deer from the fire?

TG: Yea, he was scared I guess. He just come and... there was a little protected area there, I guess it was the only green... somehow or another it had escaped the fire, you know, cause it jumps over the top I guess.

SD: Was there a lot of wildlife?

TG: Oh yea. You'd see lots of deer, and those wolves I mentioned before, and a few bear, yea, when the berries were on and grouse...

SD: What kind of bear?

TG: Just black bear. They re'not very big. Not too much, because where we were logging, its pretty noisy and that, and the trees were all knocked down, yea. Really its a shame, you know. And they didn't reforest in those days, either. Because its still not grown up there properly, you know.

SD: So its right up there on that...

TG: Yea, its right there. ^(points to mountain) Umhum, yea. We used to have floods, and washouts of roads, and oh dear. And the roads were horrendous, they weren't like the roads are now, the logging roads. These were just snaky, little roads, you know, because the logging trucks weren't great big things like they are now.

SD: Oh really. What were they like?

TG: Well they were just like a big truck that's all. They weren't huge and monstrous, like they have now. Cause these could only haul a very small turn, and after the fire one of our trucks went down, and it was just aflaming. I guess a tree...a log was still on fire you see and the wind just got this truck, so the log was just burning like the dickens. We thought he was going to blow up. But ^{I guess} he didn't. You'd lose a log every once in awhile off the back of the truck. The kingpin would slip out, and the whole thing would be left on the side of the road and you'd have to log it up...you know go and pick it up afterwards with what they called a cherry picker...laughter...oh the logging terms are really neat. Yea. It took quite a while to learn that, and they always pull the old joke on the new guy, like go and find a pail full of choker holes you see. These are the things you dig under the logs, choker holes you know, to get the chokers through to the other side, and they were always telling the poor old kid to go and...he'd be running all over the place looking for this, or elbow grease, or some, you know ridiculous stuff. Oh, just...that was a big joke. Actually loggers are quite, I don't know what you'd, they're not too well, not educated but, intellectual

I guess that's the word, some of them. I think they are more now. But in those days they were just big guys, with lots of laughs and worked.

SD: What kind of stuff did people talk about?

TG: Oh, absolutely...what they did over the weekend, or something in the funny papers, or just absolutely the dullest things you ever laid, could think about. Really not very gripping stuff at all. But in that time I think it was an escape from the dreadful war that was going on. I think maybe that's what we were thinking trying to escape : about anything too seriously. Cause what future was there at that time really, you know, you didn't know what was going to happen did you? It's much like that today.

SD: In terms of the loggers and the kinds of discussions they had did they ever sort of indicate that they were holding back on discussions, or anything like that, because you were around and you were a woman?

TG: Yea, I think so. Although I heard all the language that you ever want to hear, you know. They never, they didn't, if they got mad, or they got in trouble they didn't, they just let go. But they didn't tell crude jokes or anything like that, when I was around and I imagine they did when they were by themselves. But I never come up up on them unawares at work

when they were talking nastily. I found them very good.

SD: Were there any other women that you heard of that were also in the woods?

TG: Yes. And after I went working there there was another man got his daughter in, from Duncan, and she was a dandy little whistle punk too. She was really, really good and she worked on the other side from me. There was two sides, and then there got to be three sides. There was another girl came in after too. There was three of us.

SD: Did you meet those women at all?

TG: Well sure. We used to have lunch together right up on the crummie together. They were just young people like myself. They were nice, nice girls.

SD: And was there a sense among you of breaking new ground in the sense of having those kinds of jobs? Was there anything like...

TG: No, never thought about it. No. No. We were just...no. I guess there must have been eventually, because somebody came out from Vancouver Sun and interviewed us. I have a picture somewhere of us, and it was a silly writeup, but I guess he thought we were doing something different. In one of the areas here in Nanaimo there was a woman, you should have to interview her, she used to drive a logging truck. Yea, she drives truck now. I know she

drives bus in Nanaimo. And I can't remember her name.

But you could find it, phone the Nanaimo, the city bus...

I see her once in a while in town.

SD: Yea, I'd like to contact her.

TG: Umhum.

SD: Were guys who worked in the woods at that point into the union, and stuff that was going on with the development of the union, and the...

TG: No. no, uhuh.

SD: So that wasn't a big issue...

TG: Not then, no.

SD: Were you working during 1946 strike?

TG: No. I had finished then. I was married then.

SD: Did you stop working ~~one~~ you married or....

TG: Yep.

SD: Did you ever go back to it?

TG: No. No. I had a little boy, now I...

END OF TAPE SIDE I

Tape I. Side 2.

I didn't go back. I thought about it lots of times, but I, I never went back. I don't know whether, I would have liked it, so much after. Because I'd done some more thinking after and I found that they, as I said, they

weren't thinking, they didn't inspire you. Really. You know, they'd talk about what a big tree it was and all this, just, but nothing really um, not inspiring.

SD: It was very work-oriented? The relationship...

TG: Yea. Umhum, yea. It was actually rather dumb kind of conversations. Just nothing.

SD: Was your husband a logger?

TG: Um, just for a little while, umhum. He didn't like it.

SD: That's when you met him?

TG: Yes. Well I'd met him before that, but he came to work up in the woods then too, and it was very nice, but he didn't, I guess he found it was ^{nt}his kind of work either. And he didn't like the, he went fishing. I went fishing too as a matter of fact.

SD: Did you work commercially?

TG: Just for a little while, yea.

SD: Can you talk about that...

TG: Yea, I, that's not very long ago as a matter of fact. My husband phoned down and he said our cook's quit on the boat up here. Would you like to go fishing for a little while? And I said sure cause I always like to do stuff like that. So I had to join the fisherman's

union then and we went fishing out of Gold River and we went fishing humpies. Oh my goodness did I ever like that. And there was three other Indians and my husband and I on the fish boat, and I like those Indian people too cause you never talked unless you had something to say. And you just sit there in comfortable silence. It's lovely. But you have to work like heck. And I had to, I was a cook, but the cook, this was just a small seine boat, the cook snapped the rings; old fishermen will know what that means; cause you had to snap the rings to let the net go out. Then you had to plunge, which was like a plunger, a toilet plunger, only it's a big long handle and you had to pound the water so the fish would stay away from the opening of the net see, while you were closing or pursing up. Then I had to jump in the skiff with all these rubber clothes and rubber boots, and I'm not a small person; I could just see myself, every time I jumped in, going straight through the bottom of the boat, and I have to stay out there and try and hold the net away...oh dear, it was really good. And we used to let, we were catching the chums but every onee in the while, in the net we'd get these great big tyee, and if they weren't drowned we had to let them

go. Well that was lots of fun to catch a great big 40 or 50 lb salmon and let go through the net and all the sportsmen are sitting around just crying to watch these big fish going out. That was kinda neat. I made quite good money.

SD: Were there other women who were fishing?

TG: Oh sure. There's lots of women fish.

SD: Are they mostly native women or ...

TG: Um, yes. I think there's, but I think there's a lot of women go out with their husbands out on the boat too. Specially on the, oh dear, I can't remember what you call it, just on the boats that have, line fishing boats, I don't know what you, I can't...

SD: Trawlers.

TG: Trawlers, yea, that's right. Yea. I know there's lots of the native women go herring fishing too.

SD: I think its more traditional...

TG: Yea, umhum. It was interesting to be on an Indian fish boat.

SD: Why was that?

TG: Cause my husband was on this boat with the Indian chap. In fact, my husband's a member of the Native Brotherhood Union right now but, it was amazing that they would take me, wasn't it? I had to sleep down in the hold with

them all and everything. Ha, ha. It was lovely.

Gentle.

SD: Is your husband part native?

TG: No. Just got a good Indian friend. We have no...

we try to have no feelings of any kind of, we're all people.

SD: Right. It's just interesting cause I didn't know that a white person could be a member of the Brotherhood.

TG: No I didn't either, without being a native. Cause he just got a letter if he wants to, its sitting right there somewhere, to pay his dues to the native Brotherhood.

SD: Are there any other incidents in your working...

TG: That I can tell you about...

SD: Was it high pressure work?

TG: Um, some of the, you mean for myself of course.

SD: And also the whole routine.

TG: Yea, you had to do your job. You had to keep going or else you were let go. I think there wasn't...if you were fired the union didn't seem to...they realized that you weren't qualified for the job, so they didn't fight for you very much. But pressure, I think you put pressure on yourself, I did. So I would do a good job, so that noone would be injured, when I was

working, you know, my job. Which they could have been quite seriously injured. And everybody worked, but everybody really felt good that they had accomplished a day's work. I feel sometimes nowadays that people don't work to their full capacity, and I feel that a lot of people are unhappy cause they're not self-satisfying themselves. I really do.

When I really, really think about it I think the gypco camps that I worked in mainly were non-unionized, but now Copper Canyon was a union camp and I can't ever remember being a member...I know I was in the union so I must have just carried on. Cause I was in the union worked when I ^{worked} in the sawmill, but then that was a lapse of two or three years before I went back into Copper Canyon. I can't even remember paying any dues. Maybe I was just a dumb punk and they didn't bother with me.

SD: They might have had check-offs by then actually (No!) so that it would come right off your pay cheque.

TG: It's possible, it's possible. I don't even remember us discussing the union cause when they asked me to go back, I went back on my own terms almost. I told them you know, I didn't really want to work anymore and that, and oh, they just begged me to go so I just went. And I don't remember anymore, but I must have had to, but

maybe in those days a girl , they didn't think anything about it.

SD: Did they beg you to go because you were really skilled...
'cause

TG: I guess so. He came right to the house / I was sitting on the back step and I'd hungup my boots as you^d call it, and I wasn't going to go working in the woods anymore. Why, I don't know, cause I really liked it, but I guess I got fed up with it, because, it was long days. It was really long days, and they'd pick me up in the morning and they'd save me a seat. I'd have to sit in the middle sort of seat because I was one of the last ones to be picked up with the crummie that came from Ladysmith toward Chemainus, and we'd have to get on the speeder and go way the heck up and gone in the woods, and it was a long day. And you'd come home at night, and it was maybe a twelve thirteen hour day, well you didn't get paid for that travelling time. Well I just didn't want to do that anymore, I guess.

SD: Did you, you talked a little bit earlier about how your friends were really shocked with you...

TG: Yea.

SD: Was that difficult for you? Did people tend to ostracize you cause you were working in the woods?

TG: No, I never let that happen ever. I'm not that kind of

person.

SD: How did you fight it?

TG: I just never paid any attention to it. I just didn't let that, I never ever could give a hoot what other people think about me. ^{if they} like me, they like me, if they don't like me well that doesn't matter. And I've always been like that, and still am now. And I think it's a good way to be.

SD: I'm sure that helped a lot when you were...

TG: Oh sure. Well you see, when those other two girls came into the woods that sort of made it you know, well at least there's some other females up there. But when I went to work for Copper Canyon, and there wasn't any girls in the woods at all, just me, I guess ^{they} used to think about it. But I'd heard more stories about what happened to them in their offices and I knew what happened to me, cause nothing happened to me... laughter...nothing. And you know when I started working there, and those other two girls, I don't think they would have come if I hadn't a gone first, cause there's lots of people will follow and but there's not very many that will say, "well I'm gonna do that," and especially something like that, that was... I really don't know too many other people that did. I know that woman

that I told you about, she worked, I think she was a truck driver, but I don't know very many other girls that ever did anything. Maybe in their dads little logging camp they might have. I went cooking too, not cooking, I quit, I was always quitting and I quit and I went working ^{UP} at Youbou in a cookhouse. I lasted there three months. Absolutely hated every minute of it, cause those kind of guys were...sawmill guys again, and I had a lot of funny episodes up there, I'll tell you.

SD: Tell me about some of them.

TG: Well, it was, first, when I first got into there the cook was lefthanded and I and myself am lefthanded too, but anyway, they had this huge stove and he just flapped these flapjacks all over the stove with his left hand and he just got that all full and he went and flapped them all over with the spatula. It was the funniest sight I ever saw, cause I'd never seen a big camp. That was a big camp. And I had to pack all these dishes around, oh dear. I didn't like it very much. And they used to keep a crock behind the stove and all the fermented fruit juice would go in there you see, and then they'd be drinking this all day long and they'd be high, and they'd be slicing the... you never saw such a sight in your life. We didn't have a dishwasher, electric one, we had an old man with

one leg and the other one was a wooden one, and he'd get so mad at us girls if we didn't have the dishes there right on the dot and the first day I got there I was standing there, I guess I was dressed kinda nice, I don't know, anyway, I guess there was about four girls there and myself. They opened the door and these guys came in, talk about a herd of cattle coming into the feed trough. These men just came in like you wouldn't... I was astonished. I only worked there three months. And one night we had an upstairs over top of, I don't know what was underneath, but we had rooms up there, nice bath and everything and this guy got drunk and he came up to our rooms, and oh, I was so frightened. And I think that's why I quit, I wasn't going to have anything like that happen. But I went to a party, we used to go up the lake to these dances on these boats, Camp something or another, I can't remember, dance all night, come home, work all day and I'd go deaf and lose my voice, but I still worked, did my job. But it was exhausting.

SD: Were there women working in that mill at all?

TG: No.

SD: Were there any women working in the mills around Lake Cowichan ...

TG: Not that I know of, no. There was only us three, I think there was four of us working in the Chemainus mills, as far as I know that's the only girls working in the mill. I think those girls kept on working at the mill. I can't remember what happened. I never had anything more to do with those, the mill after I left. Didn't have time. By the time you put in that long of a day, and I think you worked six days a week, too, you'd go to a dance on Saturday night and you'd come home on Sunday...and not only that, after that forest fire, we went on early shift. Have you heard of early shift? When you go out at... on early shift you get up about 3:30, in the morning and go to work, you'd get home just, I guess just after lunch and that's very, very hot. But they only let you work, we'd maybe work two weeks at that and then they'd shut everything down because people got so tired there was bound to be accidents. They're on early shift right now as a matter of fact around here.

SD: Why do they do that, because of the heat?

TG: Yea. Unless you've been up in the woods away up in the mountains, at this time of the year, nobody realized what it's like. It's really frightening. It's just cracking. Just snapping, the twigs and everything. The heat is just drying out. And the least thing—a line rubbing on a rock

can cause a spark and set the whole forest on fire.

It's really very dangerous.

SD: Is that how forest fires begin?

TG: No., sometimes but often, like after a long heatspell like *this* we'll have an electrical storm and that's what starts them. And its really sad.

SD: Yea, because everything...

TG: Oh yea. The little animals and everything, you know. It's really terrible because then there habitat is gone. Guess *as I say* for a long long time.

SD: In terms of devastation, did you feel when you were working in the woods and watching the whole logging operation and that, the forest in some ways was getting destroyed?

TG: Oh yes, and now fortunately, we used to leave, oh, as much timber almost as we took out was left behind; because it's terrible, it was really really terrible and no reforestation at that time. I don't know it's really bad, it's really a shame. Cause those trees should have been really big by now. And look at the people it would have employed planting little trees. When I worked in Copper Canyon was the best logging woods I had seen, because the gyppo outfits get the edges, they don't get the good stuff. But in Copper Canyon we

logged, oh, some of the trees...well I'm quite a tall person and they were way way bigger than me when I laid on the stump. Just fantastic, straight up.

It was almost, have you ever been to Cathedral Grove? That kind of stuff. Almost, it gave, I guess I'm a sentimental person underneath, but it gave me the feeling of what it must have been like here, when the Indians lived here. How beautiful this Vancouver Island must have been. Yea, it really was very thrilling for me.

SD: Was that like virgin timbers...

TG: That would be virgin timber, yea. I was, I guess I was lucky to see it.

SD: Do you know how much it sold for, on the market?

TG: No, no idea.

SD: What were your wages...

TG: About \$5 a day I was making, which was fairly good in those days.

SD: How does that compare to other kinds of jobs?

TG: I think, when I was working there?

SD: Yea.

TG: I think some of the men were making, about the same as I, and then the next guy up would be making about \$7 a day. That's about it. \$10 a day would be good.

SD: How would that compare to other jobs

TG: Good. I think it was very good.

SD: You talked a bit about your upbringing... (laughter)

TG: OK. I always had the feeling that my father, I was born a girl, first of course, and I have a younger brother, but my father always wanted a son, it's a feeling. So as I would be growing up I guess he just treated me like a son and he thought I could do anything so I guess I could. And one day we were clearing this land and it was really, really, well, the interviewer sees what kind of land around here, and in those days, we didn't have power machinery we just had a horse and we had an old thing called a stump puller, which I used to work on too. But anyway, he used to blast a lot and there was this big thing he'd blast and there was this big thing he'd blast and there was a great big hold under this huge tree that he'd blasted out, and he said to me 'take this pry and the pry was about a 12' cedar rail, like the split railing fences ^{that} you see, the snake rail fences. And he had it all fixed up, and I was to go on the end of this pry and hang on while, and I was supposed to pry this stump up while he was gonna do something, I guess. I don't know what he was gonna do under there. So I said OK. So I got out on this thing, and I did something and the pry

slipped and clipped me under the chin and I landed in this great big hole. And I thought I was killed. And he looks over the hole, down at me, and he said to me 'what are you doing there?' And of course, I had to laugh because he was really mad and I was laying down there like I was dead.

SD: Do you think that the way that your father treated you, which was to teach you skills and allow you to do things that most girls didn't do, really helped you to develop a sense of independence, then helped you later go into an area which most women wouldn't...

TG: It must have. At that time I never thought about it cause that's how I was brought up, but when I stop and think about it now, yes, because none of my friends did things like that. You know their fathers, they did the dishes and they swept the steps and things like that, and I had to go out and help him, and I used to have my own little crosscut, oh about, yea about a 6' crosscut saw. Smaller than his, he used to use a great big one, and he'd saw part of the block and then I'd finish it off. Well I mean I didn't know very many girls that could swing a crosscut saw. Mind, it's a nice thing to do. It's really nice to get that rhytm. And I had my own sledge hammer. He used to split the...cause we used wood in

those days you know. But, and he taught me to drive the truck and I could drive back up through those stumps just marvelous. And none of my friends did that kind of work, and maybe that's why I enjoyed the work I went into. And even in my later years, as I was growing up, my husband was remodelling houses, and he'd go off and leave me with a crew of about ten guys to look after while I was, you know, looking after all these guys to do the work. And then as the years went by I also helped my husband build houses, you know, help him do all that kind of work, and I like it. I've always liked it.

SD: You must have been in pretty good physical shape then?

TG: I was quite strong, umhum. I have to go to a chiropractor^v now quite often to get things jarred into place again but, you just did it, you know. You never thought about it.