

You were born in Montreal, Canada, and your parents moved down here when you were only two years old?

No, they moved to Edmonton when I was just under two years old, maybe 18 months, or something like that. My father was a chef on the Canadian Pacific Railroad before he was married and traveled between Montreal and Vancouver, B.C. In those days, the trains were a lot slower than today, so consequentley...then he went to work for the Canadian Postal Service. Incidentally, he was born in New York. They were right on the border there, and could cross over any time they wanted. Anyway, when he went to work for the Postal Service, he lost his [American] citizenship because he had to swear allegiance to the King. When he married my mother, she became a citizen up there automatically. That was the law at the time.

What year were they married?

1907. I was born in 1908. I'm the oldest of five, "the old man". Anyway, we could claim citizenship for the kids provided they moved back before they were 18, which they did. During World War I. He had a couple of brothers here in Tacoma, so we moved to Tacoma. The uncles all left home at an early age and scattered to all different parts of the country.

Did your Dad come from a large family?

Yes, he came from a family of ten. Five boys and five sisters, all gone now. After that, he went to work in Todd

Shipyard. When the shipyard folded up, he was out of work for quite awhile. Can I back up a little?

Sure.

When he first went to Edmonton, he borrowed \$100 from a friend and he opened up a restaurant. I have a picture of that at home. Me sitting on a stool. I was just a little tot. After that, my mother got sick and he sold the place. I might mention that he called it "The Union Cafe". He didn't know what to call it, and one day a union representative came in there and introduced himself. He wanted to know if my father wanted to join the union, and my father said, "Sure, I'll do better than that, I'll name my restaurant "The Union Cafe". He made pretty good money until my mother got sick, then he came down here and went to work in the shipyard and was out of work here in the 1920s when things were pretty bad.

How old were you when the Market crashed in 1929? I guess you were about 21. What do you remember about it?

Well, I'm 82 now, so I guess that's about right. There were an awful lot of people out of work. I remember there were some demonstrations, I always believed to this day that they were Communist demonstrations. They all met up here on 13th and Commerce streets. There were hundreds of them. We formed a parade and marched up to City Hall. They wouldn't talk to us, [or] to the leaders.

What year was that? After the Crash?

Yes. I had to go on Welfare, by the way. In 1934 I got a job as a radioman on a fish tender, Pioneer Seafoods. I was the first one to operate a ship-to-shore radio; I initiated that. I was up there about a month and then they had a big strike. The longshoremen all went on strike, and also the fishermen. So, everybody was on strike.

In 1934?

Yes. There were a lot of bitter feelings too. When we came down in October, I was rich. I had \$275. So I proposed.

So, you got married in October, 1934?

Yes, on October 29. After that I went to work for Sears and Roebuck. They were on 24th and Pacific. After the holidays, I was out of a job. That's when I went on Welfare. I got a little ahead of myself earlier. I went to work for Dave's Tailoring as a presser. They made jackets. That's when I joined my first union. I had to join the union.

It was a closed shop then?

Yes. You had to have the job in order to get into the union. As a matter of fact, all the unions were closed shop then. In those days. Shortly after that, I got myself elected on their Executive Board. That was the first time. No pay or anything. Then that place went on strike. My mother, sister, and my wife and I, we all walked out. We

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were all locked out. We never did go back to work there after the strike was settled.

**At Dave's Tailoring? So, four of your family members all worked there, and you all struck? And why didn't you go back to work there?**

Yes, Dave's Tailoring. We all struck. There were some bitter feelings. Some went back and we were picketing the front. So we decided not to go back. I looked around here, but there were no jobs to be had. Some friends of ours worked in a garment factory in San Francisco. I wrote them a letter and they said to come on down, we might be able to get you a job. So my wife and I packed up and headed down there on a Saturday. I had a brother and a uncle who were already there. On Monday morning I started out looking for this plant. In the meantime, I ran into this outfit called "Everwear Manufacturing". I thought as long as I was going by there I might as well put my application in. Anyway, I got in there and told them about my experience in Tacoma, and the boss there, he said; "Yes, I got an opening." I just about fell down. I'd been out of work for awhile. He says; "You come in Wednesday." Well, I was right there on Wednesday, right on the ball.

**What kind of pay was that?**

Well, everything was piece work. I worked pressing corduroy trousers. The first day I made under \$1. Then I got up to being kinda speeding there, \$2 per day. Then the factory I was working for moved to Napa, California, in the meantime.

A friend said; "Do you want to move to Napa?" I said, "Sure, we'll go to Napa." Part of the factory was in the old Palace Hotel, a four story building, and the other part was in the garage next door. So they needed somebody there at night, especially in the hotel. Nobody was living there. General Grant, incidentally, stayed overnight there on his way to San Francisco. So, we moved in. Picked out the room we wanted. We had the kitchen all to ourselves. Everything was paid for. Gas, utilities. We worked there for six years, until World War II broke out. The high school was offering all kinds of courses down there. The one that appealed to me was welding. I took a welding course and passed it. When I passed the test, they had some fellas there from the shipyard. I was getting ready to move. I didn't want my wife down there alone. Of course, I didn't have no trouble getting a job there. I became a boss.

**At which location did you become a boss?**

At Todd Shipyard [in Tacoma].

**So, you had come back up here?**

Yes. I had already passed on my exams down there, so I was an expert there, because they were breaking in all kinds of guys. That's why they made me a boss. I had a large crew. I stayed there until the end of the war. I had to join the Boilermaker's Union. I never became active.

**When was that [that you joined the Union]?**

1942. Then, when they closed down, I went into partnership in a restaurant. Do you know Tacoma very well?

Somewhat.

[Know] where the old Olympus Hotel was? We had a little restaurant right near there. We did real good there. Oh, yes, we had to sign a union contract, too. That's all the little people had, to join a union. Everybody else belonged to unions, associations; medical associations. They all had associations, so why not us?

As an owner, then, you joined the Union?

Yes. Then my wife got sick and we sold that out. Then I went to work at Ft. Lewis Officer's Club as a dinner cook. They wanted me to manage the whole club, but I told the Colonel "No". They finally got a manager, but I left because they didn't know nothin about the kitchen.

Was that before you and your uncle bought your own place?

Yes, I had to back-up a little. That was a long time ago.

Yes, nearly 50 years ago. I read alot of your articles in the Labor Advocate, and I never realized your were an owner at one time. How long did you have the restaurant? Was it a cafe?

Over a year, but I couldn't tell you how much over a year. A small place. Had a counter with 11 stools and a table with four chairs. That was the size of it.

Mostly lunch, or breakfast, lunch, and dinner?

Let's see, breakfast, lunch, I'm not sure. My uncle was an experienced chef, having worked in the Palace Hotel in San Francisco. That's where I picked up a lot. I was never asked to join the union, incidentally. I went to them. I worked in various restaurants around town.

**What year did you join Local 61? Was it a big union? Can you describe it?**

Yes, when I joined, there was close to 3,000 members. The union went down to about 2700 members and stayed that way all the time I was an officer of the union. I decided to run for Executive Board, so I did. I went out and campaigned and won the election by one vote. I'll tell you more about that later, the election that I won by one vote.

**Do you remember what year that was?**

No. I served on the Executive Board for quite awhile. We were having leadership troubles, so I decided to run for the business agent's job, which was a full time job. So, I run for business agent. I campaigned like all get out, just like the politicians, you know. Hit every restaurant in town seeking votes. Lo and behold, I win by one vote again. So, don't let anyone ever tell you that your vote don't count. I tell that to people all the time.

**What motivated you to want to become a full time business agent? What type of job was it?**

I had to organize the non-union workers, bring them into the union. It was quite a job. I had to attend all funerals,

had to visit the sick members. Sometimes members were suspended, and we had to go out and pick them up.

**What do you mean by "pick them up?"**

Well, sometimes they would move from one place to the other. That's quite prevalent in our industry. We had to go seek them out.

**To collect their dues?**

Yes, they had to reinstate. If they didn't reinstate, we would put them off their job. Simple as that. Management was real fair. We had one employer, though. Pierce County was divided into three sections; we had three business agents. They were the outside managers of the union. I first went to work in the outside district. I had Enumclaw, Buckley, Black Diamond, Puyallup, Sumner, everything outside the City Limits. We had one employer in Puyallup, called Nettie's Cafe, whenever she had any new people, she always called me and told me to come and pick them up. She told me this two or three times; "As long as I have to pay union wages, I expect them to join the union." That's the way she put it, just like that. I thought that's real neat, I didn't have to pound the bricks looking for them. We used to work at all hours, you know. It was a 24 hour thing. Sometimes we came in later in the morning.

**Sounds like a tough job.**



It is. And a thankless one too. All kinds of people.

How many years did you do that?

All told, about 20 years. Salaried office, about 18. It was interesting, educational. All kinds of employers. We had good ones, and some real bad ones.

Why don't we get into some of the employers? Into the strike? What year did you become Secretary/Treasurer?

1956. I was elected. All the business agents were under me. I was a little tough to work for. Some of the business agents were somewhat lax, so I would have to get on them once in a while, so naturally they didn't like me. Two lady business agents conspired to get me out of office, and they succeeded. I was glad anyway. When I won the election the last time I had made up my mind to serve the term out and then I'd resign. I'd had enough.

How many agents did you have at that time?

Still three. That's when the ladies came in - 1971.

In the early years, then, there were more men than women in your union?

It was about a toss up. In those days, they had men waiters. That went out like everything else. Pretty soon there were no men, they were all women.

In the late 60s and 70s?

Yes. We had some real snazzy men waiters. It was always nice to see them work.

What was it about them that impressed you?

Well, some of them wore nice white shirts, bow ties, dark slacks. They always carried a little towel. A lot of them became bartenders, better paying jobs.

Let's get more into the strike. You had been the Secretary/Treasurer for awhile. I noticed in reading your articles you first casually mentioned the negotiations in January of 1969. Things appeared to be going rather slowly at first. You first met with the owners at the Winthrop Hotel, and you mention that not a lot was getting done. Do you remember much about the first meeting? Who was present? How long did it go on?

We had a negotiating committee. The union appointed a negotiating committee composed of some of the officers, because the rank and file didn't know much about negotiating an agreement. I'd already been through that over the years. That's how we met. We had about six people on our negotiating committee, representing the union. The employers had an equal number.

Do you remember any of the people there? First, on the employer's side?

Well, there was John Honan. Incidentally, he was the one I beat out as business agent by one vote.

And now he was representing the employers?

Yes, he'd gone into business. A guy by the name of Stanley. I don't remember his first name. He was from the Gay 90's Restaurant out there, a big night spot. We had John Swan. I don't remember who else.

Those were three of the people you were negotiating with. What about who was on your committee?

I want to mention one thing. When I became Secretary of the union, the bartenders wanted their own union. I told them if I'm elected I'll see that you get it. The previous secretary didn't want no part of that. He wouldn't allow it, he wouldn't even talk to them so they got pretty mad at him. That's how I got elected into office, so I did. We had to form a joint Executive Board, three from our Local 61 and three from the Bartender's. They got their charter. They were real happy then. I was elected chairman of the joint Executive Board of the two unions. Representing the bartenders was Anthony Pasananti. I talked to him the other day on the phone.

I was curious about that. I noticed from the Labor Advocate that there was one union, then there was two, now there's one. What was the bartender's reasons for wanting their own union?

They felt they could get better working conditions, and better pay. When we negotiated a contract for the industry there were a lot more waitresses and kitchen helpers than there were waiters and bartenders, so they controlled the vote. When the industry said they would give the waitresses x numbers of cents per hour, they thought that was pretty

good, but the bartenders were unhappy because they were just getting peanuts, so that's why.

Let's get back to the strike of 1969. Twelve of you met, then, at the Windsor Hotel?

That was the first negotiation. At that time we presented what we, we sent them a letter first, advising we were going to ask for this...some of the things we were proposing. They were against that. We already had health and welfare. They were opposed to the pension.

So, the pension system was a strong point between you?

Yes. We had a series of negotiating meetings. They were also against the wages that the membership was asking.

Was there a big difference between the two?

Yes. There was quite a big difference at first. There was a compromise. Anyway, we negotiated...I don't know how many meetings we had. Anyway, it got to where both sides were at each other's throats, so we went back to the membership and told them what the story was. "It's up to you people to decide for yourselves if you want to go on strike to get what you believe you should get." So, they did. We voted...I don't remember how many...I think it was almost unanimous.

It says in your column of June 13, 1969, "In the 15 years I've been in Local 61, this is the largest gathering of the membership I've seen." It states that 91% voted to strike.

That's about right, too.

I was curious about one thing. Your column called for the strike to begin the first part of June, but for some reason the strike did not actually...it was about a two week delay. Do you remember what caused the two week delay?

Yes. I called the International Headquarters and told them to send out one of their vice-presidents. As a matter of fact, this vice-president they sent out was the Secretary here at one time. Lester Green. I was real happy because he knew the people here. So, he thought that we were not really organized yet to go on a strike. All along, I had felt the same way, because I had never been the leader in a strike of that size. I was a little nervous. I didn't want to botch things. He said to go back into negotiations, so we did. Nothing came of that. We did go out. Then we were more organized as a result of his ...

Lester Green came out here from Cincinnati?

He came up here from Arizona. He had quite a district. They used to send him out on special assignments. This was one of his special assignments, and they sent him up to Alaska. He was their ace troubleshooter in the industry.

And he was familiar with the Tacoma area, and he was instrumental in helping you organize and prepare for the strike? And that was why the two week delay occurred?

That's right.

So he joined you in the negotiations. Did all twelve members who began negotiating continue through the entire process?

Yes. Once in a while...very seldom did someone change in there. If somebody didn't show up one day, they sent in someone else for that session.

So when Lester joined you there were 13 of you?

Yes. He took the leadership, being he was an International vice-president, and that is what he was sent out here for, to take leadership.

Did he feel as strongly about the issue of a pension plan as you did?

No, he never committed himself on that.

Was that then, still a big issue between your union and the owners, the pension plan? Was it bigger than wages, would you say?

Yes, it was a big issue. Wages was the biggest issue.

The first two months, then, there was no compromise mentioned?

No. They didn't want the pension plan because of one thing. We wanted to get our foot in the door... a couple of pennies an hour. They were aware of that too. They figured; "Okay, then they are going to keep adding to that as the years go by. We'll end up paying quite a bit more than what they're asking for now." We knew that, and they knew it too.

So, the strike started, and the Seattle chapter went out at the same time. I understand from your column that they were only out for two weeks. Why? Did they have an issue in the pension plan?

They already had a pension plan. So, no problem there.

You had different benefits?

Yes, they had better. We were trying to get better.

Other than wages and pension plan, were there any other benefits being negotiated?

Yes. There were some paid holidays, or time and a half or double time days we were asking for. That was a directive from the membership. The membership decided what they were going to ask for. We presented them with a schedule of what we thought was right. They accepted that, but they wanted to add to it. That was the fly in the ointment. They're the boss. Anything that we proposed they agreed to, but they wanted to add to it. We had a schedule set out that we thought was pretty fair. Some of these rank and file members got a little too ambitious...that was the fly in the ointment. We had to try and negotiate for those additional demands.

You were willing to concede on some of the issues of double time and holidays if you could do well on the salary and pension plan issues. That was the Union's position? Would you say that was correct?

Yes, I would say so.

And, management's position wasn't close to that? It sounded from your articles that they weren't willing to compromise. Is that true?

Yes, that's right. We also wanted to improve the health and welfare by a couple of pennies. They didn't fight us on that. They agreed to two cents an hour increase. They

didn't take us on about that, it was the pension plan that they were [against, and]...the wages...and the holidays.

During the summer of 1969, while you were negotiating, did you participate in any of the picketing?

No, I had my hands full with what was going on in the office and distributing the pickets to various restaurants.

So, you organized the pickets?

Yes, I and the secretary of the Bartender's Union. However, I did go out on the picket line and see how they were doing. It made them feel good to see Secretaries out there. We explained to them that it was impossible for us to get away to do that work ourselves.

Sure. Were there any violent incidents on the picket lines that were brought to your attention?

No real violence. There were some misunderstandings, and a lot of name calling, of course. We were called all sorts of names.

By whom?

One or two employers. Some nasty characters. Like the manager of the Winthrop Hotel. I tangled with him. Actually, if we had been together, we would have come to fist fights. There were some pretty nasty incidents on the picket line. We had a chef that worked at the Tacoma Club, at the top of that building. We were picketing the Winthrop Hotel and this manager that I'm speaking of was going out to



take him on. That was a dangerous situation. I guess he was calling this black guy (the chef) some names, but he backed down and went back inside.

Is that what caused your confrontation with him?

No, that was a different time. He was a nasty character, and he was boozed up a lot of the time, so naturally, he thought he was pretty powerful.

I'm glad you mentioned the black chef. Obviously, he was out picketing. Were there many minority members in your union in 1969?

Yes, we had quite a few Asian girls, and Black cooks, and some Spanish cooks, not many, and some Chinese. We had quite a variety.

Quite an large ethnic diversity, it sounds like. Were they all supportive of the strike?

That's right, quite a diversity. They were all pretty good. We never had too much trouble there. We had problems later on, I'll tell you about that later.

Why don't we go ahead and cover that now? You had trouble later on? Why was that?

Well, as the strike progressed...see, our industry doesn't pay very well. In other words, people are underpaid. You take the chefs in different restaurants. They got to know just as much as plumbers or electricians out here, otherwise, they can put an employer out of business if they don't know their stuff. So, after about a month of striking some of them were getting broke and were out of money. We

didn't have no strike fund. We tried to build one. As a matter of fact when I went in as Secretary we tried to build one, but they turned it down. I was in favor of having the strike fund in case we got into this very thing we are talking about right now, but the membership wouldn't go for it. They didn't want to pay a couple of nickels more from their paychecks so we could accumulate a war chest.

There was no war chest in 1969, so the membership had no funds to draw on during the strike?

That's right. So, the only thing we could give them, when they went out on the picket line, was \$5 for lunch money and gas. Some of them got in pretty bad straits...with families, and kids to feed, a wife...So, some of them starting going back. That's when the trouble started. Those that were still out on strike were willing to [fight]...with them at any time, at the drop of a hat. I guess, of course, I never seen any of it myself, but I heard about it.

Was any of it racially motivated? Or was it strictly over the fact that some people crossed picket lines?

We never had that kind of trouble all through the strike, although some of the Asian girls went back. But, the black chef I was talking about, he stayed out to the bitter end.

Do you remember his name?

Henry, something. I couldn't remember his name right now for all the tea in China. That was over 20 years ago.

One of the members that I spoke to recently mentioned that there was a lot of angry feelings against the Teamsters because they were delivering produce to the backdoors of the restaurants.

Yes, I went to them and told them what our situation was. The officers of the Teamsters were very supportive of us. On a couple of occasions the drivers went through the picket lines and we caught them and reported them. They were brought before their Executive Board and they were fined, and then they turned the fine over to our union. So, they were very supportive, right from the start. Just some of their drivers....

I'm glad you mentioned fines. In your column you state that some of the members who crossed the picket line were then taken to court and fined. How did that end?

They weren't taken to court. What happened was that those who went through the picket line had charges brought against them by the membership and they had...they were asked... to appear before our Executive Board, but they never did. So, our Executive Board went ahead and levied a fine on them. We had all kinds of charges for a while.

What kinds of fines were they?

They ranged all the way from \$50 to..I think the Bartender's had a \$500 fine, I'm not sure. I know they had excessive fines. Anyway, that all stayed in limbo until after the strike was over, then we could take them in tow a little.

To back up just a little, how would you describe the last session when the agreement was reached?

Well, this is the way they put it. This involves more money for the health and welfare, the pension...They were getting short fused too, you know. They were having some problems too. No money coming in, no customers. They were hurting too a little bit, it was a two-way street there. So, they said, this is what we're going to give you. They sat right across the table from me and said; "This is what we are going to give you, take it any way you like." That's the words they used; "take it any way you like." So we thought it was pretty good and our negotiating committee recommended we call a special meeting and explain it to the membership. We played a little trick on them, for their own good. It involved the pension plan. We said the employers were willing to give us so many cents on the pension plan, but they didn't, see? They gave us a total package, and we took a couple of pennies off of that. That's how our pension plan got started. We recommended they accept it, and they did. They were getting tired. This being a service industry, all service industry is low paid.

You decided to set up a pension plan with the money? That's what you meant by "their own good". How would you describe the results of the 1969 strike?

It was fairly successful. We got a pretty good increase at that time, so that's why we recommended they accept it.

Was Lester Green there at the end?

Yes, and he also recommended they accept it. The Secretary of the Pierce County Labor Council, we had him there also

advising, he said it was the best thing we could do. If we went on any longer, we could lose.

I suppose it was very hot, picketing was pretty miserable work?

Yes. Now, here we are faced with all these people that's got charges against them. That was a big issue. We started collecting. They were paying, some of them. But someone wrote to the International, complaining about why they went through the picket line. And the International comes up with the stupidest stunt I've ever heard of, and I told them so too after it was all over with. They exonerated every one of those people. Some of the fines I had collected, I paid them back. It incensed the members who had stayed out on strike. So, there were a lot of bitter feelings around.

So, the International created alot of bitter feelings?

If they had left us alone, we were going just great. I wrote them a real hot letter about what they had done. I was going out anyway, I was done. They never answered back. They never said a word. I know two of the International vice-presidents said that was good, he needed telling off.

Who did you write to?

Ed S. Miller. He was the one who did the exonerating. He took it upon himself. He was the boss.

You mentioned in your column that the Christmas Party that year was cancelled because of bad feelings. Is that what you meant, about the exonerating and fines being levied?

Yes.

Just briefly, you mentioned a women's auxiliary. Organizing a group to work on a float for a centennial parade. What was that about, and who were they?

Oh, a group of the girls organized for a float, a flower in our hat. It was good, public recognition. That was it, they didn't stay organized.

When I attended a quarterly meeting at the union hall last week, I noticed there were only four or five members present. What do you think is the future of the union?

As far as I'm concerned, the future of the culinary unions...When I went out of office in 1971, we had over 2800 members between the two locals, of which I was chairman of the Executive Board. When I went out of office, somebody got elected who had never done anything like this before and he was relatively new to the union. As a result, he didn't know how to operate, and he made some rules that were detrimental to the union, in a way. The business agents in the field used to go out to the outlying districts and collect dues, like up in Eatonville. They hated to mail them in, so I used to go up there when I was the outside business agent. Well, he stopped all of that. He said the business agents aren't dues collectors. Well, they are! They are everything out there in the field. As a result of that, we had cities like Enumclaw, we had quite a few houses up there, like Buckley, Gig Harbor, Sumner, Puyallup. A lot of little hamlets we had organized. Well, they lost all of that. So, I don't think their membership is over 600 people

now. I think that's pretty close. I used to have the Puyallup Fair all organized. That was a big shot in the arm. That's all gone now.

I appreciate your taking the time to come down here to the University of Washington campus in Tacoma and I appreciate your comments. It's three o'clock now, and I know you have other plans for this afternoon, so I'll let you go. Thank you.