



Otilie Markholt

**Interview of Otilie Markholt**  
**by**  
**Kendra Fitzpatrick**

## INTERVIEW

The interview that follows was done on February 9, 1993 in the home of Otilie Markholt, by Kendra Fitzpatrick. We had met previously, at which time Ms. Markholt was presented with a copy of the questions that would be asked. During the interview, she sat with the questions in front of her, and it seemed redundant to ask them word for word again. The questions will appear in full in the appendix and the reference to those questions as they are recorded will appear as part of the transcription. Ms. Markholt's conversation will appear as OM, mine as KF.

KF: Today is February 9, 1993. My name is Kendra Fitzpatrick and I am interviewing Otilie Markholt, for the University of Washington, Doing Community History Project.. Okay, we're going to begin the interview by asking you a couple questions which you have already been made aware of. The first one is just a general sketch of your life history, who you are, where you came from.

OM: Well, how far do you want to go back in my family?

KF: Well, if you feel like some of the history is important to your background, as far back as you want to go.

OM: Well, all right then. On my mother's side, her parents were German immigrants. She was born and grew up in Chicago, and taught school until she was married in her mid thirties. On my Dad's side, his family were what he called Pennsylvania Dutch farmers in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. His Dad was wounded in the Civil War and mustered out and homesteaded in Iowa. So he spent his boyhood on the farm in Iowa and then moved to Chicago. He went to Alaska first in 1897, during the time he was attending the University of Michigan Law School during a vacation, where his sister and brother-in-law had a trading post up on the Yukon River at Circle City near the Canadian Line. This was, of course in 1897 during the Gold Rush. Subsequently, he spent 20 years in Alaska on Seward Peninsula. During that time, he and my mother, who had

known each other in Chicago, corresponded, and were married in 1912. She went up there.

I was born in a little mining camp, near the Arctic Circle, on February 25, 1916 and my parents then were right about 40. So, I was an only child and I was a child of older parents. We moved out here, came back to the states in Nov. 1919. [We] went back to Chicago where their families were and then they moved out here for good to Seattle in the Spring of 1921. So, I grew up in West Seattle. And, I don't know what's interesting about that childhood except that I was an only child. I went to grade school and high school in West Seattle, two years at the University of Washington, putting myself through as best I could. I was in high school during the depression years, from the fall of 1929 through the spring of 1933. My dad had been selling insurance and lost his job and things were extremely hard. Is that enough family background?

KF: I think so. I'm curious as to whether your family was close. Your father was an insurance man. But, did he have other businesses? Was he ever a laborer? or - -

OM: No, no, he wasn't. We were a close-knit family. They were politically conservative, in spite of what the depression was doing to us. And, we - - they were mainstream folk that maybe you wouldn't have expected this child to grow out of. (At this point we both laughed, acknowledging the obvious contrast between her parents' and her own political views.)

KF: That's my question. Where your beliefs came from, if that wasn't the influence.

OM: No, it wasn't the influence. Well, for one thing, the depression is bound to teach a person something. They had no money to help me go to college. I wanted to go very, very much. So I got a job in a dime store. The first work I'd done. I didn't even baby-sit or anything in high school. I was 17, this was the H.L. Green company in Seattle. I didn't know it at the time, but they fired a bunch of their regular clerks and hired these 17 year olds because they could pay them the state minimum wage of \$9.00 for a 48-hour week. I learned that after I went to work there. They didn't resent me, they were nice to me. I was a

dumb kid. But, I learned what a cheap chiseling outfit that was. Then the NRA came in, the National Recovery Administration, and their minimum standard, I believe, called for \$11.50 a week for 44 hours. Well that lasted a week or two and then the wages dropped down and the word went around that if you want to work here, then don't say anything.

But that was my first lesson that this employer was a cheap chiseler. And the women knew it very well. And in fact, besides that, the manager of the store was a pig and they warned me that if he ever sends for you to go up and unpack stock, just go home. So, this was a 17 year old kid. So I called the school counselor, through whom I'd gotten the job and reported this and she said, "Well that happens." So that - - I did save enough to get myself into the University of Washington. There were no scholarships in those days, except for the athletes. They got scholarships. The school at that time was losing its good teachers - - (I was going to be a history major)- - because it was paying them so little. And at the same time it had a reputation as being one of the really desirable schools for the Greek Houses. It was a very negative impression right from the first. I found a few people whose friendship I enjoyed and - -

KF: You lived at home then and went to school?

OM: Yes, yes. I did until into my second year. Then, I scrounged around then in the summer of '34, nothing was happening. The big waterfront strike was going on although I didn't realize it because I wasn't close to those things. But I ended up trying to sell Realsilk Hosiery and - -

KF: Door to door?

OM: Yes, door to door. Terrible! (chuckle) And finally, when I was desperate for money for the next quarter's tuition, I took a housework job which just scared me stiff because I had never had to do any housework and I didn't know how to do it; and, I disliked every minute of it! But I did get back into school and between that and some more dime store - - I made it on into the second year. One job was for the eminent Anthropology Professor Dr. Erna Gunther, and she wasn't much of an employer either. As I remember, I worked from three to eight and I was given a meal that was dinner. That was five days a week and then

from eight to eight on Saturday. And I earned \$15.00 a month. So, that was pretty bad.

KF: And that was basically housework? You weren't baby-sitting ?

OM: Oh yes there was a very spoiled little boy, eight years old that was around after school. But otherwise it was cleaning up her house and...preparing her dinner. Ah, so I finally got on a student relief job at 50 cents an hour and this, this was clover!

KF: Sure!

OM: This was in the Library filing, filing cards in the Suzallo Library. And - - I gave it up after the second year. That was, that was enough - -

KF: Why do you suppose you quit?

OM: Why did I? Well I just got, I guess, I just got disgusted with it. For instance, at the beginning of that year, the college received a permanent president, Dr. Lee Paul Seig. He came from the University of Pittsburgh, and I went to the opening assembly where he spoke to the students. He said, " You're here to learn, not to think." And I was beginning to think. I was putting all these experiences together. I was calling myself a pacifist. I had participated in a little demonstration on the edge of the campus where the Sigma Nu boys came and broke up our signs and roughed us up. They didn't touch me physically. I was beginning to call myself a socialist because I didn't think that things were fair the way they were working out.- - Well, the first year I was scouting around for some, something to plan to do. I went to the Dean of the Law School and - - he said that [there's] no chance unless you go into a family firm. And my grades were plenty good to get into Law School - -

KF: They would not admit you because you were a woman?

OM: Yes, yes. I went to the Dean of the Journalism Department and he said you could write home economics or society, because I was a woman. So I, I just

gave up. At school I had a few good friends. The school had so many negative things going for it. It had some good teachers, some that I thoroughly enjoyed, It was marvelous to be in their classes to see these horizons opening up. I loved it! But, the school itself, no. So I quit.

KF: Okay. So when you quit, where did you go?

OM: Oh, I got married. Not directly but, within a year. And - - I married a young activist, Robert Donbroff, in the Sailor's Union. And you have this question, people who have given me direction or changed the direction. I had been starting to look for a crusade - - the peace demonstration, calling myself a socialist. I gave a little talk in our speech class why I am a socialist. I didn't know anything about socialism, but anyway. So here was a crusade. He was a very passionate advocate of unionism. I could join right with him and this was a very good thing. So, I didn't worry about going back to school.

KF: You had your mission or your direction.

OM: Yes, I had my direction. From the time I was in second year high school, I knew that the thing I wanted to do most was write. And that was in the back of my head all the time, no matter what else, what else I did. So when the agent of the Seattle branch of the Sailor's Union retired, in 1939, and by this time I had one child, [Bob], born in 1937, February 1, 1937, and I had another child, [Lee], born February 15, 1939. Pete Gill retired as agent of the Sailor's Union. There were no such thing as pensions in those days. He was probably pushing 70 and he'd given his whole life to the union. [He had] been agent there since the turn of the century. He was just a marvelous old Viking of a man. Just a beautiful guy. He was a friend of my husband's. So the union commissioned him to write the union history more or less as an excuse to keep him on full pay. So, knowing my interest, my husband arranged it, and we arranged that I was to work with him. So I ended up consulting with him, but doing the history of the union. Then worked at home with these two little tots. And it was never published. There's a copy in the Bancroft Library and it has been used extensively as a basis for other stuff. I finished that in May, 1942. So, now, where are we?

KF: We're talking about influences on your early outlook on life.

OM: My marriage broke up. And I came to Tacoma in October 1942. I wanted to get someplace else. I had finished this book in May and Pete's [Gill] health was such that that was extremely urgent. I just had to finish that, because I wanted him to see it completed. And he did and he lived another three years. But I wanted to get away from Seattle. In the mean time, through my husband again, I had met Ralph Chaplin. Do you know who he is?

KF: No I don't.

OM: All right. He wrote the labor anthem "Solidarity Forever".

KF: Oh, yes.

OM: He spent 5 years in Leavenworth prison for his beliefs during the First World War, of a 20 year sentence. He came out here first to edit the maritime paper. In fact my husband was instrumental in getting him here. Ralph was in San Francisco. Then we were in touch. I got to know him. He was, by this time in 1942, editing the Tacoma Labor Advocate, their weekly labor paper. I had the idea, as soon as I finished this book of the Sailors' Union, I knew that I had to do a book not just on one union in the maritime industry but a book about all of them and not beholden to any union, not working for any union. And I did receive a stipend as I went along from the Sailors' Union. But, [to do the book] as I saw it. So, I started, on this. I was going to come over here and get a job unrelated to the unions and Ralph Chaplin would be here and he would critique my work and everything would be lovely.

I had gone to work after I finished the sailors' book I worked in the Tea Room in Bartell's Drug Store in Seattle. This was during the height of the War. They had their celebrations at noon banging around on, let's see this was about 3rd and Pine, I think. It was a filthy place. But it was union. I did join the union. I had never belonged to a union before. I had offered to join while I was working on the book. I'd ask Pete, "Well shouldn't I be joining the office employees?" and he said he'd talk to them, and they said well they didn't see any need. So, I didn't. But then I did join the waitresses' in Seattle. It was this famous old Local

240 that Alice Lord - - She's one of our famous, probably the most famous woman in Washington Labor history - - She was still business agent of the local. I remember her as a little old wizened tiny woman by that time. So I came over here on a transfer card and went to the union and got a job. First, in the K Street Grill. (that didn't work out) and then at the Mecca Restaurant here. Do you remember the Mecca?

KF: Yeah.

OM: Good. Good. Nice restaurant, but awful busy. It was terribly busy during the war. Just a rat race. So by the time I finished a shift there, there was no question about writing anything. I had left my children with my folks until I could get proper housing and a proper shift. This good day nursery here I had inquired about before I had ever come over. And, let's see, that was October when I came over.

KF: Was that unusual to have a nursery for working women?

OM: I don't know how unusual. This was a private organization and I don't know how long it had been in existence. It was excellent and it was pay in proportion to your income. So, I am sure that other people paid more than I did. But it was a very fine nursery. It was where it still is up on I Street, but the building has been replaced. I was [working] mostly the early shift, 5:30 in the morning to 1:30. I opened up the place, so I had all kinds of afternoon and I used to go down and visit Ralph Chaplin in the [Labor] Advocate. I had known Tiny Tronson a little bit through my husband. He was active in the Longshoremen's Union and then we had met at the maritime affairs. These people decided that I should not be waiting tables. (chuckle) So, when a job came open in the Labor Temple in one of the offices, Tiny and somebody else came down and talked to me at the Mecca. And I said, "Ah, I don't want to get involved in that again." And things had gone from a very rosy picture at least the way I saw it in the last few years in Seattle in the union movement, all kinds of problems had develop. And it broke my heart and you know, well, when you're twenty a lot of these things can hit you hard. So I said, "Na, I don't want to, Too hard." So then, another job came open and they came down to me, just after I had worked the Christmas shift. And my wrist was swollen from carrying dishes,



you carry stacks of platters, and I had burns up my arms from the platters. You don't drop them if they start to burn you. So I said, "Yes, thank you!" (laugh)

KF: You were ready.

OM: I was ready. So the first of the year, I went to work for the Metal Trades Council. This was becoming one of the important war-time shipbuilding ports and the Metal Trades Council in peace time had been just a small organization, that negotiated for the small boat yards. But now it had grown to the point where the job of secretary was a full-time job and they needed an office and they needed an office secretary. All I knew about office work was typing. I was a fast typist because of all the writing I had done, so I went to work, the first of the year.

KF: '44, then?

OM: '43. I just waited tables 3 months. And I joined the Office Employees Union. It was a federal union then. Do you know what a federal local is?

KF: Associated with the National Organization? Is that what you mean?

OM: No. No. The AF of L from time immemorial had this arrangement, where if a group of workers in any locality want to form a union, but there is no international union there for them to belong to, they can form their local under the direct care of the central labor body in the area. So this was the situation with office employees all over the country at that time. And this was the Office Workers Union, Local 20360. That long number was the number of federal locals that had been chartered by the American Federation of Labor. Also, the first local was right here among the Longshoremen in the 1890s. So it's an old institution that has served very well until there are enough locals in the country and the impulse was there to get together to form a national union. So we formed our international union.

KF: So that preceded the national union - - the federal - -

OM: The federal locals preceded them.

KF: Right.

OM: Then in 1946 we received a charter from the American Federation of Labor as an international union in our own right, and turned in our federal charters. We were Local 23 because we were the 23rd oldest federal union in the country. So we received Local 23. The San Francisco Local is Local 3. Indianapolis in the headquarters of the Typographical Union is Local 1. I don't know how old they are. So, I became somewhat active in the union.

KF: You worked in the Metal Trades Council but you were a member of the Clerical Union.

OM: Yes, because those people needed a bargaining agent just like anyone else.

KF: Sure!

OM: We didn't have signed agreements for many, many, many years in the trade union offices. But the biggest, biggest segment of the Clerical Union were the offices of the retail stores, and the shipyards then began to organize with the time keepers and then the payroll office and so on. So we had several thousand members during the war. But only a little handful were working in the trade union offices.

KF: That Labor Temple was located on 15th and - -

OM: 15th and Market, yes. There is a picture of it in the Centennial Booklet. [See Appendix]

KF: I saw that, yes. When you first came to Tacoma, what was, what was the city like?

OM: It was crowded.

KF; It was a boom time?

OM: Oh yes, and it was very strong union. At that time, every single little restaurant, lunch counter was union. Everything was union in the area. It was a high tide of unionism and many, most of these shipyard workers came from where the unions weren't that strong, The unions made some effort, but they probably could have made more effort. They could always make more effort to teach their newcomers but there was very good morale among the working people.

KF: Why do you suppose there were so many unions during that time?  
Because they felt the power of the union movement?

OM: Well, for one thing, for instance, in the restaurant industry, that pays a lot less than shipyard wages. So they really had a hammer. Because, if they didn't accede to the union demands, they would lose their people to the shipyards. And, the workers were, [and] the other unions were getting support. Of course, we were just past the '30's, which was a real period of support and solidarity and organizing.

KF: So it was all still on everyone's minds.

OM: It was still in everyone's minds. Now for instance, a friend of mine told me this story. He was working as a carpenter in Portland during the '30's, and the waitresses were organizing down there. So they would go into the Carpenter's Hall and the people who are waiting for jobs around there, they would hand out nickels, and the guys would go to the particular restaurant that they were trying to organize at noon and buy their cup of coffee and sit. (laughing)

KF: And that was the way to do it, wasn't it?

OM: And that was the way to do it. (laughingly)

KF: Without protest, they were making a point.

OM: You always do it the easiest way. Some of this grandstanding that you see, it's a sign of weakness, not strength. For instance, you see all these big

demonstrations, but you see one car sitting outside of a place with a guy sitting in it with a picket sign propped up on the car. If that's all that's necessary, that union is strong. They don't need a swarm around there, because the employer isn't even going to try to buck them. Do you see what I mean?

KF: I see, yes.

OM: That may not look very picturesque, and that may not give you goose bumps like a general strike but that's a strong union.

KF: I never thought of it that way.

OM: Well, a lot of people don't and that's why there's been so much garbage written about when the labor movement is strong and when it isn't. And it isn't necessarily strong when its got to do all this hysterical stuff. If that's the only way to get it done, then fine. But that isn't because they're that strong, because they're not that strong.

KF: They want people to notice them more.

OM: Well, yeah. You do things the easiest way. But if you don't need to do something, that is an awful lot of effort, you're going to do it the other way.

KF: Makes sense.

OM: Yeah. Where are we? (referring to the questions on the written page.)

KF: We've talked about Tacoma, your impressions of life of the working class. We've kinda touched on that.

OM: Yes, like I said it was a terrific time, during the time of war, it was a terrific time of struggle for everybody. And then, of course, then wage freeze, the job freeze, not only the wage freeze, the job freeze and that was at the Metal Trades office. At the Metal Trades office the Secretary was one of the committee to decide the validity of workers' requests to be released from their jobs. If you didn't get a release, no employer could hire you for such and such

a time, so I don't think that was a very successful operation. There would be people, the tide flats would get damp and miserable and people with sinus trouble. That was no place to work. Transportation problems. If you lived within thirty miles, you had no problem. That was the way they ruled it. And, the only people that , that freeze didn't seem to work any hardship on were youngsters who were just roaming and who didn't care if they worked or didn't work. They were the ones who weren't hurt by that freeze. But it could work real injustice on a lot of people with real problems that weren't recognized by these guidelines.

KF: I can see that. Well then, where did you live at this time? Was there like a working class area for Tacoma people?

OM: There's always been a working class area for Tacoma people.

KF: A lot of the books say the South Tacoma area was the working class - -

OM: It was. It was. Sixth avenue was pretty much the dividing line from the turn of the century.

KF: Still is.

OM: Yeah. Still is. Okay. I was able to find a place to live, when I brought my kids over, in the dining room and kitchen of an old house up on Fawcett. Ninth and Fawcett. Where that telephone bunker is now. You know that?

KF: Yes, I know that. I used to work there.

OM: Oh. Well on the corner that time, opposite the old telephone building, was the Langendorf Bakery. Next to it was a big frame apartment building. And next to that was this old house. And it was a pretty, pretty rickety old place. But it was living quarters and there was a yard for the kids to play in. And I took them to the nursery during the day. So it was all right.

In August, 1943, I remarried a shipyard timekeeper that I met in the union. And then we got housing at Lincoln Heights. Then after the war we moved out south.

He was a North Dakota farmer. It would never have occurred to me to move out on a farm, but that was fine.

That marriage didn't last, but the farm idea did.

KF: Is that the same farm you now have?

OM: No it's actually down the road a bit, but it's in the same community.

KF: So that interested you in farming then?

OM: I made a big garden. I still do. When my sons were getting that age, the 4H [Club] formed in that area and they were interested, so they were in 4H. I was an assistant leader and we had cattle and chickens. Those kinds of projects.

KF: So, were you still working at the office?

OM: No. No. The Metal Trades shrank when the shipyards shrank. I worked about one day a week for a year. Then I stayed home. Then I went to work a temporary hitch for the Internal Revenue. Stayed home again. I didn't really want to work. All the time, though, I had kept my union membership as much as anything for the medical [benefits], because we had a group [policy]. I was paying it myself, Pierce County Medical, but we had a group I could pay through.

Then in November, 1949, I got a call from my union. And I had been somewhat active in it, volunteering. Would I come to work the next day? The office secretary had been embezzling money and the secretary just discovered it. So I went to work. It was on November 22, 1949.

KF: What union was that?

OM: My own union.

KF: Oh, the clerical.

OM: Yeah, Office and Clerical. Well today it is known as Office and Professional Employees International Union Local 23.

KF: Full time work then?

OM: Yes..

KF: What age were your sons then? Were they in school when you worked full time?

OM: Yes, now let me think. They would have been ten and twelve. And this man that I married had some [children] somewhat older, so there was one older boy of his that was there. They were there by themselves after school.

KF: Sure.

OM: (Pause) That marriage ended in 1952, about '52 or '53. So, that was it.

KF: That was it?

OM: Yeah.

KF: Now Markholt, is that your maiden name?

OM: That was my second married name because I was trying to make everything real nice and had this second husband, Halvor Markholt, adopt my children.

KF; So you kept it. It's the children's name too?

OM: Yes.

KF: Okay, well , was that your last job, then basically?

OM: No, I worked there until 1963. In the meantime, we did manage to get a pension plan for the local and I became vested. I had resumed work on this

maritime history that I'd had this idea of pursuing when my sons - - by that time they were grown. One of them went through the University of Washington and through Washington University Graduate School in St. Louis and graduated there with a Masters of Social Work. The younger one went a year to the University of Washington. Anyway, when they left home, I stayed on the farm, but I started putting this maritime history together. Ralph Chaplin had showed up again. And, he had been in Tacoma for a while and then Denver for a while, and they were back in Tacoma and he got after me to start writing. I was writing for him while I was working for the Metal Trades Council. I was writing feature articles and stuff for him for the Labor Advocate. And at one time he and I were figuring that I would be the next editor, but that wouldn't have worked out. So I was back on my history, living on the farm alone.

I finally got some grant money so that I could go back east and do some research. So I spent some time in the headquarters of the International Longshoremen's Union down at the tip of Manhattan Island. Ever been?

KF: I haven't.

OM: That was on Battery Row [where] their office was. You could look across at the Statue of Liberty.

KF: You stayed on the island for a period of time, or?

OM: I was there five months.

KF; Oh.

OM: I used what records they had. They were very nice to me. I had a letter of introduction from Harry McIlveigh, the Secretary of the Central Labor Council and these clerical workers were my sisters. See, we belonged to the same international union and I still have my card. In fact this January was my 50th Anniversary with the union. (proudly)

KF: And you still keep that active?



OM: Oh yes, I'm an active member. I wouldn't be a delegate to the Central Labor Council if I weren't.

OM: When I came back, I went to work again here and there for the trade unions. The union scale had been high. My living requirements have always been pretty modest as you can see by this outfit, (looking around at her modest kitchen) I have always preferred to have my time as I want to dispose of it, and just make enough to get by. So once my kids were not dependent on me, I didn't have to work full time. As I said, the trade union scale was always good. So I worked part time for years.

KF: Talk about any political, social, religious organizations and what were your experiences with them.

OM: All right. Part of this was while the kids were still home. I remember my older son got interested in the anti-nuclear movement just about the time I did, after the war when all that testing developed and all that stuff. So I joined SANE [Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy] I don't know what the acronym stands for now. It was an anti-nuclear testing committee. I also joined the American Civil Liberties Union during the McCarthy witch hunt because I didn't believe in that. I didn't like the Communists, but I didn't like what was happening either as far as the smear. Then in the late '50's the civil rights movement started in the South and then in the North, and I joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People here. There was a Tacoma Chapter that I was active in. More active after I got back from the East. I was East in 1964 and into 1965. So all of these organizations seemed very compatible with my views as a union person and their goals seemed to coincide with the goals of working people. So those are the organizations.

KF: Okay. In what way, if any did these affiliations influence your life?

OM: Not really. I gave some time to [some], the others I just, SANE and the ACLU, I just paid money to, to support them. The NAACP I gave some time to. I did their bulletin for awhile and participated in a few of their demonstrations. I

remember we picketed the Superintendent of Schools because he told us that he couldn't get rid of the racist text books until they wore out. That was Angelo Giadrone, so we picketed him.

KF: Okay. I'm going to turn this over now (referring to the tape in the tape recorder).

KF: Okay . Well, let's see, we were down to : Have there been people and/or events in your life that have given you direction. You mentioned your first husband, Have you significantly changed the direction or focus of your life?

OM: That direction has been pretty consistent. After I started working for my own union, in 1949, that's all I ever did was work for the trade union offices. It was full time up until I quit in '63, then back again, some part time, some full time, some vacations, different things, but that was all I did until I retired. I retired from the job a month before I was 65.

KF: But you haven't retired from the work. (laugh)

OM: No, but the rest of it is all volunteer. But I haven't worked for wages since then.

KF: Okay. We're kind of going into the second part of my interview, focusing more on the specific labor movement of Tacoma. The I.W.W. is kind of interesting in the Pacific Northwest. What part do you feel they played in the labor movement?

OM: They were involved in some extremely spectacular events that received far more publicity proportionately than they really deserved for the influence that they had on most people. They were very spectacular. Writers, reporters and historians and the whole works were more able to see these , these big spectacular things than to see that a union has negotiated a contract, that has provided these people with the benefits they really needed or has ended discrimination that was oppressive to them or something like that. So as far as publicity, its been all out of proportion. But, the most important role of the

I.W.W., I think, in the Northwest and Tacoma has been as a training ground for union people. Now, I didn't mention this when I talked about my first husband. He had belonged to the I.W.W. when he was going to sea in the Gulf. He sailed out of New Orleans, and the I.W.W. was strong in the merchant seamen at that time in the 1930's. So, he brought with him to the Sailor's Union the principles of the I.W.W. and the belief that economic action was the most effective in the union movement, that there is indeed a class struggle, that the interests of the working people and the employers are not identical. During the time that we were together in the 30's we were close to the I.W.W. He used to pick up the paper at the hall in Seattle. They had a hall at 2nd and Main in Seattle then. In fact, after we were separated, and I guess I was kind of looking for a home, I tried to join, went down there, and I was a housewife. They didn't take housewives. (laugh)

So, that was that. Then by the time I did go to work, I got involved in the Office Employees. But I brought to them what I had learned: that there is, indeed, a class struggle. The AFL CIO called it the adversarial relationship. That's exactly what it means, And that's exactly what they mean. It's the universal recognition that as long as we have to sell our labor, we can sell it better collectively. And the employers interest is to buy it as cheap as he/she can and our interest is to sell it as dearly as we can. So there is no community of interest there. A lot of remarkable people here were Wobblies in their youth. Some of the longshoremen who had very responsible positions. But the quality of their organization permeated a lot of the rest of the labor movement. Also, this was true in the woods and in the lumber industry. This, I think was their biggest contribution here.

KF: The ideology of...

OM: The ideology of it, exactly.

Yes, I did, indeed join. Long after the 1940 attempt. By the end of the 60's, I was getting disgusted with the union movement here. With some of the, what I call timidity. When that Washington Plaza building was built down on Pacific, between, what is it? 11th? 12th?

KF: 12th and 13th?

OM; There was Concrete Tech. over on the tide flats. The laborers were on strike and union people were installing the stuff in that building that the scabs were making. And everybody was afraid. Had they declared a sympathetic strike and refused to touch the stuff the unions would have been sued and the officers would have been arrested. and so forth. I was getting terribly impatient with that, so I did join in February 1971. And I became active in it. [I.W.W.] And, we built a branch here. This building is owned [by it, but] that branch itself collapsed. And I dropped out about nine months ago. The young people who were active in it elsewhere were just so far from my conception of doing anything useful and necessary. I had envisioned it as a kind of a caucus within the union movement itself. And it may have worked that way a little bit. The unintended benefit I did get from it were some marvelous friendships. Some of these old timers were just the most beautiful people. Fred Thompson in Chicago. I started attending the annual conventions in Chicago and met these wonderful old timers. But a lot of the youth were not working class and seemed very far from the interest that I had in working class. And, the union movement here began to shape up a little bit.

KF: So your purpose in joining or re-establishing a branch here was more a reflection of your feelings toward the union movement in general ....it had kind of died ...or?

OM: Well not died, but it was getting very timorous. And as I say, the scabs handling that stuff in that building was the last straw.

KF: So you thought the I.W.W. could regenerate some - -

OM: I thought it could be a caucus . It could spread the notions of economic strength on the job and in the union. It didn't develop into that and it didn't anywhere.

KF: Do you think it was because of the wide spread in age? Older people and younger people? There wasn't that common thread.

OM: No. There are young people in the union movement. There are a lot of them that I've met, both active in my own local and in the Central Labor Council. These were just middle class campus rebels that the I.W.W. attracted. And they were the new breed just starting to join. Now I'll tell you on my way back to the coast here in the spring of 1965 I arranged with the I.W.W. headquarters in Chicago to use their newspapers to go through them for the maritime stuff. That was before their stuff went to the Libido Collection at the University of Michigan. The old newspaper files were there in the office. And I spent oh, not quite a week there in the day time in their office and [with] two delightful old timers you know. But the new breed was just starting. There was an anarchist bookstore in another part of Chicago and these kids were all in that and all buzzing around the office. And the old fellows were just shaking their heads and looking at them. What's all this? (laughing) So, the conflict was all there, but I didn't realize what it was going to be. That was '65 and I didn't join until '71. So I had a look at it. But, there were a few people who stood where I did, but a lot of these kids were actually anti-union. They actually thought that no union was better than AFL CIO, and of course I never in the world would buy that. So, I didn't think that it was much of a labor organization any more.

KF: Didn't serve a purpose.

OM: No, and, of course, part of my theory for and part of the reason I stuck with it so long [is] it did represent, in the international left, it represented the Non-Marxist Leninist alternative. I don't know how much you know about all of this....

KF: Not a lot.

OM: A lot of the international left, if you want to call it that, is Marxist-Leninist. Of course, this is before the breakup of the communist parties in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. So here was one organization that was anarcho-syndicalist. That there would be two strains in the international revolutionary movement that had not seen capitalism as the most desirable. One strain had been the Marxist-Leninist movement and the other strain is the anarcho-syndicalist movement and that goes clear back into the last century. The I.W.W. in this country was always the representative of the anarcho-syndicalist movement and from where I stood, syndicalism looked like a possible

alternative. and that was the workers ownership of their industries and all that. I guess, looking at it closely enough, it just didn't look as if it would work. That was a lot of the reason I dropped out.

KF: Well the next question, I think probably has been answered too. What experiences in your life brought about your interest in the Tacoma labor movement and what has motivated you to the study and preservation of its history?

OM: Well my life-long project has been this maritime history which we'll see what happens. But, it was only natural that at first I started doing little historical sketches for my own union, for the new members. We do little sheets or we did little sheets about the size of the Educator . In each group, for instance, if a person went to work at the Gas Company, there's a little history of the Gas Company for them. So, I started working. I had never been a delegate to the Central Labor Council for many, many years. When Harry McIlveigh was secretary, my kids were small and I wasn't going to spend any more evenings away from them than I had to. Those are the years when I joined the I.W.W. When Clyde Hupp, the present secretary who is retiring this month, became Secretary, I started in as a delegate to the council working on a project. The State Legislature had passed enabling legislation for labor studies courses in community colleges. There were districts. This was Pierce-Kitsap. And we formed a labor studies advisory committee composed of Council people. We had a representative from the National Labor Relations Board involved. Our purpose was to design a curriculum and find a college. This was in the late '70's. I think this started in around 1977. We got everything looking nice on paper, but we didn't succeed in finding a college and we didn't succeed in capturing any students. That was the beginning of my involvement with the Council in education work.

The next major project we tackled was trying to get more adequate study of Labor History in the Tacoma School System. Our first effort was to invite social studies teachers and their students to what we called A Day at the Union Hall. We used the Carpenter's Hall, around the early '80's. That wasn't very well attended because we didn't have a handle on how to go about it. But we did make one contact with a woman named Winnifred Olsen who was the Social

Studies Helping Teacher in the school district before she retired. She's a woman about my age and we immediately took to each other. So she threw half a dozen eighth and eleventh grade histories at me and she said critique these. And I did. They were just terrible. We decided we'd build a teacher's packet around these critiques and specifically- - what do they call it? Well now they're called labor footnotes. Where the, all right where the history would talk about the benevolent Rockefeller, we'd talk about the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company and the massacre there, wherever the place was that there was that horrible labor event. Where they talked about the benevolent Carnegie that donated all the libraries, we'd talk about the Homestead strike.

KF: The other side - -

OM: Anyway, we put together a nice teacher's packet with a bunch of our history, with a bibliography of labor stuff, with a short history of Tacoma Labor that Steven Canway and I did, and a short history of the American Labor that the AFL CIO did for their Centennial . So these we distributed somewhat. We had two in-service days where we had workshops. One was in the District 10 Administration building. We drew a lot of people from Seattle there. Who's the social studies director state-wide? His name's on the tip of my tongue. He's very sympathetic. He secularized our efforts and then the second one was at Green River College. We handed out a bunch. We found a little core of sympathetic teachers who really wanted to promote this. In the course of this we ran across Jim Ruebel in Puyallup who was such a big help on our Centennial Booklet. By now that [the packet] is obsolete and we're in the process of revising it because certain of the labor footnotes dealing with the union strength and differentials in wages and all between union and non-union have to be brought up to date because the figures become obsolete quickly and they have to be replaced with new material.

The Labor Educator is another important project and we have just passed our eighth birthday , was that it? Seventh birthday in January?

KF: This is '93. You started it in 1985 - - Was that it?

OM: Something like that. Its been going awhile. And of course, our Centennial Booklet was the big project. Now if you talk about the Central Labor Council, Labor Councils vary. This particular one has the word Central in it. A lot of them don't, but we do.

KF: Okay.

So why do I feel these were important? [Referring to written question on unions.] Haven't you discovered that by now? (Smiling) I don't think I need to repeat that.

OM: As to women in unions. You have this outline.[See appendix] So you probably don't need anything on tape do you?

KF: Not necessarily, no. I can follow this. This [referring to the printed outline] was created by you?

OM: Yes. This was 1987 presentation at Evergreen and to accompany this I had some pictures from different Labor History Calendars.

KF: Would that be the Evergreen College here in Tacoma or in Olympia.?

OM: There wasn't a branch in Tacoma at that time.

KF: Okay.

OM: This guide [referring to the outline] I didn't read , but I passed this out and these were notes.

KF: Okay, I can include that. Okay, getting on here. What are the most significant things that the union movement has done in this town?

OM: Oh, well it's made working peoples' lives immeasurably better. [pause] Successes and failures. Well it hit this low spot when it was probably not as forthright in protecting people as it might have been. One business agent at the Carpenter's , I had a great respect for at the time. I met him in the hall of the



Carpenter's building one time and he said, "You know, there should have been people go to jail here. There should have been people that didn't let that happen." He was talking about that building [First Interstate Building discussed previously] and at the time it seemed to him that it would have been better to make a statement of principle than to acquiesce in the anti-labor legislation that was making these people think they had to handle the scab products. So, that was a low spot.

The union movement is not perfect. No institution is, let alone a mass institution like that. There are some representatives who are not as diligent as they might be. There are others who are wonderful crusaders who do far more than they could get by with. The sociology of this town, I think, has made it easier than in a lot of places to build a strong union movement. We're a colony. The middle class at times falls away compared with the middle class say, in Seattle. And, a lot of our people work in Seattle. Its always been a strong union movement. I was amazed coming into it, when I began to attend Central Labor Council meetings to see the young people. And, they are there! They are there! It isn't a bunch of old fuddy duddies. And they are committed and they are active.

KF: Are they anxious to join, do you feel?

OM: Some of them. Some of them join because they have to. The union shop provision, which we have to have, has been both good and bad for us. Its been good, because you can't have free loaders. But, the main object of the organizations and the people trying to destroy unions, like the right to work organization, has been to forbid the union shop so that people could freeload. So, they recognize just as well as we do that the union shop is essential to a strong union movement. But, at the same time, it isn't enough that we go to these people and we say that you have to join the union. The employer tells them when they go to work, "See what a good job this is. See all these nice benefits I'm giving you. See these good wages. Isn't it too bad that you have to pay those nasty union dues?"

Now, we have to counteract that. The people who struggled and built these unions are gone. They're retired. They're out. These people, going to work, have never been involved in any kind of that struggle. It's handed to them.

When they join they get this good union contract. But its such a terrible job then to convince them they got to fight for that, they've got to defend it, they've got to be loyal to it or its going to disappear. And sometimes it does disappear.

We lost, last winter, was it last winter? No, last summer, we lost Pierce County Medical. We had bargained for them since 1955. This is the Office Employees Union I'm talking about. The employers had been after, for years, they had driven the union out of King County Medical, our sister local. And they pulled every trick out of the bag to beat us and they did beat us by a few votes. Because, enough of these people believed their promises that everything would be just as good as it had been under the union. [emphatically] They would do every single thing. They gave them notarized statement. Whatever good that did them. You know.

But some believed it. Some places they would actively hire people who either came from anti- or non-union localities or they would quiz them, "How do you feel about the unions?", you know. A lot of places like the retail stores hire a lot of part-time people. And a lot of them just under the benefit break. Usually twenty hours a week is the benefit break. Because then they aren't too likely to be interested in the union and feel that it's worth fighting for. So, we're up against a very sophisticated set of employers these days. And, of course its because we've hurt their pocketbook, and they live in their pocketbook. They haven't been able to buy us as cheaply as they would like to.

Sometimes we win. There is the Clerical Strike of the City Employees. This was a marvelous victory. And a great bunch of people. It was noteworthy because the highly skilled linemen, and wiremen, even load dispatchers who are the ones who control the flow of electricity, they are very highly skilled engineering jobs, they supported them. And we won.

KF: Do you feel that more? Do you see that more now, do you think?

OM: Yes, It's on the upswing. Did you read some of those Educators?  
[Referring to the Newsletter] [See Appendix]

KF: Yes.

OM: You see, it is on the upswing. And, the employer is our best bargainer. Just those differentials, you can't get around them. People aren't that stupid that they are going to live life like that forever. They are going to.....and the employers are greedy. As soon as they break the union, they start beating people down. They can't help it. Buy 'em cheap. So, yes, it is on the upswing.

KF: I wanted to ask another question about that. I know, it seems to me like people are changing jobs a lot more than they used to. Do you see that?

OM: I'm not close enough to it to understand, to realize that but I can very well believe it because a lot of good jobs are disappearing and some of the jobs that people are being obliged to take are not so good that they want to stay at [them] all their lives.

KF: Do you think that has affected the unions, the membership?

OM: Of course, of course. Look at the Rust Belt. The steel workers and the auto workers. Some of the strongest union industries going and they've lost thousands of members. The smelter <sup>1</sup>closed. They were a strong union. I don't know where those people are.

KF: Do you have any idea.

OM: One of them, [who] was president of our Central Labor Council, was working at the Smelter. Last I heard he was working at that steel mill in West Seattle. What was it? Was it a Bethlehem Mill?

KF: Bethlehem Steel.

OM: Well some other outfit just bought it. Okay, so he was working there. And that's no fun to go to Seattle for a job. Some of them, I think were retrained to work on the cleanup.

KF: But, has it broken their union spirit?

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OM: I don't know. I don't know. But cleanup, I think the Laborer's Union has jurisdiction and they have a very strong union, so I don't think anything would break their spirit.

I suppose there is a lot of changing around. The retail stores have fallen on hard times. The older ones were union. The new ones have gone in non-union, Mervyns and what are some of the others? K-Mart's non-union. Costco is non-union. The wage difference. They say Costco pays pretty well. A lot of that retail apparel and stuff pays around \$5 an hour I guess. The Bon pays at least \$7 or \$8 because its always been union. Nordstroms just broke the union. So, it's tough. It's tough, and they work at it. And they work at it with these part time employees. We lost the office at Penneys in the late 1970's. And they didn't have one single full time person left. They were all part time. They were scared stiff. That's the way you get rid of a union.

KF: Without much fight.

OM: Well, yes.

KF: What's your life like now?

OM: Great! Great! Our family is very close. As I said, I haven't worked for wages since I retired. They started this little organic meat business on the family farm in 1967 and its gradually blossomed out into a retail establishment. They feed out cattle and they raise chickens organically and have a retail shop and do custom cutting. I've kept their books for them ever since they've started. I'm presently teaching my granddaughter, one of my granddaughters, to keep the books. So, I've kept my hand in there and I spend a lot of time out there. My son and I make a big garden together. He lives on the old family farm. So, that's great. (pause) Hobbies? I don't know what you call a hobby.

KF: Your writing? That's not really a hobby.

OM: Well I think that may go someplace. Affiliations? I'm active in my own local. I'm active in the Central Labor Council education work. I'm active in an

organization called, Pacific Northwest Labor History Association. Now its called the Heritage Association. It's the same outfit. It's a combination of academicians and labor people covering Washington, Oregon, British Columbia. We have an annual conference. We put on a festival occasionally. I am the vice president for Washington.

KF: Is that any connection with the Labor's Heritage Magazine?

OM: No, the Labor Heritage Magazine is the AFL CIO publication out of the Meany Institution. I had an article in there.

KF: Yes, I read your article.

OM: Oh, you did. Well - -

KF: I just wondered if that was related because of the name.

OM: The name is very similar. This has similar associations with different names all over the country. The Southwest Labor Studies Association is a comparable organization covering California and I think over into maybe Arizona...which comes first, New Mexico doesn't it?

KF: Arizona.

OM: Arizona, ya, okay. Maybe over into there. So this has been a rewarding thing to work in. We publish an annual Calendar. I'll show you one. I think we have a few left in the Council office for sale at the remarkable bargain price of \$3.50.[See Appendix]

KF: Okay.

OM: And most of these images are from Tacoma. Nine of the 13 images are from our collection. Oh, that's the other educational thing we've done. We've started this picture collection, and if you are that interested, we can arrange to go see them sometime.

KF: Oh, I'd love to.

OM: Its a poster collection. Poster-size enlargements of pictures.....[looking at photos in calendar] That's one of ours from the Richards collection of the shipyards. [ Appendix Calendar-January] Look at this guys face. He can't believe it that these women are welding. [laughter] This is the one right here that we emphasize on the Calendar.

This pictures collection has been the other major educational project. It started with a few pictures and then [more] in probably the mid-eighties and it's now fifty-odd. We had them hanging in the Hanforth Gallery at the Library for the month of September.

KF: I wish I had known that.

OM: Yes, I wish you had.

KF: So you procured them and found them and - -

OM: Most of them, yes, I found most of them. High Gloss up here on K Street does the enlargements and then Clyde Hupp - -

KF: Where did you find the pictures? Basically in archives of unions?

OM: No, first we combed the State Historical Society. They had a lot of the early pictures. And then the Library. And finally, when the Richards collection was finally donated to the Library, you know all the "gobble di gook" that went into where it was going and the family was trying to sell. It finally ended up at the Tacoma Library. So, I figured I owed the Library one for a lot of things they'd done for me in the Northwest Room, Gary Reese and the staff. So I volunteered to sort the shipyard pictures. I spent probably six weeks at that. When was that? That would have been the summer of '88 wouldn't it? No, it was later than that. Maybe it was the summer of '90. Yeah. It was the late summer of 1990 that I went in there as a volunteer and I started and catalogued all the shipyard pictures and then we selected them. But, you saw a whole bunch of Tacoma images here. If you want one there are still some left at the Council Office.

These are some of our folks. I love these. Isn't that lovely. In the glossy, the faces of the women are just marvelous. [Appendix, Calendar-October]

KF: All those boots.

OM: Armenian. Now its pretty much Korean and the unions gone. But this was a very strong union at that time. The outfit Bone Dry opened up as things were getting better after the depression. They reactivated the local and brought back the unit. And I remember when my kids were growing up, let's see this shop was maybe down, by that time it had moved from here to maybe down on Commerce or Broadway. I used to take my kids work shoes in there to get fixed. [Appendix, Calendar-November]

KF: When did it close?

OM: I don't know.

KF: I don't really remember it.

OM: By the time, by the early fifties, that's when I remember taking my kids boots in there. This workshop was gone and it was mostly a shoe repair place and it was down on Commerce maybe between 13th and 15th. See it was close enough to the Labor Temple that I could take them down there.

KF: Sure. I like that [Calendar].

KF: [Turning a page of the Calendar to Women Meat Packers picture] I like that! [Appendix, Calendar-February]

OM: Did you ever read [The] Jungle?

KF: Yes.

KF: Okay, this is my final question unless you want to share anything. I think it's kind of one of those questions that sounds like an epitaph. [laughter]

OM: [laughing] Yes, it does sound like an epitaph.

KF: I don't want you to feel that way, but professionally, personally, those are probably one in the same. [ The questions is, how would you like to be remembered, both personally and professionally?]

OM: Yes, and to me, I have never given that aspect any thought. I have just been busy doing things. So, I don't think I am able to answer that one.

KF: That's fine. Anything else you want to add? Important aspects that you think I haven't asked you about, about the labor movement that we should talk about or discuss? Can you think of any thing.

OM: No. It's still relatively strong. It's still relatively strong.

KF: I get that impression that you feel that way.

OM: It had one of the highest percentages of labor endorsed candidates elected in this last election. And that is an index of how much influence it has throughout the community.

KF: It seems like candidates always look for that endorsement too.

OM: Yes, they know that it means something. That's right.

End of interview.

[As we looked through the photos, the picture of the quarry at Wilkeson reminded Ms. Markholt of an educational project that she has worked on , and at her direction, I turned on the tape to continue recording. Those comments are included with the photos in the Appendix.]



## INTERVIEW #2

KF: Today is March 2, 1993 and I'm with Otilie Markholt who is going to share with me some of the significant events in the labor movement pertaining to women and their activities, as well, in Tacoma.

Shall we start with that first question?

OM: Certainly. [Reading from the questions] Significant contributions that women brought to the labor movement in Tacoma. Certainly they brought the organization of their own crafts that were predominately women. The beauty operators, the waitresses, laundry workers, the office workers, healthcare work places were predominantly women. Now, their contributions were no different than the men. I'm not going to defend the idea that women react very differently in their work places and in their situations, aside from their special problems. They contributed just as well as the men and the extent of that contribution depended largely on the same things that the extent of a man's contribution would depend on - how they saw themselves as permanent workers, self supporting workers, these were the people who were willing to put the most into a union organizing drive and in maintaining the union. This was true of men and women. The people who saw themselves as upward bound and this was just a brief interval in their lives, whether they were men or women, couldn't be bothered with the unions. So there was no difference in gender there at all.

The particular problems women that had as compared to men.[Referring to the next question] The same I guess as in the rest of our society. Some of the men had the disadvantage of having society consider them superior. And the women had the disadvantage of society considering them inferior. In my own union, for years, some of us felt, and I shared this feeling, that we would labor under a distinct disadvantage if we employed a woman as business agent. The people she would have to bargain with would not respect her. I was approached to take that job once when it was open, and that was one of the reasons that I hesitated. We finally overcame this. And this was true not only in my own local union, but

throughout the international , more and more women are becoming active. Our national leadership is predominantly but not completely male. But many of our fine organizers now traveling all over the country, working out of the international office, are women and we've had, I'd say, one of the best business agent we've ever had-our present, Judy Zink, who is a woman. She's been in office since the beginning of the '80s,something like that . No, a little bit after that. But she's excellent. And we have overcome this feeling among ourselves that we would be handicapping ourselves, I'm sure that she has done an outstanding job and she has secured the respect of the employer. So those were the particular problems that we've faced and they've been faced by every predominately women's group. Now, more and more these women are being taken into the union movement on an equal basis and considered on their merit. It's not tokenism which is also demearing. Tokenism because you're a women we'll give you this, not because you're really capable of anything. But more and more the women are taking their places on their merit.

Names of women who are notable in the movement. Yes, I did dig some up. Let's start back with the first one that I have knowledge of. I'm sure there were others who are lost.

Anna Peterson was active in the United Garment Workers Local 201. This was the union at Days' Clothing and other places. This was in the 1920s that I would find her reports in their national magazine. I quoted from her extensively in the Centennial Booklet.

Next. A friend of mine , a very interesting and capable woman, Ida Morris. She was the wife of an activist in the Longshoremen's' Union. I think I mentioned him in the other tape- -this delightful Irishmen, Paddy Morris.

KF: Right.

OM: She was a legal secretary working for the labor attorney, Leslie Sulgrove. By reason of being married to a union member. she was eligible to belong to the Card and Label League, the Tacoma Card and Label League, which was a women's support group She was active in strike support in fostering the use of union goods and services. She was very active in all of that. Then when the

first Office Workers Union, Local 20360 organized, she was one of the charter members. So both as a wage worker and as the wife of a union activist, she in her own right was extremely active. This was from, I would say, around the time of the First World War on into the 1950s. She had long, long period of activity.

Gertrude Wetzel was active in the Laundry Workers, Local 42 and in the Central Labor Council. I believe her activity in the Laundry Workers began when they reorganized in about 1917 maybe. And I knew her when I worked in the Labor Temple in the early 1950s. She was very capable. She was also active, as I say, in the Central Labor Council.

Ada Sommers was active in the Retail Clerks Union, Local 367. That is presently the United Food and Commercial Workers. I don't know that she ever held a full time staff job, but she was very active as an individual member and in the Tacoma Union Card and Label League also, and the Washington State Card and Label League. That would have been a section of the Washington State Labor Council. I believe she was president of that section for quite a few years.

Back tracking, Gertrude Wetzel was the full time business representative of the Laundry Workers.

All right. Mrs. John B. Anderson. She was the secretary, which is a full time job, of the Beauty Operators Local 158A. Later, she went to a full time job for their international union. This was the Barbers' International Union of which the Beauty Operators was kind of an auxiliary.

The last one that I think belongs in this group is Lilly Piva. She was the full time representative of AFSCME, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and this was in the 1970s. For a number of years she was very active in that union. She was also vice president of the Pierce County Central Labor Council.

I'm sure there are a great many more women, but these are some that I am aware of.

KF: Okay. Great.

OM: How conditions changed for women in the work force here. Certainly as the change in their position within the labor movement certainly has to be reflected, in part, in a similar change in the work place. Although I doubt if the work place has been as willing to change and as able to change as the people in the union movement have been. I think that they have lagged and certainly the problem of harassment. It seems as if it must be more prevalent in the work place, generally, than it is in the union movement. It has to start from men and women getting over this idea of seeing each other as superior or inferior and learning to see each other as human beings with certain abilities and certain personalities and just never mind putting people on a ladder.

KF: Right!

OM: What was it like for me to be active in the union. Next to raising my children, which was the most rewarding experience in my life, this has been a source of satisfaction. I have some wonderful friends, I've enjoyed the work I've done. I feel we've been able to accomplish something, so it's been a great experience.

How did the activism impact my personal life? When my children were small I just was very careful to confine myself to things - - I did a lot of writing at home - - I just didn't make a point of being away evenings because I didn't want to. I guess that's the only answer I can give. I used a lot of vacations to do union things. And this is what I wanted to do.

Now, is that - - - ?

KF: Yes, thank you.

Oral History: Otilie Markholt  
Interviewer: Kendra Fitzpatrick

Questions:

Can you give us a brief sketch of your life history? Who is Otilie Markholt? Please begin by sharing some background information, ie: when and where you were born, your family members, your family life as a child, the schools you attended, etc.

What were the main influences on your early outlook on life? Have these remained with you or changed?

If Tacoma is not your place of birth, when did you come to Tacoma and what event or circumstances brought you here? What was Tacoma like in the early years you were here? What are your early impressions of life for the working class in Tacoma?

Returning to your childhood, as a young person, what hobbies or special interests did you have and did those interests continue into later life in the form of activities or employment?

What were your employment experiences? When and where did you begin working and what type of jobs have you held? What were working conditions like? How did these jobs influence your views about unions?

Did you belong to any social, political or religious organizations and what were your experiences? In what ways, if any, did these affiliations influence your life? What are your beliefs and how do they relate to the labor movement?

Have there been people and/or events in your life that have given you direction and/or have significantly changed the direction or focus of your life?

What part do you feel the IWW played in the labor movement of Tacoma? Were you active in the IWW? If so, for how long and why did you join?

What experiences in your life brought about your interest in the Tacoma labor movement and what has motivated you to the study and preservation of its history?

Can you tell us something about women and unions in Tacoma?

You have been active in labor education projects in the Pierce County Labor Council of Tacoma. What type of education projects have you participated in and why do you feel these are important?

What are the most significant things the union movement has done in this town? How would you assess its successes and failures, its weaknesses and strengths?

How do you think the future looks for the labor movement?

What is your life like now? Do you have a family, hobbies, affiliations, etc?

How would you like to be remembered, both personally and professionally?

Are there any other important aspects of the Tacoma labor movement you think we should discuss?

Interview #2

Questions to Otilie Markholt

What significant contributions did women bring to the labor movement in Tacoma?

What particular problems did they have as compared to men?

Can you give me any names of women who were notable in the movement?

How have conditions changed for women in the workforce here?

What was it like for you to be active in the unions?

How did your activism impact your personal life?