

Interview: Sean Griffin (SG)
Interviewer: Leila Harding (LH)
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Transcription: Pete Smith

SG So, Leila, can I get you to give me your full name and birth and birthplace?

LH My name is Leila Eileen Harding. I was born on February 20th, 1949, in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

SG I understand you were born into a naval officer's family but that circumstances changed fairly quickly. Can you tell me about that?

LH I was about two and my parents divorced or separated, I guess, and then divorced, still living in Halifax. I don't really know too much because I was so young. I know my mother moved out to Victoria with her— no, they hadn't gotten married, they got married in Victoria—who became my stepfather. She moved out to Victoria and took my brother and my sister and I stayed in Nova Scotia. My sister was 12 years older than I, so she was in a boarding school and I was living with my godmother. My father was still—I don't know what he was doing at that time. He, of course, had been in the Navy in World War II, and he was still doing something, he was still a sea captain in some capacity but I don't know what it was at that point. My sister got out to Victoria and then he eventually took me by train across Canada to get out to Victoria. We all then joined up and lived with my mum and he went back to Nova Scotia and remarried. He remarried and was with somebody until he died basically. That was sort of the big change. So I was about four when I went to Victoria to live with the family.

SG What year would that have been?

LH Well, 1949 plus four? That's '53.

SG That must have been quite a change, though, for you as a very young child.

LH Yes.

SG Coming all the way from that and then suddenly different circumstances.

LH Yes. I don't have a lot of recollection. I remember the house we lived in and and I don't really remember too much about it. I was very young and with such an age gap between— my brother was six years older than me, so there was quite the big age gap.

SG But you did tell me about growing up in Victoria that it was, what was the phrase you used?

LH Oh yes. I mean, it was a nice place. It was very pretty, it was lovely and all the rest of it but when I became 19, 20, I wanted to leave. Victoria at that time, and I think it's still known as newlyweds and nearly deads. (laughter)

SG Really? I've never heard that before.

LH Yes.

SG My wife tells me that she grew up in or spent a lot of time in Victoria . She said, oh yeah, that was the standard phrase.

LH So in 1969, I moved with my boyfriend at the time into Vancouver because I always had my sights on the big city.

SG At that time, Victoria would certainly not have been known as a working class town or anything like that.

LH I had very little information or knowledge about unions or that kind of thing. I might have heard about a strike here and there, but I just didn't know what it really meant. I wasn't really interested. I was young and free.

SG Your mother at this time had been working, I presume, was she?

LH Yes, She was an executive—I don't remember her exact title, but something like executive director of a certain branch of the Canadian Red Cross in Victoria. She dispatched housekeepers to people's homes if the mother was going into hospital for surgery or the mother couldn't cope for some reason and had children so mum dispatched people to different homes. She did that for quite a few years. That afforded me, I went to a private school and that's because she worked. I did private school from grade 6 to 12.

SG So that would have been somewhat unusual for that time for someone to not be a stay at home mum in that period.

LH Yes, I think it was actually. I don't ever remember my mother not working outside the home, to be honest. Because I know after I left home, a few years after that, which would have been in the 70's, she was the executive director for Vancouver Island for the Multiple Sclerosis Society. She went on from the Red Cross. Maybe they stopped that service, I'm not really sure, but I know she went on to do that. But I had left home by then.

SG You also mentioned that she was clearly in the WAC Bennett school of politics, hey?

LH Yes, she very much was. Enterprise was good. My sister lived in Port Alberni and we'd go up there and the plant was belching out smoke and she'd say, oh, that's the smell of money and little phrases like that. I remember.

SG How did you feel about that?

LH I don't think I had a lot of consciousness, to be quite honest with you, at that point. I just know the smell was bad. She was certainly—I mean the CCF—I mean I wouldn't have even heard of the CCF at that point, but she was definitely a Socred through and through. My stepfather, I don't know, but I suspect he would have been the same as well.

SG You yourself, as you say, pulled up stakes and went to Vancouver.

LH That's right.

SG What prompted that?

LH I think it was a break from the family, I had always decided I wanted to move. I wanted to travel. So Vancouver was a good starting point and I only lived there for one year. I lived there 'till 1970. I had a job at a car dealership and I was what they called a stock clerk.

SG Which dealership was that?

LH It was called Fred Deeley Motors. It was a very well known—.

SG —British [unclear]—

LH —organization. Yes, that's right. They sold Triumphs and MG's and all those kinds of cars. I worked in the parts department, so we had the men who were knowledgeable about car parts. They were handing those out and and they give us the form and we mark it off our cards. Then we knew when to reorder stock so that's exactly what I did.

SG Car dealerships at that time were unionized, was Fred Deeley?

LH It was, yes. It was in the Machinists' Union. I didn't join right away. I was on a probation or something. I'm going to say six months before I actually joined the union. I joined the Machinists'. That was a whole new experience. I had no idea what that was, but I didn't know where the Machinists' office was. I never went to any union meetings. I just know my pay increased. I couldn't tell you to how much, but I know my pay increased but then I paid union dues and an initiation fee, which I wasn't crazy about at the time, but I understood.

SG That that would have been unusual for a lot of young women at that time, to be part of what was largely a male bastion.

LH Yes, I would think it would be.

SG Did you get any sense from that of a change in your circumstance that this was something good or bad?

LH It felt like something somewhat good because I know my pay increased and that was always pleasant. Of course, Vancouver was a lot easier to live in at that time, but still you still had to pay rent, buy food and all those kinds of things.

SG You were living on your own at this time?

LH I was living with my boyfriend at that time. Not far away. Just up at 15th and Arbutus.

SG Which today would be \$3 million. (laughter)

LH Oh, yeah, probably. I rented a main floor of an apartment in a house.

SG All of Kitsilano at that time, as I recall, it was pretty much working class.

LH Yeah.

SG Not anymore.

LH Not anymore. No.

SG You mentioned that you were just in Vancouver for a year.

LH That's right.

SG I understand another jumping off point to England.

LH That's correct. In the summer of 1970, probably about July, I first travelled across Canada on the train to see my dad in Halifax because he still lived there. He, at that time, was captain of oil tankers for Irving Oil, which is a big concern back there, a big company back there. He would go down to Venezuela, pick up oil and take it over to Belgium. I'm not sure what the port would have been. I don't think it was Brussels. He had a good living accommodation on the vessels. These are huge, huge, 700 foot long vessels. There was some talk about my going on a trip with him, but it didn't pan out. So from there, I flew to England and met up with some people I knew from Vancouver area and met some other people and sort of carried on from there.

SG Just to back up for a second, as I understand it, before you went to England, you worked on Tom Berger's campaign?

LH Yes, that's right. I believe I lived in his riding. I don't remember— Was he an MP or an MLA? I don't recall.

SG He was an MLA and if the timing is what you suggested he would have been running for the leadership of the NDP at that time.

LH Okay. I thought it was an election though I worked on, it seems to me.

SG It's possible, yeah. They were kind of simultaneous.

LH Yeah. It seemed to me I worked on his election campaign. I couldn't tell you what I did but I just remember that was kind of my first introduction to the NDP and what do they, what are they about. It was possibly some influence from the boyfriend that I was living with at the time. We both worked on the campaign. I don't recall what I did particularly but it was probably doing mailings and those kinds of things. It was a very new thing for me. I remember going into an office somewhere on Broadway.

SG Obviously a new experience nonetheless.

LH Yes, absolutely.

SG So back to England again. You had just planned on going there as a trip did you?

LH I did and I, then I met some people and I went to one of the Isle of Wight concerts. The second one in 1970. I met a whole bunch of people that became my friends and are still my friends to this day. They're spread far and wide, but I still am in contact with them. Then I met somebody and decided to stay in England. So I did for six years.

SG Had you gone with your boyfriend or was he left behind?

LH I left him behind. I always wanted to travel, and I don't think he could get the time off work. He worked at the post office. It was something I'd always wanted to do and England

really appealed to me and I knew a couple of people over there. So that sort of was an opening for me.

SG Did you end up working, I presume, fairly quickly over there?

LH Once I decided to stay, I got a three-month temporary job at BC House which is in the centre of London. I just happened to be in there one day and heard them say they needed a receptionist. My ears perked up and I thought, I could do that. I applied and they said it was only a temporary position until I think September to December. I said ok that's fine, I'll make a start, that's a start and I could work there. If it had carried on, I would have not been subject to British tax. I would have been subject to B.C. tax or Canadian taxation, which is a lot less than Britain was at that time.

SG What is BC House?

LH It's, ah, it's a place— I mean it's not a consulate or anything. I think it's for trade. Trade between Britain and B.C., I think that's what it was mostly to do with. I'm sure it's still there today. Travelers could go in there and get information about what's going on at home or something. I think I just went in there just to see what it was all about and that's when I heard about the job.

SG Did England end up being an experience in terms of broadening your view about working in the trade union movement and so on?

LH Yes, I didn't have any involvement in unions over there. That really only happened when I came back to Canada. I think what it did was it opened me up to... There was a woman in our group and she was a feminist and she was kind of the person that sort of woke me up to the whole idea of feminism and that kind of thing. I always considered her a mentor. That's kind of where I suppose my awakening started. I don't think she was in a union, but she worked in community development projects. I didn't do that kind of thing at that time. I did mostly office work but it started me on the road, which I carried when I eventually decided to come back to Canada. I didn't think I was going to come back.

SG It would have been a time in England when the feminist movement was very much on the ascendancy.

LH Yes, that's right.

SG Was she an activist?

LH Oh, yes. She was very much so.

SG Did you take part in things with her?.

LH Not a lot. I was kind of on the sidelines, just kind of seeing what was going on. The lay of the land, that kind of thing but things stuck with me and I carried that forward later in my working life, especially and my personal life.

SG One of the things that you mentioned to me earlier was that you you felt a need to do something to help people. That kind of struck a chord with me. Would you put that down as sort of a core value that you developed at this time?

LH I would think so, yes. I also think that I had felt that way before as a younger person, like in high school, we have different clubs, right, as schools do. One of the clubs I was very involved in at that time was the United Nations Club. That was a real opening. We learned quite a lot about other countries that I knew nothing about and we would come over to Vancouver for mock UN meetings. You'd represent a country and you'd have to speak on issues and learn about that country's issues and values and culture. For me, that was the start. It was a spark, I guess you could say.

SG And you came back to Canada?

LH I had a child in 1975 and had married...

SG In England, you had a child?.

LH Yes. Yeah. We came back in September 1976. I wasn't planning on coming for a long time, but my husband at the time and I were not doing that well financially and we thought, oh well, let's give Canada try, let's go back. I didn't know anything more, I'd been gone for six years, so I didn't know how things were. When I was sponsoring my husband and child, the man we met with said, well, why are you going to Vancouver? And I said that's where I'm from and that's the place I know. Well, you should go to Winnipeg. They need people there and workers there. And I thought, Why would I go to Winnipeg? I don't know any anybody in Winnipeg. (laughter)

SG Why would anyone go to Winnipeg? (laughter)

LH Yeah, exactly. It was just kind of a funny thing. Eventually, I sponsored the two of them and then we came here. We were only coming for a year and of course we've never left, so there you go. I've been back since 1976.

SG That's a fair load you took on to be responsible. Because when you sponsor someone, you have to be financially responsible.

LH Yeah.

SG So you obviously went back to work fairly quickly.

LH Yes, because I had a good work record but it was a bit hard getting a job because my experience of that's six years had all been in England. If I went for an interview they said, Oh, well you don't have any local experience or We're not phoning anybody in England to get a reference for you. It was a bit tough at first, but I did manage to find an office job. I worked for General Binding Corporation which makes the plastic coil binding. So I worked there for a number of years and left and went back there actually.

SG What were you doing?

LH Secretarial, clerical, taking orders over the phone for the bindings. We had lots of set customers, lawyers, office, those kinds of things so we would know, Oh they need two boxes of these kind of this size. Mostly phone work.

SG So that was non-union work?

LH Very much so.

SG And not well paid probably.

LH No. I think it was okay at the time and again rents were cheaper and living was cheaper. We managed. My husband, he would supplement income. He mostly stayed home and looked after our daughter. He was a guitar teacher and he would have some students come in on the weekends and then I would look after our daughter while he was doing his lessons.

SG You mentioned that you'd had a chance meeting with Janet Hall, who was a long time member of CAIMAW (Canadian Association of Industrial, Mechanical and Allied Workers) around this time, and that it led to more changes in your life [unclear] union work. Tell me about that.

LH Right. Just prior to that in 1981, I had decided I had enough of secretarial work. I'd been doing it for most of my working life and I thought I'm gonna try something different. I took an eight month course at Langara College as it was at that time a teacher assistant course, which I really, really enjoyed and thought this will be great and I'll work with kids. Dan was (my husband now) was just in the process of getting his teaching degree and I thought, Oh we'll have summers off, all that kind of thing. I was in what's called a women's self-help counselling group assisting women and helping them with their lives. It was training. We were doing the training, and that's when I met Janet and I said I am looking for a job. Right away she said, Oh well there's this new union called the Independent Canadian Transit Union (ICTU) in the next building to us. It's just setting up and their secretary is going away for a week and they need somebody to replace her. I went and met with this woman named Jacqueline and I worked there for the week that she was away and it was very boring. I thought, this is secretary work again. When I had finished the teacher assistant course, there were huge cutbacks. I'm sure all of you remember, back in 1982 and what were the first to go in the education system were the teacher assistants. So I never did get a job as a teacher assistant.

SG You would imagine that would have been hundreds of them that had taken this training.

LH I don't know if any other places offered it but Langara. I think there was maybe 25 or 30 in our class, in our group.

SG I remember it being offered in a number of colleges.

LH So it might have been, Yeah.

SG I think they were trying to encourage it at that point, and then boom.

LH That's exactly what happened. I never did work as a teacher assistant.

SG How did the work at ICTU work out?

LH I did that one week, and then I went off again and I found some temporary jobs through a temporary work agency. Then a few weeks after that, Jacqueline, the secretary, phoned me and said, Oh, we've just hired our own in-house lawyer and I can't do all her work plus all the other work I have to do. Would you be interested in coming in and helping out? She didn't offer me a job so much. I don't think she was in a position to do that. I said, Oh, sure,

why not, it might be interesting. I was the lawyer's assistant and did all her work and other work as well. Then I just kind of, as they say, morphed into the job. I just never left. I carried on working with the Independent Canadian Transit and I really enjoyed it. I was really happy to be in the union atmosphere and I knew if I had gotten a job as a teacher assistant, I would have probably been a member of CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) and I was kind of intre—Oh, I would like to join a union. That's interesting to me at that time in my life. I absorbed a lot of things, obviously working at ICTU, but we were non-union staff at that time.

SG I presume later it got its own independent staff union?

LH Yes. So for about three years—unfortunately the woman, Jacqueline, went off sick and eventually left and we hired another person, a woman named Pat Crowther. We also had a bookkeeper. The financial officer of the union did not do the books. He hired a bookkeeper to do them. So we had three of us. Every year the bus drivers, presidents and vice presidents gave us a fairly decent wage increase, about a dollar an hour, which was pretty good in those days. One of the years we started, we thought, Gee, we would like a pension. So we proposed a pension. We didn't have a union, it was just us. They sort of looked at us and said, Why would you need a pension? You've all got husbands. That's what they said, not a word of a lie. Well, that doesn't sit very well with us. We're working women, we're independent women. We should have our own form of pension somehow. I mean, it would have to be an RRSP (Registered Retirement Savings Plan) or that kind of contributions or something. That caused us in 1985, we decided we were going to join a union and have somebody negotiate this for us and that's exactly what we did. April 1st, 1985, we were certified at the Labour Relations Board and they were totally shocked. You know, sort of, Well what are you doing, I mean, my door is always open, why didn't you come to me? Well, we did, and it didn't make any difference. So here we are. We joined the Food and Service Workers of Canada (FASWOC). We thought we had we should join a Canadian Union. We all believed in the independent Canadian Union movement at that time. FASWOC was part of the Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU) as was ICTU and CAIMAW who was close by. We knew about CAIMAW of course.

SG Did that create any tension, having both of you in the CCU?

LH I'm not sure. I don't know what the higher-ups felt about that, but I suspect it did because they didn't want one union pitted against another. We got that but there was no other choice. There wasn't anybody else, and we couldn't form our own little tiny group. It wouldn't have had any clout, right.

SG How successful was the pension organizing?

LH Oh yes, we got our RRSP. I mean we could see the bus drivers, they have a very nice pension when they're working and then when they booked off to be at their union, as an officer, the union also supplemented their pensions as well so I mean, they were doing very well. Here we were, three women trying to negotiate so many cents or so many dollars an hour to start putting into an RRSP for our retirement.

SG Staff unions have always been a bit of tension in some circumstances and very much supported in another. How did the bus drivers feel about a staff union among their...?

LH I don't think they were happy about it at all. It did change the atmosphere somewhat but we carried on. We were professionals. We did our work and it settled down after a while.

SG What happens inevitably when people join unions is they get looked at for what additional responsibilities can you take on? What else can you do? Did you find that you were in that position?

LH Yes, I was. That was 1985. Then I guess I started going to a few union meetings. They didn't have them very often. I soon got the sense there was a lot of turmoil in the Food and Service Workers of Canada. I think I might have gone to a convention, I don't recall, but later in 1986, October, because I just found a document. Prior to that, I had met a woman who was, I think she was the vice president of the White Spot local. It was White Spot and Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) at that time. I don't think there's anybody else in that local.

SG FASWOC was largely the restaurant trade union for KFC and White Spot.

LH One of the locals. Yes, but there were two or three other locals that were different, not White Spot and KFC. One of them was the White Spot Commissary. That was a separate local where they made all the food at that time. The other local was the Arbutus Club. So the Arbutus Club has been unionized for a very long time, since the early '80s. I don't know exactly when they unionized, but they were already in FASWOC. There might have been one or two others, I don't recall now. In October 1986, I was asked if I would care to run for National President of FASWOC. Having said that, there were two sections of FASWOC. There was a small section in Ontario and they had the National President out of there and for some reason they were breaking away. They were going because they were so far away and it was such a small group. I don't recall them very much.

LH So I was going to be the national president of this union here in British Columbia, basically. I said Okay, I don't know anything about it, but sure. It was all a baptism by fire, there was no question. As I say, I did not have a union background and this was all very new to me. We had a convention which is where they would have elected the national president and I was acclaimed to that position. Then I really got involved in turmoil in FASWOC. It was a mess. It really was. It was financially in trouble. There were hired staff running the union, not the elected officers which is what I got myself into the middle of and was trying to clean up and trying to get it back on track. Then I started finding out there was huge debt that had been quite covered up by the then financial secretary. She continued to be the financial secretary when I was elected, but she worked against the vice president and myself for quite a long time before she finally resigned. It was quite a turmoil.

SG I know in interviewing both Roger Crowther and Denise before they mentioned that CAIMAW also became involved in this and trying to help out to solve some of these problems. Was it at this point that you yourself became more involved with CAIMAW In that?

LH Yes, certainly, because it was all new to me and I really didn't know what exactly the Constitution meant and how you had to follow it. And I'm sure you've heard this before, Jess Succamore was by far the person I relied on because he had been around for a very long time and I knew him a little bit because CAIMAW was right next door building to ICTU. So every time I—but I didn't know who—Hi, this is Jess, you know, that kind of thing. He was right there with me and really saw me through a lot of that turmoil and he

said there's a right way to do these things and there's a wrong way. I wanted to learn the right way to do it. He was very helpful to me and others, not just me, but others who started becoming involved. We then got some like Jef Keighley started coming in to help us with grievances because I'd never done any grievances. We didn't have any grievances at ICTU particularly just the big bargaining issue. We really relied on CAIMAW a lot. They were very, very helpful, actually.

SG When you say there's a right way and a wrong way, what did you feel was at the core of the right ways?

LH Following the Constitution, which the people that had been there before me and continued on for a while were not. They were just doing whatever they wanted and saying they didn't have to answer to the national president or the national executive board. We had a national executive board, but it was very tentative, really. I understood the Constitution, that's what you follow. That's the important document for elected officers and and staff reps. (They didn't call them business agents, I think they were staff reps or something.) But it was the same kind of thing. They are hired. They don't run the union. It's the elected officers but that's not the way these other people were doing things.

SG So union democracy really was kind of at the heart of this.

LH Yes, absolutely.

SG So where did this lead eventually?

LH It was very clear. When CAIMAW people started getting a little bit involved in our union we might take them to say, grievance meetings with the White Spot management. They were incensed about that because there had been quite a cosy relationship with these hired staff reps in FASWOC with the management. I only found out after I'd been in a while that they used to have Friday morning breakfasts together. White Spot management approached me about this and said, we used to have breakfasts and would you like to join us? I thought, that doesn't sound right to me. I didn't know, but I didn't it just didn't sound right. I didn't join any Friday breakfasts, I can tell you. They started getting kind of incensed that we'd be bringing a what they called a third party to the table to hear a grievance. I think the position was, you don't tell us—we could bring a lawyer. You're not going to say anything if it's a lawyer. But, because it's another union rep, we can bring who we choose to assist in these matters, or whatever. So we just ignored them, basically. They were not having the cozy relationship that they had been quite used to. I think that's what really bothered White Spot especially. They at that time were in charge of KFC or the General Foods, I guess it was.

SG It was General Foods at that time, right. You must have become much more integrated in a sense with CAIMAW at this point.

LH Yes, the idea had come up about merging with CAIMAW. It was very clear because there had started to be this division with White Spot management that they were not going to make our lives very comfortable so we pursued merger discussions with CAIMAW. We properly presented it to the membership and said we would want to stay within a CCU Union. That's where both our backgrounds are. CAIMAW was very careful. They never said you must join us, or intervened. They led us, but let us make our own decision on that. When I look back on that now, it was very properly done. I remember Jess Succamore and the president at the time was Rick Ward (of CAIMAW). We had a special

convention for this issue only, and they came to it. They made a presentation and we had a motion to vote on whether we were going to do this. Jess and Rick left the room. They did not sit there and watch all this and intimidate anybody or anything like that. They left the room and we took the vote and it was, I don't remember but it was pretty overwhelming. There weren't many who dissented. I think they realized there had been such turmoil in the union that had gone on for quite a few years, even before I even knew about FASWOC or had joined it. It had gone back a few years. Then I found out we were hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt and the bank had stopped signing cheques for a while. It was a mess. There's no question. I was starting to get back on the track, but then this merger came up and so then we merged with CAIMAW. It happened fairly quickly after that.

SG You had to also take this merger proposal to all of the membership around. I remember at the time of various meetings being held in all kinds of different places. I remember being quite astounded that this kind of process was going on. Do you have any any recollections of that?

LH Yes. At that time we had KFC units in Prince Rupert, Terrace and Kitimat, Quesnel, Williams Lake, Salmon Arm, Kamloops. I think we had two or three in Kamloops. I don't think we had Kelowna, but we might have. There were also several towns on Vancouver Island, plus Victoria and Nanaimo, Langley. I think we had one in Langley, Maple Ridge. We didn't go to the unit. If we were in, let's say, Courtenay, I'd have a hotel room, or those of us who were doing it, and then members could just come any time. We'd be there all day. You come after shift, before shift we'll be here, we want to talk to you. They were all 16 year olds and 17, very young people. They were sort of [mimics] Who are all these old people—older people sitting here. (laughter) But we did it. We did it all properly and it was well accepted and Jess was very good. It was a little harder for him I think, because they were so much younger than him but he would, he never talked down to them, though. Or I never—none of us ever talked down. We just, These are the facts. This has been the situation. This is where you could go and it would be much stronger and you'd have a stronger presence against the employer when needed, that kind of thing.

SG These kids are essentially, as you say, 16, 17 year olds already have some experience in a union and are taking that additional step of merging with another.

LH That's right. The union, to be honest, didn't go to town that often. We tried to at that time. It was a big task and big costly task to go to all these places and fly up north and all that stuff.

SG Is that what is that document is that you have there with you?

LH Yes. It was some messages of support from some of the different members, shop stewards and secretary treasurer of a local. Denise made a comment. She was the president of the White Spot local and then other people from some of the KFC's.

SG This would have been part of the...

LH Yes, this would have been a document that we would have given them to show them there is support for this. We're hoping you'll support it too.

SG One of the things that, for any of us who have been in the labour movement, the independent Canadian labour movement unions like CAIMAW, ICTU and FASWOC and

so on were always a bit of a flash point with the established labour movement, which was many international unions. It would be difficult in many cases where those issues would be brought up in bargaining. Did you encounter that as you moved along at any time that an employer would say, you know, you guys don't have the support of the international labour movement?

LH Not that I ever recall. I wasn't as involved in negotiations early on. It was later on I sat in on different negotiations, and by then we were well-established and in the CAW [Canadian Auto Workers]. In those days I don't recall anything like that other than that early stuff I mentioned with White Spot management and having a cosy relationship with some of the FASWOC people. I know they were not happy when we joined CAIMAW. That was even more of a red flag to White Spot. I always mention White Spot because really they were the predominant employer. The other ones, less so. We had not as much to—we saw the Arbutus Club people, for example, but we didn't have a lot other than negotiations every two or three years or whatever the contract length was. Not really. No.

SG One of the key issues obviously was Canadian sovereignty for CAIMAW. How did you feel about that issue of sovereignty? Was it important to you?

LH It was. You just reminded me that one of the things that really started my view about Canadian unionism. It was just a small thing, before I ever became involved. It might have been in '80, '81. I remember a newspaper article about some mineworkers in Nova Scotia, the United Mine Workers, and they had gone on strike. I don't know what their issues were, but I'm sure they were usual. They applied for strike pay from their international who refused to give it to them. I thought when I saw that, I thought, that's not right. They must have been sending lots of union dues for over the many, many years. I know the United Mine Workers has been around for a long time and they weren't getting strike pay. That's wrong. They've paid into that. That was sort of a trigger for me about the Canadian union movement. I didn't really know a lot about other unions, other American unions say. But I mean I'd heard of, you know, the Steelworkers [United Steelworkers of America] and Teamsters [International Brotherhood of Teamsters] and that kind of stuff. I just thought that was wrong. I think that was sort of a light bulb moment for me.

SG Right. You, also at this time, took on additional responsibilities with the merger with the National Union, with CAIMAW as well.

LH That's right. Once the merger happened... CAIMAW was good because they tried out some people to see how they would fit in because the already existing staff reps like Roger and Jef and Pete Smith and others couldn't take on all this extra work. White Spot is a lot of work. When there was all those units for those years and the KFC. Especially if you're going to give them decent service and visit them every few weeks or whatever and deal with all their many multitude of issues. So CAIMAW was trying people out. One of the things they suggested I might like to try out is doing workers compensation appeals. So I started a training program with John Bowman, who was I guess he was a researcher-cum-WCB person at that time. I did a couple of months. Then CAIMAW got into three very big and difficult strikes in 1988. One of them was White Spot and the other was Western Canada Steel and I think the other one was the mine up in Williams Lake. That was huge. That was a lot of people and CAIMAW didn't have a ton of money either. Strike pay was very, very, very low. I think I got two or three months in with John and then basically I had to go back to ICTU because I had a job to go back to. I was on a leave from ICTU under the union contract. I was allowed to take union leave. I understood that. I was fine about that. I was getting into doing the appeals but I was fine. So I went back to ICTU. I think

that's maybe when they took on Denise and then the other person they decided was not really suitable. I think Denise continued. She did because she ran the strike, the White Spot strike. I mean we all worked. I went to hund—not hundreds—I went to a lot of the picket lines and with the people because I had gotten to know some of them as well over the years.

SG The Canadian Kenworth strike was also around this time too wasn't it?

LH Maybe that's the one it was and maybe it wasn't the mine. I know there were three. It might have been that not not the mine, but I'm pretty sure it was Western Canada Steel.

SG I'm presuming that financial pressure and all the changes taking place at that time was part of what drove another merger process, this time with CAW?

LH Yes. You would probably have gotten more information about that from Jess Succamore. I think that CAIMAW had been so under attack for so long. There had been Labour Board cases and court cases. I'm sure it financially drained the union. I think that they started looking around and I guess had some meetings. The other part of it, is when FASWOC merged with CAIMAW I went on to the National Executive Board of CAIMAW. Because I had been the National President of FASWOC that was sort of a position that was given to me, but I was part of that. So I was part of those merger discussions but as far as the starting of it, I would think that the president and the financial secretary, Jess and Rick would have started that process.

SG So you continued in that position when you were back working with ICTU?

LH I did, until the merger. It took a while. It didn't happen right away. I think we didn't merge until '92. I think it was '92. There were a lot of discussions and Jess being the big constitution person that he was and very knowledgeable about how constitutions and he did a lot of work after we joined. He did a lot of work on the CAW constitution. What it is today is certainly down to Jess's knowledge, following proper procedures and continuing to be democratic.

SG He became the first Western Regional Director.

LH That's correct.

SG One of the results of the merger, as I understand it too, was that WCB appeals went from a national responsibility to a local union responsible. Is that correct?

LH That's correct.

SG That would have involved you.

LH That's kind of where I came in again. Again it was Jess, he had made a suggestion. Jess had a very good relationship with all the old CAIMAW locals and suggested they needed somebody to do their appeals because certainly the mines, there was a mine on Vancouver Island and up in Williams Lake area, they had lots of appeals. They had very difficult employers who would always fight every single WCB claim, appeal and all the rest of it. So anyway, you're right. It was the locals and we put together a plan and approached some of the locals and said, if you put some money into a fund we could have someone do

your appeals for you. Many of the locals were very open to that and that's where I came in. I started doing WCB appeals in 1993. I did it for about four years from '93 to '97.

SG So you were channeling your old training from John Bowman?

LH Yes. I had to do more, though, because it was cut off. I took labour studies at Cap College [Capilano College]. I did WCB courses. So I did some of those.

SG WCB appeals can be a really tough gig too, in terms of the knowledge you have to have.

LH Absolutely.

SG Any cases that you recall that were particularly [unclear].

LH There were quite a few, but I suppose the one that's stuck out for me was a man who I knew who had committed suicide. It had been put down that it was the employer that had caused him such grief as a union president. He was the president of his union. He somehow, as far as I know after the fact, he felt so much of the burden was on him, rather than gather people around him to deflect some of the burden from this horrible employer. Sadly, he took his own life. There was an appeal to try and get his wife a pension because of it. It was a very long case. They had a lawyer who did the first levels of appeal, Craig Patterson. He was very well known in the in the area. That's what he did was mostly, I think, Workers' Comp appeals and they denied it. The Review Board as it was called. That was the second level of appeal because you could appeal to the manager of the claims adjudicator. If that didn't work, you then you'd go to the Review Board and unfortunately, they turned that down there. Then it got to be a medical—the third level at that stage was the Medical Review Panel. That's where I came in because I guess the lawyer, they couldn't afford the lawyer any more, sadly and so I just got the case. It was all written submissions. I didn't have to make a presentation, but I had this file about that thick and I had to read through it. It was very difficult for me because I had known this man personally. Again, it was not successful and I always felt terrible about that but you're sort of at the behest of these bureaucratic organizations and they were not going to pay her a pension. I don't know what happened to her after that but I always felt very bad about that one.

SG I would imagine that kind of work really does take a toll on you too, emotionally for that reason.

LH It did. Physically and emotionally it did for me. I am not a person who compartmentalizes things. I internalize which is a lot of what I did at the time. After four years, I was at a crossroads in 1997 and my leave from ICTU was definitely up. They were not going to extend it again. I either had a choice of going back ICTU or carrying on to do this work for 17 more years till I was 65. I just thought, I can't do that. I just can't do it. So I stopped. We found somebody who had been in one of the mines and who couldn't work in the mine any more because he had health issues and he came on and has done that work and still does that work to this day, even though he's in his late 70s now, Lloyd Hines. Lloyd Hines is very good at—he's done a very good job. He was very involved labour—as an activist in his local up in Williams Lake where he worked in the mine. He was a welder.

SG Did you ever talk to him about how he manages not to take it home with him?

LH No, I think it's just different personalities. I don't think John Bowman took it home either, just different personalities. I internalized a lot of it, took it on and of course felt terrible if I didn't win. But I had a lot of wins and I'll always feel good about that. I helped a lot of people and I did get wages and pensions and rehab training. Some people had to be retrained. Lloyd being one of them, actually because he couldn't go back to work in the mine anymore.

SG You didn't actually go back for a very long time to before you took on another job is that right?

LH Yes. Denise Kellahan had been seconded to the national union. She was the president of the local at that time and she was the main person that serviced White Spot, KFC and other places. I was a recording secretary, but it wasn't a full time position. I was kind of the next table officer. The president, vice president and financial were all full time positions, but the recording secretary wasn't. But I was the next in line, you might say. So she asked me if I would like to book off again. That would have been early '99, I guess. Not quite get the dates, but I think that's about right. I went as a temporary servicing rep and then eventually ICTU merged with the CAW so my job was gone there anyway. We got severance pay from that. I had technically, even though I hadn't been there all that time, 17 years with ICTU. The staff that was still left wasn't the same people—or was, sorry, one of them was still there and there was other people. We all got severance pay according to our years. I got a severance package from ICTU and then they merged into the CAW. I carried on for seven years doing the servicing rep work.

SG I ran across stuff in a binder of mine. Full disclosure, I was a member for some time of local 3000 when we were working with the Labour Environmental Alliance. There's a list of all the servicing responsibilities for the various reps.

LH Oh yes.

SG Yours is about 21 certs long.

LH (laughter) I wouldn't be surprised. I'd forgotten that, but yes.

SG Kind of astounded at how you would manage to carry that kind of a load because you included some White Spots and included the Arbutus Club and including hotels etc.

LH Yeah. I don't know if—did it really include hotels? I never really had much involvement with hotels that I recall.

SG You actually had two hotels.

LH Oh ok, there you go. You didn't have grievances all the time from all of them. When I was doing that work, White Spot and KFC were still the main ones. Then we took on the casino, which is now the Park but it was the Edgewater back in the earlier days. I was part of that but I also had a lot of help from the national rep on the casino because it was a big, it was a big organization. I don't know, I just managed. We all worked really hard, long hours. I never went home at 5:00. I was always there till 7:00. Sometimes got more work done between 5 and 7 than I did all day. I'm sure most union reps would say something like that because you're always interrupted with phone calls and people coming in and asking questions. We didn't have grievances all the time at every single place. It's all timed

too. Sometimes it took a while for the employer to get back to you so you're going on with something else, some other issues somewhere else. So I managed.

SG I wanted to ask you particularly about the Starbucks campaign. Part of it is it's something that keeps coming along as one of those issues. I know you weren't as involved as, say, for example, Denise or whatnot.

LH Right.

SG You were still on the front line. Yes. As a service rep?

LH Yes. Often I did, I fronted health and safety committees in many of the workplaces. I always attended the health and safety meetings of White Spot or KFC. We were always trying to get people in the actual units to be active in that area because it's a very important area in those kinds of workplaces. There are many, many hazards that need to be addressed. In White Spot, we had a somewhat active Health and Safety Committee. Part of my job with dealing with all that was to go to the units and do health and safety inspections so that was another thing I did. I would go to all the White Spots and eventually if I went up—well we lost Kitimat quite early on, I seem to recall—but if I was going up to Terrace for a meeting, I'd make sure I could do a health and safety inspection. Now that wasn't very often, but it was something—we also had health and safety meetings here with the companies and we'd make sure that all the units got the minutes so the members knew what was going on. That was important. That was a lot of my involvement and I did do some grievances with Starbucks certainly.

SG Must have been very different, though, because KFC and White Spot, they would have had a union staff that had some background and tradition with it where in Starbucks this was a new experience. How did you find that in terms of engaging people?

LH Yeah, it wasn't easy. It wasn't easy, and I know as you know that they all eventually decertified. We had nine or ten Starbucks around the Lower Mainland. We had started with four I think it was. John Bowman, who was the organizer at that time felt it would be, don't just get one, because the Starbucks could just shut that down because there's so many. I remember they started with four and put in a cert for four to the Board and then some joined after that, some other locations joined after that. I don't recall how that all came about, I think that was other people dealing with that. John probably and people he would dispatch. It wasn't an easy group. They were a much more transient group of workers, more so than a lot of the White Spot workers had been there for years. I mean, just amazing. There's still one woman at one of our White Spots who's been there 40 years, and she's well in her 60s now. So—.

SG That's incredible.

LH Yeah, she doesn't work as full time now and I'm sure she's going to retire soon.

SG So in terms of what the health and safety, which was your connection, Was there engagement by Starbucks workers in that or did you find it hard?

LH Yes, we had a worker committee. There was two or three people who were more active from different units. One from the one on Commercial Drive, and the one from Hastings that was on Hastings. Neither of those are there now. There were two people anyway, there could have been others I don't recall now. Sometimes I was able to take

them to other units to have a look. The issues were sort of similar. They weren't dissimilar in each unit. That was the engagement, We'd certainly do training. The CAW especially is very good at training. I mean, I got a lot of training from the CAW myself even though I'd been involved for all that time. We would have local training groups. I did health safety training was another member who was very, very good at that kind of thing.

SG So I'm assuming it was just the turnover that finally [unclear] non-union group.

LH I think so. It was just not an easy group to bring together. People came for a while and left and new people came and they didn't know anything. Well, we got a union. What's that?

SG What was the Starbucks management's approach, was it pretty relentless?

LH I wouldn't say, it was as relentless, I don't feel looking back, as White Spot but White Spot was very seasoned. They had been dealing with the union for a very, very long time, since 1958, when Nat Bailey said you should get in the union because one of the union, outside unions was very interested. That's how that came about. But they were, they were determined. They certainly weren't going to make it easy for us and I don't think many employers do, to be honest. They weren't an easy bunch either. It was just different than than White Spot. I feel, as I say, White Spot was more seasoned in the whole union idea and having had dealings with the union.

SG I got the sense that CAW put in a lot of resources. I remember they used to be all over the union hall little bumper stickers and Starbucks buttons and various things. A lot of money put into that campaign, too.

LH Yeah. I think because it could have been a feather in the cap if we could have gotten way more units. That would have been a real— and I don't think people in the US knew that there were any. You hear about drives now and it's like it's the first time that's ever happened. They don't know about our little union that organized nine or ten Starbucks.

SG That's the interesting thing. I notice that the United Steelworkers have a campaign in the Fraser Valley now.

LH Right.

SG Something is happening this weekend around it. Do you think that the work that was done, the groundwork that was done by CAW at that time will have some resonance for those people?

LH I would be surprised because we're talking 20 years ago now. It'd be hard. I'm really quite pleased to hear that this is happening. I didn't know. But good luck to them. I can't think it's going to change that much. It's not going to be easy and I'm sure it's still a transient workforce. Maybe not, but I'd be surprised if it wasn't. It's just not the same. The White Spot workers, for example, got tips and for a lot of them that was really good money. I know you get a little tip jar on the counter at Starbucks and I always try to put money in those. I don't know what the wages are like now. I couldn't tell you and I don't recall what they were back when we had them.

SG There's been some suggestion that the nature of the work is changed only because people don't look upon it so much as a part-time short-term job but more of something

you're going to have to put up with for a long time because that's what work there is. it's, I guess, an open question.

LH Yeah. I wonder if it's that way now because everywhere I hear employers are crying for workers, not just in the service sector, so I still wonder if it wouldn't be a fairly transient job.

SG How did employers and management representatives treat the union generally in your day? Did you find it was different from today or different from when your early times or?

LH You mean when we joined CAW? I'm not sure what time frame you're might be referring to.

SG I guess with CAIMAW and the CAW. When you were dealing with employers, what was their response to unions in general? Did you find that it was—you know because you're in a service workers environment as opposed to a resource community or something like that or government sector for that matter.

LH I would say that they probably didn't like us very much. As I think I mentioned when CAIMAW came on the scene with White Spot, they really were not happy about that but I think things just kind of carried on. Business as usual as far as the employer and the union battling out grievances or going to arbitrations or that kind of thing. I don't recall that there was anything more than it was when CAIMAW joined. It was just there's another union here, I guess. I really don't know.

SG So it was the nature of the work. I guess that's what I'm asking really. A lot of employers, I would suggest, think that unions in the service sector shouldn't be there.

LH That's true. Well it's hard for me to say. I've been retired 13 years now.

SG No, but even though from the time you first began and the time you were in CAW, was there a shift at all, do you think?

LH I don't think so, because again, White Spot had a history of being unionized, whether they liked it or not. I don't think so. They were used to it and we have to get on with it. I mean, they probably weren't happy about it but that was their problem.

SG They were able to decertify some of them.

LH Oh, yes. I think we had 19 White Spots at one time and I think it's down to nine because they've closed many, many locations now. They closed some when I was involved. There was one at 25th and Cambie and it closed down, I think it was after the strike. I know they tried to close down Georgia and Cordero, but that got resolved through the strike. Their head office is gone, which was down on Marine Drive and I've seen others. There was one at 12th and Cambie, that's long gone so we've lost a lot. I think the Maple Ridge one is still there, but that was never part of the overall cert so I'm guessing it's still there.

SG I guess they never were able to certify the Express White Spot places.

LH No. There's so many that opened up. Before I got involved, they only opened up a White Spot every few years and it was automatic. They recognized the union. Then, I believe the story was, some bright spark of a manager when they opened the new one,

sort of, I'm not going to recognize the union. This was just before my time there was a huge Labour Board case about that which the union lost and that's what started it. We had to go after them and bring them under the umbrella of the big agreement but Maple Ridge always had a separate agreement because they started franchising them out, too. That was part of it. It's quite a history with White Spot. Then, as you say, these White Spot at the gas station places have shown up and on the ferry for goodness sake. It's quite something. they have just expanded.

SG The White Spot food that is delivered to the ferry is that the commissary?

LH I don't know any of that. No, the commissary shut down even in my time. They started contracting that out. I know JD Sweid was a company, but whether that's still around now I don't have any idea who makes the food.

SG They found a way around.

LH Of course. Yes, that's right.

SG But you were you were also the financial secretary of the local before you finally called it a day in 2006 when you retired.

LH In 2006 I became—

SG For most of your working life, you've been representing a lot of fairly low paid, underrepresented workers and whatnot.

LH Right.

SG And I'm sure that wasn't quite the life you saw for yourself working in Fred Deeley.

LH No. I don't think I had any vision of what my life was going to—things just fell into my lap, I guess you could say. I was in the right place at the right time when I met Janet and then it just kind of went from there.

SG Any regrets looking back on that change in your career?

LH Oh, no. I mean, it was hard work. It was frustrating work but I wouldn't change it for, for anything. Really, all I really wanted to do is help make people's working lives better. I feel I made a contribution to that through grievances, solving them, certainly through the health and safety stuff. I felt that was really important as well. No regrets. I feel very lucky that I got to, and I met the amazing people in the union that I have met. Lots of members and all the CAIMAW people I'll never forget them. It was it was quite an experience. It was 25 years of my working life that I gave to the union.

SG Just as a final point, one of the things that is often not noted about trade union work is what they do on the international system to help other countries, other people, other unions. I understand you went on a on a delegation from CAW to Mozambique on a land mines issue.

LH Yes. Just very briefly, the CAW for a number of years has what they call the Social Justice Fund. With the big three auto, they had negotiated that the employer would put so many cents per hour for every hour worked. When those auto plants were huge, 10,000

workers, that's a lot of money. The employer got some kind of a tax break. I'm not sure how that worked for them, but they got something but they had no say in where the money went or how it was used. So the CAW started funding projects overseas. Mozambique being one of them. I know they did some things down in Latin America. When Hurricane Katrina hit, I think they put money into that and when there was a big flood in the Red River area of Manitoba. So they didn't just send it abroad. They they did it locally in Canada. They contributed money.

LH The Mozambique one was in 2001. I was part of a delegation. There were four of us, three from Ontario and myself. We went to Mozambique for about two and a half weeks. We went up and down the country because there were a lot of projects that CAW funded there. There was a new school that they funded that we got to see the children. We got to see the old school and the new school, and it was quite different. The old school, they were sitting on logs to have their training and [in the new school] they had desks and blackboards. It was quite wonderful. Then the landmines, I call it de- landmining because after the Portuguese left there was all these internal battles and all that. So there were, I'm going to say millions, thousands anyway of landmines in that country. That was one of the projects. The CAW worked very closely with a Belgian organization. I'm sorry I don't remember the name of it now. They would employ local people to go around with metal detectors, that's what they did, to find landmines everywhere. In fields, people would be working in the field and something would happen that something would blow up. The other part of the Belgian organization is they ran what they called orthopedic centres. That's where people who had been affected by the landmine, say they lost an arm or a leg, they would go there and they would get helped with prosthetics or wheelchairs. Of course, they couldn't work after. I'm not sure how that went. We got to some of the orthopedic centres. We went to some of the fields. They had them all sectioned off and you had to very careful. We wore some protective like visors and a, not exactly a bullet-proof vest but that kind of thing, I guess it was a bullet-proof vest. I don't know how much it would help, but presumably we were walking a little bit and I was very nervous.

LH It was wonderful to see and meet the people. I have to say the prosthetics, we're not talking fancy, computerized anything. We're talking like wooden legs and things like that. It was quite something to see. Everybody was so warm and welcoming. We had a translator. Most of the people we might meet with spoke Portuguese so there would be the translation. There was one village we went to and we had apparently paid and helped the village with some cows from the next—Zambia or somewhere like that. This young man who looked after the cows said in his language so that would be translated twice, would you like to see my cows? So he brought his cows on. It was lovely. We were sitting under a lovely tree and talking to the elders and whatnot. There were many really amazing experiences and I felt very, very lucky to and privileged to do a trip like that and see a country I never would have thought of going to in a million years. But they had a lot of problems and I think they probably still do to this day.

SG So it sounds like a great note to end on. Thank you very much for your time.